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LIGHT AND DARKNESS;

OR,

THE SHADOW OF FATE.

A Story of Fashionable Life.

The road to Happiness is open to all, but Error stands at its entrance to entrap those who are weak enough to yield to her wishes, into her own paths, which terminate in the gulfs of Despair and Ruin.

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,
346 & 348 BROADWAY.
1855.

Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1855, by

D. APPLETON & COMPANY,

In the Clerk's office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
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NOTICE.

The publishers beg to apologise for too many typographical errors in this volume owing to the effects of a fire in the printing office during the progress of the work but which will be corrected in a future edition.

P R E F A C E .

I HAVE endeavored in this book to portray the bad not as wholly bad, nor the good as immaculate, since of human nature either is rarely or never true. To show how errors which seem venial at first, grow into crime when fostered by indulgence, and excused on the principle of fatality, or any other pretence by which the perpetrator seeks alike to blind himself and others;—to prove that to the ungoverned passions and foibles of the many, more than to the baleful crimes of the few, we owe the miseries which darken social life; and that the most brilliant gifts of person or worldly fortune are so many smiling spells which lure to ruin, those who are the slaves of impulse;—to give to each his proper share of blame, making not one the wholly sinning, nor the other the wholly sinned against—is the object of the work. The writer has endeavored in every scene to veil this moral, and trusts—though not openly thrust into notice—it has been sufficiently developed to be visible even in a careless perusal, and that the reader will not lay the book aside, feeling that he has been unable to derive from it one moral lesson or profitable reflection.

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LIGHT AND DARKNESS;

OR,

THE SHADOW OF FATE.

CHAPTER I.

THE SHADOW MARS THE LIGHT.

“Betray the trust of another, and beware ever after, lest your own be betrayed.”

“Why weave a net around the bird
That might be happy, light and free.”

THE crescent moon of May hung like a jewel of peerless lustre on the blue of the midnight sky, and threw a soft, mysterious spell of beauty over the city of New Haven, which slept beneath its influence, in the hushed and holy repose which only moonlight can give to external nature;—a repose which seems to him who looks upon it as an enchanted slumber, rife with beautiful and glorious dreams.

Nowhere did the moonlight fall with a softer, more graceful effect, than into the rose-mantled porch of one of the prettiest of all the pretty cottages for which New Haven is noted; into no hearts did its influence sink more deeply than those of the youth and maiden, who stood in that porch side by side. They spoke not; perhaps their souls were too deeply moved for words, for the only sounds which broke the hush of the hour, the gay shouts of some band of college revellers, or the lively tones which ever and anon reached them from some party indulging in the pleasures of a moonlight promenade, were alike unheeded by them.

There was a striking contrast between the pair, as their forms were clearly revealed by the moonlight against a background of shadow.

What a splendid-looking fellow he was—that youth! I can see him now, with his superb head covered by its cloud of raven hair, half waving, half curling; his splendid and spirited contour of features, classically pale, with those large, glorious dark eyes, lighting up his whole face,—at some times brilliant with soul light, at others softened by the drooping shadow of the lash into a dreamy mesmeric power; his figure slightly above the common height—a model of full and graceful symmetry; all combined with that air of careless grace and haughty independence, often found as the accompaniment of high breeding, but oftener still of that inner consciousness of self-power, which places the possessor above, though mingling with the many.

The face was not one of unmingled brightness; an expression of melancholy at times shadowed it, which added to the passionate interest of the observer, but was strange to see in one, upon whom nature and fortune had exhausted themselves, in the richness of their gifts. Habitually too, the perfect lip was disfigured by a curve of scorn, but this was half concealed by the thick moustache, and often relieved by a smile of seductive fascination.

Reader, is the face and form of Claude St. Julian daguerretyped upon your mind? I hope so, and I wish you to retain the impression, fully and distinctly, in the scenes through which you will follow him; for to his striking appearance, his lightest words and actions owed a power they would not otherwise have possessed.

For the present, the expression we have described as habitual to him, was lost in the look of deep suspense with which he gazed upon the girl beside him.

Having nothing of the striking beauty, and air *distingué* of her companion, she was yet graceful, gentle, and pretty—one of those persons we often meet, and whose characters we can read at a glance; while that of the other was a study for a lifetime.

Apparently the musings of the young girl were not of the most agreeable nature, for her cheek was cold and colorless, and she trembled perceptibly.

The long pause was at length broken by St. Julian, who said, in tones low, but the passionate earnestness of which rendered them distinctly audible,—

“Marion, you have given me reason to believe that you love me; why not confirm your words by your actions? I believe not in this hesitating affection, which is but half love, half calculation. I would suffer no obstacle on earth to tear me from you, and yet, you hesitate to tell me you are mine.” “Claude,” replied the girl, raising her soft eyes to his face, “have I not given you every proof which the most exacting could require, in thus meeting you without my mother’s consent? She, good, trusting mother as she is—thinks me safe, sleeping in my little room yonder,” pointing to one which opened on the porch, “when I am with you, listening to vows she has forbidden me to hear.” There was a tinge of bitterness, and self-reproach in her tone, and she added passionately, “Ah! Claude, how can you doubt my love, when for you I deceive the best of mothers.” As she spoke, tears which sprung from mingled sources, rolled slowly in large drops down her cheeks. “Forgive me, dearest, forgive Claude,” said her impetuous lover, encircling her waist with his arm, and drawing her to a seat. Placing himself beside her, he drew her head towards him, until it rested on his shoulder, while she continued sobbing, but resisted not the embrace. A few words of tender soothing followed; Marion’s tears ceased flowing, and they sat in silence for some time. “This is not what I came here for to-night,” said Claude suddenly releasing her from the arms which had encircled her, and starting to his feet, “what I have to say may pain you, more than what I have already said, but you must hear it.”

He paused, and looked up at the moon, as if to avoid the eager, inquiring gaze fixed upon him, though the expression of his face revealed the tumult of his feelings. At length, he said in tones whose wooing tenderness made words appear gentle, which were in reality, cold and stern:

“Marion, you must tell me *now*, that you will be mine in spite of all the powers of earth or—dearly, wildly, as I love you—I leave you for ever.”

Marion gazed wildly upon him, as he uttered the words, as if fearing to trust her ears, then appealingly, as she read his look of determination.

“In a few weeks your plighted lover will return to claim you as his bride, and *then* it will be too late—we will be

separated for ever. Say, will you be mine, in spite of lover, mother, friend or foe?"

Still she hesitated; with hands clasped, and face turned imploringly towards him.

"'Tis well," said he haughtily, folding his arms, and drawing himself up to his full height; "you waver between your own and your mother's choice; such love is not for me, farewell!"

He turned to descend the steps. With a faint cry she detained him.

"Oh! Claude do not leave me. I will give up all, yes *all* beside, for you."

He turned and clasped her in his arms; her head dropped upon his bosom. The struggle was over, the decision made.



CHAPTER II.

"A BRILLIANT MATCH."

"I' faith 'tis a bonny bride, and a gay bridegroom; but do
You think the twain well suited?"—OLD PLAY.

THREE weeks after the interview detailed in the preceding chapter, there appeared in the New Haven, and New York papers, the following announcement.

"Married on the 23d inst., by the Rev. ———, Claude St. Julian, of New York city, to Miss Marion, second daughter of the late ——— Wentworth, Esq., of New Haven."

Tremendous was the sensation produced in the fashionable world by this announcement.

"What a match!" was the universal cry. "The idea of the elegant, rich, and fascinating St. Julian, marrying the daughter of a poor widow. If he chose to make such a fool of himself, how could his parents consent to it?"

The world forgot that his parents had never denied him any thing he chose to take it into his lordly head he must have; that they fondly hoped marriage might settle the wild

boy down into a discreet, prudent man; and that the mother of Marion Wentworth, was the old and chosen friend of Claude's mother.

Mammas frowned, papas shrugged their shoulders, and told their daughters never to despair, their chance would come after awhile; while the daughters wept in secret over the sad fate of the Byronic youth, who had turned the heads of half the school misses in Gotham. Let the world cry out as it would, the match was made; as are many other matches, which are the last that any human being in his sober senses would venture to predict. The spoiled belle passes over eligible after eligible, and links herself for life to some one, upon whom the world would scarce think she would deign to bestow a glance. The gay *distingué* man of fashion settles down upon some retiring, oftentimes ordinary, woman.

Claude St. Julian was the only child of wealthy, and aristocratic parents. Of French descent, some of the best blood of the *haute noblesse* of France flowed in their veins.

Upon Claude—sole heir to the wealth and honors of their house,—was showered every indulgence wealth could procure, or fancy devise. Naturally brave, generous, and warm-hearted, his very virtues had degenerated into vices under this injudicious treatment. Nature made him almost perfect, but education and the world had used their utmost efforts to spoil her work.

When a gay collegian at Yale, he met, as we have seen, the quiet, unobtrusive girl, Marion Wentworth. It was strange that the idolized hero of many a gay coterie, should have selected her, as the envied object of his attentions. Perhaps he attributed her reserve to maiden timidity, and it increased his boyish passion, as a breeze, though chilling in itself, fans a fire into fiercer flame. Perhaps her very coldness was alluring to one who turned with wilful caprice from those who seemed to court his attentions.

He enjoyed the reputation of being the wildest young man in Yale College, nor was it ill deserved, as many a one in that vicinity could testify. Thus, though the welcomed favorite in the most select circles, he would not have obtained the *entrée* to the quiet and well-ordered home of Mrs. Wentworth, but for the never-forgotten friendship, existing between that lady and his mother. When after a separation

of many years, the son of her old friend appeared, with a letter begging her to "watch over Claude and be a mother to him," she could not resist the appeal. She soon perceived the growing *empressement* of his attentions to her daughter, but knowing she was betrothed to another, she had too much confidence in her truth and firmness of character, to dread any thing from them. Upon Marion's betrothed lover her mother looked with an especial eye of favor, perceiving in the integrity of the young man's character, the best guaranty for the future happiness of her youngest and best beloved child. After graduating, Arthur Warren returned to his home in Virginia, to make preparations for his approaching marriage. It was during this absence, that Marion attracted the notice of one who boasted, only too truly, that so far as the sex were concerned, his motto was, *veni, vidi, vici*. Mrs. Wentworth's eyes were soon opened to the real state of affairs. In vain she remonstrated with Marion—in vain represented the wrong she would inflict on her betrothed, and warned her of the dangerous and unsteady character of the man to whose keeping she wished to intrust her happiness. With that spirit of obstinacy often latent in natures seemingly the most gentle, the girl remained immovable. Her invariable reply to her mother's remonstrances was—"I had rather be miserable with Claude, than happy with any other man." "I don't blame Marion," says some young lady reader curling her pretty lip; "I should have liked him too." We dare say you would. There is more than one Claude in the world, and as far as we have had an opportunity of observing, they have no reason to complain that their merits are not appreciated by the fair sex. Mrs. Wentworth went so far as to restrict his visits to intervals like those of angels. She could not have adopted a more effectual mode of inflaming the attachment of the romantic lover, and strengthening his determination to win her daughter, had she been the most adroit manœuvrer that ever laid snares to entrap the heart of an unwary youth "in the knot there's no untying." The result has been shown. In silence and tears, the mother gave her treasure into the keeping of the gay bridegroom. "Of course," cried the charitable world, "all that sobbing and sighing was put on for effect. Every body knows she must be delighted with the match."

CHAPTER III.

THE WORLD OF FASHION *vs.* THE WORLD OF HOME.

"They tell me thou'rt the favored guest
Of every fair and brilliant throng;
No wit like thine to wake the jest,
No voice like thine to breathe the song!"

MOORE.

"Hast thou forgot the altar where kneeling by my side,
Thy vows were breathed to love for aye thy young and trusting bride?"

M. S.

BORNE to her splendid home, surrounded by every luxury wealth could give; received kindly by his parents, and idolizing her husband, one might have imagined Marion's lot to be a happy one—but if she herself cherished such a delusion, she was soon to be painfully convinced of its fallacy. Claude had not the most remote idea of relinquishing for her sake the gayeties and pleasures of a city life. He wished her to accompany him into society, and at first she willingly complied; but she soon found that she was but a dim light amid the stars of the gay and fashionable circle into which she was introduced, nor was she exactly *comme il faut* as regarded fashion and etiquette.

"What an ordinary little body that *dear handsome St. Julian* has married!" ran the whisper. "What a pity he married so young! What could have made him fancy *her*?—only passably pretty, no brilliancy, no manner, none of the *je ne sais quoi* about her characteristic of the highbred and fashionable woman." These remarks—as such remarks are generally intended to do—reached the ears of the parties concerned, and Claude was deeply mortified. Marion saw it, and this palsied even her natural powers, and gave her the appearance of *gaucherie* and *mauvais honte*, those worst of crimes in a "fashionable set." The gay round of pleasure was to her a scene of torture. At last she begged permission to stay at home, saying with a faint smile that nature never intended her for a fine lady, and, therefore, it was impossible she should ever become one. To this Claude somewhat reluctantly assented, but he offered to remain with her, to which

she had not the heart to say no. At first he did so with a good grace, but in a short time began to find the "evenings at home" extremely dull; and at last his principal occupation was yawning through the early portion, and then going off to sleep on the sofa, about the hour at which he generally started to some place of amusement. His friends rallied him about getting into bad habits (?). They entertained "serious apprehensions that he was a henpecked husband." Claude declared it was a duty he owed society to go out more, and Marion assented with such an appearance of cheerfulness, that he went his way rejoicing that she was so reasonable, little imagining the pain the effort cost her. She felt painfully her inefficiency for the brilliant rôle which her husband wished her to play. Inferior, in accomplishments, to the elegant women with whom he had been accustomed to associate, she had not the tact which some women possess, of catching intuitively the graces of polished society, and remedying, by the study of a few months, the defects of years. Though pretty, amiable, and well educated, in the every-day sense of the term, she knew she was no match for the brilliant and versatile genius of Claude;—careless as he was of his proud gifts, and making no use of them, save for the enjoyment of society. She loved him because of his irresistible attractiveness—if I may so express it—and because he was her husband; but there were many things about him she could neither sympathize with, nor understand. When throwing off the joyous *abandon* of his ordinary manner, he revealed the depths of his rich, impulsive soul; when gems of thought, poetry and feeling, flashed like diamonds to the surface; Marion listened, but she was only startled,—she did not comprehend; and Claude saw it, and sighed to think that the wife of his bosom could never be the twin spirit of his soul; that between them, there could never be that mysterious, but delicious communion of heart with heart, mind with mind, which is to love what the soul is to the body,—its eternal and etherealizing essence.

As time wore on, every day convinced St. Julian more of the terrible truth,—that he had made a mistake in marriage. Then came regrets, that he had married so early and from boyish caprice; then pity for "poor Marion;" then the remembrance haunted him that he had sought her, when he

knew her heart was pledged to another; he had caused her to break vows the holiest,—to be undutiful to her only surviving parent, and as these thoughts came with torturing force upon him, he could not repress a pang of self-reproach, for Claude, though an erring and passionate, was far, by nature, from an unprincipled man. In proportion as his heart grew colder towards his wife, his remorseful pity increased; his voice had a softened tenderness in its tone when he addressed her, which her feminine instinct told her was not love, but which was yet painfully sweet to her heart. And is it not often thus? When the heart grows cold and recreant to vows once warmly breathed, still perchance too fondly remembered by their recipient, does not our voice take a kinder tone,—do we not lavish a thousand unnecessary attentions, as if thus to silence conscience, and blind even ourselves to the consciousness of our own falsehood?

The birth of a little girl, a year after their marriage, had been quite an epoch in the life of the young wife, opening a new fountain of joy and tenderness in her heart; but then, Claude had hoped for a boy, and could not help expressing his disappointment. Poor Marion, she could have wept that it was not in her power to gratify his wish; for, much as she loved her child, her idolatrous love for her husband was before all earthly things beside. Deprived, in a great measure, of the society of her husband; Marion clung the closer to her child, and from the vigilance with which she watched over her, the care with which she shielded her from even the free air of heaven; one might have imagined there was a conspiracy between the powers of earth and air against the life of the babe. Pale and dispirited, she scarcely ever went into gay society, unless urged to do so, and then often making delicate health an excuse for non-compliance. Instead of endeavoring to retain her husband's affection, by conforming as much as possible to his tastes and feelings, she became daily paler, more silent, more uninteresting; yielding herself, without a struggle, to be the passive victim of circumstances.

CHAPTER IV.

A FOREIGN TOUR.—DEPARTURE AND RETURN.

“ And none would guess, so gay thou art,
That thou and I are far apart.”

MOORE.

“ You must make
That heart a tomb, and in it bury deep
It's young and beautiful feelings.”

BARRY CORNWALL.

FOUR years of the married life of Claude St. Julian and Marion Wentworth had passed away, when the former was recalled from his gay career by the death of his parents, who died within three weeks of each other. Whether it was grief for the loss alone of those whom he had loved with all the fervor of his passionate nature, or whether the remembrance of many an anxious, painful hour, and bitter pang his impetuous follies had caused the hearts of those who had lived but to idolize him, mingled with and embittered his sorrow, we know not; but certain it is, that the grief of the bereaved son seemed to pass all bounds. When the first paroxysms of sorrow were over, and the dreary, monotonous period prescribed by fashion for mourning had commenced, he became restless; home was unbearable: he must try a year or two of foreign travel; it would brace his nerves and restore his spirits. He expected, as a matter of course, that Marion would accompany him; but as the time drew near, and she made no preparation, and spoke not of departure, he concluded in his own mind, as she was so averse to society and change, she would prefer spending the twelvemonth he designed being absent, with her mother. She had not mentioned such a wish, 'twas true; but then delicacy, or some other feeling,—“ Marion was so strange”—might have prevented her.

Acting in accordance with this belief, he one day said to her in a tone of assumed carelessness, as if he took it for granted, and therefore it was unnecessary for her to affirm the contrary: “ Marion, would you prefer staying with your

mother to accompanying me to Europe? You were projecting a long visit home some time ago; perhaps this would be a good opportunity to make it. She shall not accuse me," he added mentally, "of dragging her from pillar to post, against her will."

There was none of that *openness* of feeling between them which is the soul of the marriage union, and without which, it is impossible to avoid misapprehension, discord and unhappiness. Marion did not feel as a wife should do,—that all which concerned her husband's enjoyment or interest, necessarily involved her own,—yet one could not blame her altogether for this. With the dissimilarity of taste and pursuits which existed between herself and Claude, it could scarcely have been otherwise; unless she had been willing, as she was not, to remodel her nature to his. She had waited for him to *request* her to accompany him to Europe; a rather unreasonable thing to expect of one who had been accustomed all his life to have his every wish anticipated—and when he did not, she wisely concluded that he preferred her remaining at home. When, therefore, he mentioned, or as it seemed to her, *proposed*, in a roundabout way the visit to her mother, she replied in calm, measured accents:

"Perhaps it would be better for me to remain with my mother;" though at that very moment her heart was sinking, dying within her at the thought of parting with him. And these few cold, careless words, sealed the separation between the husband and wife.

More than two years passed away, ere Claude St. Julian returned to his native land. His heart did not bound with that joyous sense of happiness, which seemed natural in one just returning, after a long absence, to home and loved ones; on the contrary, he felt more like a prisoner who was returning to bondage, after having stretched his *parole d'honneur* to its utmost extent.

The year spent by her husband in imbibing the inspiration of foreign lands—in the pleasant and soul-stirring occupation of travel, had been passed very differently by Marion in the quiet cottage at New Haven. When the weary twelvemonth, prescribed as the period of his absence passed away, and brought no Claude at its close; and when month after month passed, and still he came not, hope died in the

heart of the wife, and the agonizing feeling which succeeded it, was the conviction of her husband's indifference. Mrs. Wentworth exerted herself the more to make her daughter happy, as she highly resented the absence and neglect of her husband; but she could not resist the temptation—which the best of people often find irresistible—of saying to her repeatedly: "Ah! Marion, if you had only taken *my* advice, *this* would never have been."

Every one who has experienced it, knows what sort of comfort *this* is, when suffering from the consequences of one's own errors. It was torture to the morbid and irritable feelings of Marion. She had been cold and constrained, but timid and gentle, before; now she became, under the influence of anxiety and disappointment, nervous and fretful. When time writes with the characters of grief and pain, he leaves wearing traces on heart and brow, and Marion changed much in those two years.

When at last the very day of her husband's return approached, she scarcely knew, such is the perversity of human nature, whether to mourn or rejoice.

"Had you not better change your dress, for a prettier and more becoming toilet?" suggested her mother, as they were awaiting his arrival.

"No," she replied sullenly, "what is dress? If he loves me, I will look well to him in any thing."

From being very neat (for that is a virtue your cold, quiet people often possess), she had fallen strangely into the habit of neglecting her dress—a reprehensible habit in any one, but more particularly in a wife, whose bounden duty it is to contribute to her husband's happiness, by appearing as agreeable in every way as possible. Poor Marion, it must be confessed, had but little encouragement for the task, if task it could be called. In this, as in most other cases of domestic unhappiness, there were faults on both sides, *but had either chosen to correct those faults*, the other might, in time, have been won over to imitate the example.

When she heard the well-known footstep echo in the gravel walk, her first impulse was to fly to her husband's arms, but the demon of mistrust held her back; and when he burst into the room, she advanced to meet him almost as if they had parted but yesterday.

He could not repress a start of painful surprise, as his eyes fell on her faded form. The next moment he had clasped her in his arms; but her cold lips scarcely returned his warm kiss, though it thrilled through and through her frame.

A moment after he had forgotten her and all else, save his child, a cherub of five years, whose fragile loveliness he gazed on with delight, as he half smothered her with caresses.

The mother-heart of Mrs. Wentworth sunk within her, as she marked the contrast between the prematurely faded wife, and the brilliant *distingué* husband, in the very pride and bloom of manhood. She felt for the wife. The world, or at least one half of it, would have pitied the husband, and thought the wife rather to be envied. The next day they returned to New York.



CHAPTER V.

THE ORPHAN GIRL.

“As fair in form, as warm, yet pure in soul,
Love's image upon earth, without his wing.”

BYRON.

“And he, this stern hard man, is *he* to be the sole protector of so much innocence; such tender, loving helplessness?—OLD PLAY.

For the better understanding of this “over true tale,” it becomes necessary for us to dwell at some little length upon the early life of one of its principal characters, one who may perhaps claim the title of heroine, if this book, which is but a succession of life pictures, can properly be said to have a heroine.

Florence Fulton, the offspring of a romantic marriage—for her mother, a beautiful Italian girl, eloped from a convent with a young American naval officer, for which escapade her father, a haughty old noble, never forgave her,—Florence Fulton was left an orphan at an early age. Her father was by birth a Virginian, and the only relative he had in New York—where he lived when at home—was a bachelor uncle, from whom he had expectations. He died soon after his marriage, and his widow survived him but a few years;

drooping after his death, like the flowers of her sunny clime, when transplanted to our less congenial soil. Before her death she wrote to her father, imploring him to receive as her dying charge, the little Florence,—but in vain; if the letters were received, no answer was returned, and she died, leaving to the cold and careless uncle, the care of her darling, then about seven years of age. As may be readily imagined, Mr. Fulton was not the most suitable person in the world to assume the charge of a young lady's education.

Disobedient and stubborn in his youth, he had mortally offended his father, a rash, impetuous man, who disinherited, and drove him from his house. With a vow of revenge in his heart, Cymon Fulton left the home of his father, and from that hour—forgetting all other aims—he devoted himself to the accumulation of wealth, in which he had so far succeeded as to find himself, at the period to which we refer, one of the wealthiest merchants in New York.

He lived to see his brother, the favorite son of his father, squander his patrimony, leaving his only child a mere pittance, and requesting, on his death-bed, that his long neglected brother should be the guardian of his boy, then at West Point. Old Cymon, sooth to say, not with the best will in the world, assumed the guardianship; but to do him justice, he saved out of what seemed to be the mere wreck of a splendid fortune, a comfortable independence. Some benevolent person ventured to suggest that perhaps Cymon might have added a few thousands of his own, to the scanty inheritance of the nephew; but this was so totally at variance with the reputation of “the old miser,” by which name malevolent people were wont to designate him, that it was at once indignantly put down.

Estella Fulton, knowing the character of her uncle, and fearing that her child's situation might otherwise be rendered painful, made it her dying request, that, though remaining nominally her guardian, he should give Florence possession of her property at the age of seventeen. To this Mr. Fulton reluctantly assented; reluctantly, because he foresaw the step to be an unwise one. But who ever thought of refusing the request of a dying person, however unreasonable? no matter how much we may have insulted and trampled on their feelings in life, we feel bound when they are dead—and

our compliance or non-compliance can affect them no more—to obey their last wishes.

With a benevolence scarcely to be expected of him, he assumed the entire expense of the child's education; providing her with the best masters at home—for he had a crotchet in his brain, that children were not properly educated at school—and providing every thing necessary for her personal comfort; but beyond this, he took no more notice of her, than if she had been a superfluous appendage to the household furniture.

The old man had in his stern heart, some ideas of truth and justice; a correctness of principle, joined to great firmness of purpose; but it was almost impossible to break the ice which, through long years spent in the soul-hardening pursuit of gold, had congealed over the warm streams of human affection in his soul.

He had no kind words, no fond caresses, for the young girl; he seemed to think that if he provided for her mere physical wants—and not too liberally even for those—and attended to her education, he did all that was required of him. He never reflected that there was a pure young *soul* confided to his care,—to be fitted by him for the sweet, quiet, good paths of life, or the stormy ones of evil. He thought not of the warm heart, craving love as its life; fond words, and kindly tones, as its daily food; which he was chilling by neglect. He thought not of the rich soil of feeling, hopes, and fears, he was suffering to run to waste; find nutriment where it could; or be exhausted by “the mighty hunger of the heart.” Oh! how far more precious to the human heart, are kindly tones of love—soul-breathing acts of kindness—than all the worldly benefits which can be heaped upon us, unaccompanied by these.

Sharing the domestic *menage* of Mr. Fulton, was an old housekeeper, the fitting prototype of her master.

Naturally of a shrewish temper, disappointment in early life; had “turned her blood to acid;” and through the distorted medium of her perverted vision, every thing in life wore the darkest and most forbidding aspect.

Had not Mr. Fulton been previously inclined to be a woman-hater, long association with her, doubtless, would have rendered him so. To him however, except in moments

when the violence of her temper overcame her, she was conciliatory and submissive; not that she feared losing her place, for long experience, and prudent management, had rendered her necessary, but that she really stood in awe of his stern dignity of manner. She possessed almost absolute control over the household, lording it over the servants with despotic tyranny, while Florence she alternately petted and scolded. There were few teachers worth procuring who relished the atmosphere of Mr. Fulton's house long at a time. The old man fretted at the annoyance this caused him, and Mrs. Sharp attributed it entirely—when speaking in confidence to her employer—to “the perverse disposition of that spoiled child.”

Partly through the representations, and partly through the annoyance, caused by teachers leaving the house so often, Florence was sometimes left for months, without an instructor. Having few companions of her own age, she was often at a loss for something to beguile the weary hours.

With a mingling of pride and parsimony, often found in a naturally haughty spirit, which has been compelled for years to struggle with poverty, Mr. Fulton, though he inhabited a richly furnished and elegant mansion, in one of the most fashionable streets of the city, still kept up his habits of self-denial and economy. He saw no company, and his house reminded one of a deserted palace, mournful in its silent splendor. The furniture was old fashioned, 'tis true, and Rumor whispered—but then the dame is somewhat given to lying—that Mr. Fulton had fitted up his house for the purpose of taking to his heart and home (*his heart and home*) a lady who afterwards deceived him. If so, there was some reason for his aversion to the sex.

Books were the only resource of the lonely child. She obtained the ingress to a circulating library, from which she procured romances, plays and poems. The natural tendency of a young mind is to such productions as these, rather than to the deeper and graver order of literature.

There was a grass-plot, or little court it might have been termed, on one side of Mr. Fulton's house, larger than those generally attached to city houses, which had been laid out by the former owner, as a retreat for his leisure moments. It was very private, being separated from the street by a high

wall, while a thickly planted row of evergreens shut it out from the view of the house. A more beautiful spot could scarcely have been found. A *jet d'eau* played in the centre, and threw its sparkling waters in diamond drops around; its gushing music falling sweetly on the ear. The turf spread like green velvet beneath the feet, and the ground was laid out so as to form undulating falls, serving as delightful seats under the shade of the evergreens in summer. The most beautiful flowers the clime would afford lavished their fragrance on the air, and the few birds who, leaving their rural homes, found their way to the populous city, made this their chosen retreat, until the place was vocal at times with their wild-wood notes. And what is so sweet as the note of a bird? With what joyous gladness, what soul-waking inspiration it thrills from the ear to the heart! To the tired denizen of the city, what thoughts does the chance note of a bird awaken! Such visions of green fields, and gushing waters, and sweet quiet happiness! Dear birds! Sweet warblers! I love you if it is only for the delight your glad melodies have brought to many a weary heart. A few statues well selected, but marking a voluptuous rather than a pure and classic taste, completes the adornments of the court.

Shut in from the din and bustle of the great world without, there was a dreamy solitude, a romantic beauty and witchery about this enchanting spot to the orphan girl, whose poetic imagination invested it with all the charms of fairy land. It was her chosen retreat, and became in time, from the force of association, to be regarded almost as her peculiar property; and certainly if any part of the domain appertained to this beautiful fairy-like being, it should have been the spot so congenial to herself. Here, during the bright spring hours, the sunny summer eves, and the calm days of autumn, she would dream away uncounted hours; and sweet dreams they were too, tinged with the brilliant hues of young hope, and borrowing their life from her warmly throbbing heart. Here she would devour the impassioned language of Byron, or linger enraptured over the fascinating pages of Moore, the poet of love. Here, too, she would fly for refuge, when some harsh taunt of the housekeeper wounded her young spirit; or a cold look from her uncle chilled and repelled her. Here she passed many an hour of

solitude and tears, when the memory of her mother's love, and her happy infancy, would come with the tumultuous tide of recollection over her, contrasting with her lone and loveless present. Her heart pined for affection, but its mighty craving, yearning hunger, was doomed to be unsatisfied.

Few know how to pity the orphan. They may feed and clothe the body, but who shall minister to the wants of the soul? Who shall satisfy the cravings after heartfelt tenderness; holy, loving sympathy, in the bereaved young heart? Who shall give the life, the joy, the love, which beamed in the mother's glance; or watch as they would have done who are gone—our lost father, and our cold dead mother—over our erring footsteps?

Florence sought for solace and enjoyment in those studies which kindle the heart and inflame the imagination. Poetry was her dream—her passion—her delight. Music seemed to breathe the inmost language of her soul; she composed with ease; and with her perfect ear, her pieces were generally faultless in melody and time. As a natural consequence of such pursuits, she became a visionary, living in a world of her own, and imagining the world without, of which she knew nothing, the mirror of that which the "young dreams of her heart shadowed forth." Though the niece of a wealthy merchant, and living in the most fashionable street of the great Babel of Gotham, she was as complete a recluse and day dreamer, as if she had been brought up on some lone shore, with nought but nature's loveliness around her. Such is the influence of habit and circumstances over time and place.

When about fourteen years of age, an event happened to her, which tinged with its own coloring all the hues of her after life. She was one day in Waverley Place, and was about to cross the street, her eyes fixed admiringly on a light and elegant equipage a few doors above, when the fiery horses took fright at something, and escaping from the hands of the groom dashed towards her. So sudden was the movement that she stood paralyzed with terror; the frantic steeds were in ten steps of her, and she could not move; in another instant she would have been crushed under their feet—nay she was already sinking to the earth—when a strong arm was thrown around her, and she was borne to the sidewalk. Half fainting with terror, she looked up at her protector. She would have

thought the face, bending over her—the dark eyes beaming light into her own—the lip breathing such low soft words of tenderness, and soothing into her ear—belonged to an angel, but for the mustache shading the curved lip; which certainly realized her idea of a man, more than an angel. If however she still cherished any doubt as to his identity with the habitants of this lower sphere, it was speedily removed, when he inquired her street and number, and sternly reproving the careless groom, who had by this time recovered the horses—which proved to be his own—lifted her into the carriage, and followed himself.

All this passed like a dream, and, save a murmured reply to his question, she had not spoken a word. Still pale, with heart palpitating with recent terror, she leaned her head against the shoulder of her preserver for support, as the horses dashed rapidly onward. He took her cold hands in his own warm grasp, and softly chafed them; looked down into her eyes; and with a sort of mesmeric influence calmed her. Poor Florence! she never forgot that gaze, until in long after years, she met it once more, fixed upon her.

A few minutes drive brought them to her uncle's door. She murmured her thanks for his kindness; he assisted her to alight, saw her safe in the walls of home, and was gone. She knew not even his name.

Around this incident in her life, the enthusiastic imagination of the young girl wove a life-dream of romance and passion. "It was always so in novels: the life of the heroine was saved, and then of course she fell in love with her preserver; and then—after passing through unheard of difficulties—they were married; and then"—why there's an end of it of course. Alas! for the romantic dreams of a young heart in a world like this. Florence was sure he would not leave her thus, and never return; no, he would seek her out, they would meet again, and then—it is impossible to describe the glorious visions she conjured up. Day after day she watched for him, yearning to meet those eyes—to hear that voice once more—(poor child, those eyes had looked tenderly upon her, that voice had spoken kindly,) but he came not. Once or twice he passed her, in the crowded throng of Broadway, but did not perceive her—often she saw him dashing through the streets in the light open carriage, with those

same fiery horses—and at last one evening she met him, and as they were brushed against each other in the throng of promenaders, he looked at her, his face lighted up for a moment with pleased surprise, but he did not attempt to recognize her.

A twelvemonth passed away, and then Florence saw that face no more. She missed it as we miss the one gleam of sunlight which has broken through a day of clouds and gloom. She then concluded that he must have been merely a temporary sojourner in the city, and that she would never see him again; and she hushed the sweet dream in her heart, and, as time wore on, thought of it only when some memory of bygone hours stole over her, as the freshness and sweetness of spring steal upon our senses when inhaling the odor of violets.

When Florence arrived at the age of fifteen, her uncle, fearing her education was becoming neglected, overcame his prejudices so far as to place her at a fashionable boarding-school. Here she was taught to sing divinely; to speak French and Italian with the sweetest accent in the world; to dance exquisitely; together with sundry other accomplishments, which, if not professedly taught, are generally learned at boarding-schools. Florence profited as much as possible by the time she was at Madame C——'s, and when she left the school, that august personage declared that a more accomplished young lady had never emerged from the walls of her elegant establishment; an establishment which she boasted had turned out some of the brightest stars of the *beau monde*.

“Florence,” the little orphan girl at old Mr. Fulton's, attracted no attention, not even a passing sigh of compassion from the gay and busy world around her; but the beautiful and fascinating “Miss Fulton,” the reputed heiress of the immense wealth of her uncle, burst upon the world, a star of the first magnitude. “True, her uncle was a stingy old curmudgeon; but what of that? he was *rich*, and she would certainly get all his money.” The carriages of the *élite* of the city, drove in crowds to the door of “the heiress,” until the ceremony of calling was accomplished. Invitations were showered upon her, and there were five hundred dear friends, with fashionable and dissipated sons, heirs to nothing, ever

ready to chaperone her to places of amusement, and to *act the mother* towards her, if she should take it into her queenly head to allow them to do so.

Punctual to his promise, on her seventeenth birthday her uncle told her to consider her property at her own disposal, though nominally he must hold it in trust, as her guardian. He allowed her a suit of apartments in his spacious mansion to get rid of the annoyance caused him by company, and these Florence furnished in the most exquisite style; and here she received and entertained her guests, her uncle seldom interfering, *as it was at her own expense.*

Plunged into the labyrinth of the fashionable world, with no restraining influence—for Mr. Fulton was nominally a protector, and nothing more—the young, the gay, the beautiful Florence was left. It is needless to say with what zest she entered into the enchanted circle of her new life, its pleasures engrossing for a time every thought.

We have already seen that from her infancy she had felt the necessity of being loved, belonging to some natures in a much greater degree than others. A person of this description is always more or less fascinating. The very desire of inspiring love gives to the manner those attractive allurements, those sparkling graces, calculated to win it. When united—as in her case—with beauty, quick, impassioned genius, and a gay and sparkling flow of spirits, which could at times be subdued into that gentle and modest reserve which attracts, as it were, by repelling—the feeling acquired all the power of a will, which few could resist. When to all this was added the magic power of *gold*, we need not wonder that she became the most brilliant star of the New York season—living, breathing and moving in a perfect atmosphere of adoration, false and real. Her entrance into a ball-room, or at the opera, was the signal for a universal sensation among mustaches and lorgnettes. Why did so many sigh in vain? Was it because she had not forgotten the vain dream of her childhood? Was she a coquette? Judging from her reputation, we should say the latter; but time proves all things,—to which trite remark, it being the property of every one, we do not think it necessary to append quotation marks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST MESH IN THE WEB OF FATE.

And this Adonis of the crowd is the idol of my early dreams!

Thou didst beam upon my vision,
A thing of life and light;
Like a dream of bliss elysian,
In a starry summer's night.

ALL the world—that is all the *beau monde*—were thronging to the brilliantly illuminated mansion of the Moretons, in Fifth Avenue, in answer to cards received a week or two previous, bearing the important announcement that Mrs. De Vere Moreton would receive Thursday evening.

The Moretons were the gayest and most fashionable people in New York. Their parties were the most brilliant and *recherché*, and their reunions the most social and agreeable. Having no children they lived a great deal in society, and were ever ready in any project for amusement, in which was required the important assistance of a married lady and gentleman.

This winter, Mrs. De Vere Moreton—mind the *De Vere*, reader—had volunteered to “bring out” from the retirement in which her days had hitherto passed, a young orphan niece of her husband, and this gave her an opportunity of making her house even gayer than usual. To night, a more brilliant circle could scarcely have been selected than that which graced the elegant drawing-rooms, where wealth, taste, and fashion reigned; and beauty, wit, and gayety, threw their charmed influence around.

Claude St. Julian was one of a group of gentlemen standing near the door of the principal reception room; and, as all of the group will figure more or less in the events of this veritable narrative, we will give the reader a passing introduction to each. The young man leaning against the door with such an air of *nonchalance*, is Harry Vernon, the only son of the wealthy and distinguished Ex-Governor Vernon.

He is tall, with a figure splendidly developed, and a pair of magnificent dark eyes lighting up a strikingly handsome face; but the effect of his otherwise prepossessing appear-

ance is marred by a look of dissipation, and by his dress, which approaches near enough the "*flashy*," to outrage the principles of refined taste. Yet, through his assumed non-chalance and reckless defiance of conventional forms, there breathes a careless grace—a frankness and generosity of feeling—which wins the beholder in despite of his own will, and redeems his character, in some degree, from the censure it might otherwise incur.

The tall young man next him is addressed by Vernon under the soubriquet of "Plum;" his name, however, is Arthur Plumdale. His countenance in repose has a sinister, half-sneering expression, which he endeavors to convert into an expression of careless *bonhomme*. He laughs often, but to an acute ear there seems in that laugh a sort of lurking devil; yet his conversation is gay and pleasant, and he is doubtless a popular character.

The young gentleman nearest the door, with the slight, elegant figure, pleasing, though rather effeminate face, and profusion of light brown mustache, wearing an undress uniform, is Lieutenant Minton, of the Navy.

"Have you been presented to the *débutante*. Miss Moreton?" said Harry Vernon to St. Julian.

"No, I have just arrived; and if it would be of any avail, I would put up a prayer to the indulgent gods that I might be spared that task altogether."

"Why? Is she such a terrible character that you fear to encounter her?"

"No! would she were; there would be some incentive then to rush to the attack—*veni, vidi, vici*; but she is, I hear, a little simple country girl, who will answer you in monosyllables, or perhaps make some allusion to 'last term at boarding school,' by way of enlivening the conversation."

"Pshaw! St. Julian," laughed the good-natured Harry Vernon, "don't wage a warfare against the poor girl for her ignorance. Let's try to 'initiate' her as soon as possible."

"There is no necessity for the trouble. She is in Mrs. De Vere Moreton's hands, and that is equivalent to saying she will soon be thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of the temple of Fashion."

"The temple of arts you mean;" put in Arthur Plum-

dale; "of all women I ever saw Mrs. Moreton best deserves the title of *Mistress of arts*."

"Mrs. Moreton is divine," lisped the young lieutenant.

A smile passed through the circle.

"By the by, St. Julian, you have not met Miss Fulton, the reigning belle of the season?"

"No, this is positively my first appearance on any stage since my arrival from Europe. I have some curiosity to see her. I understand she is a beauty, a genius, and an heiress—rare combination of gifts to be cursed with,"—he added under his breath.

"She will be here to-night; I wonder she hasn't come."

"Oh! Fitz Friske is with her, and he always delays his arrival to the eleventh hour, in the hope of creating a sensation."

"Fitz Friske!" exclaimed Vernon. "I can't see how she endures that odious little compound of nonsense, affectation, and perfumery."

"I don't think it is to be wondered at at all," said Plumdale dryly, "he is a *millionnaire*."

"Hush! here she is," and at the same moment Florence, the beautiful the magnificent Florence appeared, leaning on the arm of the dapper little exquisite, Mr. Fitz Friske, who imagined that he received a reflected lustre from the star by whose side he moved, and felt his consequence materially enhanced thereby. She moved along with her queenly grace, a half conscious smile flashing in her starry eyes, and playing around the exquisite lip, as she marked the eagerness with which the men pressed forward to catch a look or smile as she passed. In the countenances of many of the women might be traced an expression of envy and discomfiture, which they vainly attempted to conceal; but on she moved unheeding, scattering smiles and gay words, like flowers and sunshine in her path. When the Antinous face and form of Claude St. Julian appeared, as immediately after Florence he threaded his way through the crowd towards his hostess, the women revenged themselves on the men for their admiration of "*La belle Fulton*." Fans fluttered, sighs were heaved, and hearts palpitated.

"Who is he?" whispered some one who happened not to

know him. "So handsome! with such an air *distingué*! Oh, he is *divine*! for heaven's sake tell me who he is."

"Mr. St. Julian; he has just arrived from Europe, and is a married man," responds some one in great haste, lest the fair querists should "die off" ere the requisite information could be obtained.

"What if he is married," cries some gay and careless belle, "he is none the less agreeable for that."

In truth, all were glad to welcome back the gay and popular St. Julian; his *naïve* wit, his easy and brilliant flow of conversation, his joyous and fascinating manner, rendering him an invaluable acquisition to the world of fashion; that world, whose greatest exertion is to be entertained.

The pretty little Mrs. Moreton bedizened with lace and jewels, was conversing, or rather prattling in her gay pleasant way, with a knot of beaux and belles, of which she formed the centre, as Claude approached to make his obeisance. Near her stood a pure, pale vision of loveliness, with sapphire eyes and golden hair, in a dress of white crape, unrelieved by ornaments. She seemed to move in an atmosphere of freshness, innocence, and loveliness. This was the young *débutante*. Bending over her as if in earnest conversation—rare thing for a ball-room—was a stately, noble-looking man, apparently about thirty-five, in whom Claude recognized Judge Woodward, a man no less distinguished for his high intellectual attainments, and the loftiness and uprightness of his moral character, than the gentle dignity and suavity of his manners.

"Mr. St. Julian, I am delighted to see you," said Mrs. Moreton, graciously extending her hand. "It was getting so late, I feared you would not come."

"You must have thought I had lost my taste for the beautiful, and my appreciation of every thing that is agreeable, in my foreign wanderings, if you could suspect me of slighting one of Mrs. De Vere Moreton's invitations," replied Claude, with a bow and smile. "I was only delighted at so good an opportunity of meeting with old friends, and getting a peep at the many new stars that have arisen during my absence."

"And Mrs. St. Julian?" asked Mrs. Moreton, *bethinking* herself.

“ Regrets very much that she is too much indisposed to go out. Magnificent looking woman Miss Fulton.”

“ Yes, the belle of the season—a charming girl!”

Florence was standing near, surrounded by a group of gentlemen. As Claude pronounced her name, her ear caught the sound, and she looked round. Their eyes met. Sudden as an electric shock, the glance thrilled through each. In Claude, Florence beheld the idol of her early dreams, the face and form which had haunted many a pensive hour. The gay laugh died on her lip, and her gaze remained transfixed on his. A moment, and she recovered herself, and continued talking gayly as before. The sensations of Claude were different, yet perhaps akin in some degree to hers. When his gaze first fell on her, he was struck by a resemblance which he vainly endeavored to identify. The noble features, the full and finely curved lip; the cloud of raven black hair, the starry midnight brightness of those deep, dark brooding eyes; all were daguerretyped in his memory; but the face *there*, wore not the crimson flush on lip and cheek; nor the expression beaming with the witchery of smiles belonging to Florence. That memory-pictured face, was of a pale, dreamy, poetic cast; saddened as if by early sorrow; dreamy as if a world of untold thought had stamped its impress there, but beautiful beyond any thing he had ever seen before, or since, till now. When their eyes met, *that glance*, it was the same; and like a flash he identified the brilliant belle with the young girl whose life three years before he had saved, and whose face had often since haunted his idle musings, with a vague admiring interest. Mrs. Moreton laughed as she saw his eyes fixed on Florence.

“ You seem as much struck by our American beauty as if you had never seen the fair ones of other lands.”

“ Ah! madam,” returned Claude, and with truth, “ the fair ones of other lands cannot compare with ours.”

“ You have not forgotten how to flatter I see; however, I will not accuse you of flattery, as I cannot take the compliment to myself, being by birth a French woman.” (Mrs. De Vere Moreton was the daughter of a French consul, which accounts for the aristocratic appellative prefixed to the Moreton name.)

“ If,” replied Claude, bowing, “ American ladies take the

palm for beauty, French women assuredly bear it off for every grace which charms the senses, or fascinates the heart."

"Yes," she rejoined, "I do not quarrel with our lot. Fascination is a gift which, for the power it confers, is much to be preferred to mere beauty of form and feature."

"Who is that rather remarkable looking man immediately behind Miss Fulton? It seems to me I have met him abroad," alluding to a dark foreign-looking individual, with rather a noble air, who moved among the crowd as though "among but not of them," yet whose piercing eyes, seeming to see every where, and read every thought, assured one that he was cognizant of all that was passing around him.

"Probably you have. That is Signor Basquina, an Italian count, of whom, on his first arrival here two winters ago, we tried to make a lion; but he seems to be a quiet person, with a perfect abhorrence of any thing of the sort. We are perfectly assured of his rank, as there are several gentlemen of distinction in the city, who have met him in his own country."

"Basquina—I don't remember the name. Excuse me for trespassing so long on the time you owe to others, but 'a looker on in Venice,' you know. Will you allow me the pleasure of being presented to Miss Moreton?"

Mrs. Moreton graciously complied with his request; and Claude commenced a few words of graceful trifling, answered by "the little country girl," with a grace and ease which astonished him.

It was remarked by the "numerous circle of her admirers," that "*La belle Fulton*," was unusually *distract* that evening.

She would rattle on one moment with her usual sparkling gayety, and the next relapse into silence, scarcely heeding the remarks addressed to her, or replying half impatiently, if she did. But then she was continually told that her "dear little caprices," and "spoiled child ways," were so *naïve*, so *piquant*, that they only rendered her more charming; so who would blame her for indulging in them? She had met at last the idol of her girlish years, the hero of the impassioned dreams of her young heart. He did not approach her, and this fevered her desire to know him into a passionate wish that he should speak to her, if but one word.

At length Claude approached Mrs. Moreton to request

her to present him to Miss Fulton. She was occupied with some one, at the moment, and as he paused to wait until he could gain her attention, a strange sensation came over him, a sensation which we have all at times felt, as if something, so to speak, held us *back* from some object of which we are in pursuit, or some act we are about to commit. The feeling is often but momentary, and easily shaken off; but is it not in many cases recalled afterwards, as the presentiment of coming events? Perhaps it is the warning shadow, which the wing of our good angel casts over our soul. As he stood thus irresolute, the word "Beware," fell distinctly on his ear. He started and looked around. Signor Basquina had just passed, in low and earnest converse with some one. It was probable some chance word of their discourse which he had caught, and smiling at his own nervousness, he gave his arm to Mrs. Moreton; and the next moment received a bow from Florence accompanied by a beaming glance and smile; and the presentiment banished from his brain.

"Ah! St. Julian, perhaps you can prevail on Miss Fulton to dance," said Harry Vernon. "I have wasted eloquence and breath in vain. Do unite your exertions to mine."

"And mine," lisped Lieutenant Minton.

"And mine," drawled Fitz Friske.

"I shall only be too happy," said Claude, "if I can be the favored one for the next dance."

Miss Fulton pouted her pretty lip and looked at him as if to say, "will you torment me too," but she suffered herself to be prevailed on, and the next moment they were in the flying circle of waltzers (polkas were not then in vogue) in the next room.

"Cool upon my word," said Harry Vernon. "*La belle* Fulton is spoilt; that's the private opinion, publicly expressed, of Henry Vernon Esq., the most profound thinker of the age. Come, boys, let's take some champagne, and then for the card-room."

Little recked Florence what they thought or felt. For the remainder of the evening she was "the gayest in the revel; the lightest in the dance." *He* was by her side at last; his soft tones falling on her ear; his dark eye beaming with glances that said "a thousand things at once," to the love-inspiring orbs raised to meet them; and Florence was

in a trance of bewildering delight. We will not detail all the conversation which passed between them in the course of the evening, during which Claude hovered round Florence like a spirit—(was it a spirit of light or of darkness?) We will not repeat the thousand and one pretty things which “the divine St. Julian” breathed; nor the smiles and glances “La belle Fulton” gave him in return. We will not translate the soft-toned good night, nor the sigh which accompanied it. All these bewitching little deviltries, which the monarch of Evil uses to beguile the erring and passionate ones of this world—we will leave to the imagination of the reader, satisfied that the thing will be done ample justice.

CHAPTER VII.

MAIDEN REVERIES DANGEROUS THINGS SOMETIMES.

“To think on low soft words,
Her ear had drunk that night;—
When her heart beat echo-like,
And her cheek burnt ruby bright.

“Her eyes wear a softer light—,
Her cheek a tenderer bloom;
As she muses o'er what has been,
Or dreams of what may come.”
L. E. L.

It was the morning after the party at Mrs. Moreton's, and though the little French clock on the mantel in her chamber had chimed eleven, Florence had not yet risen. The street without was alive and busy, but the blinds of her room were closed; and the curtains drawn, only suffering the morning light to steal in, softened and subdued, so as not to disturb the repose of the sleeper. That room was in all the confusion and disarray consequent upon the lengthened toilet and hasty disrobing of the previous night; but something of the tastes of the occupant might be guessed from its general arrangements.

Curtains of rich crimson silk swept to the floor; and the carpet corresponded in its gorgeous hues with the curtains. On the toilet-table was a large full length mirror; and the air of the apartment was heavy with the perfumes escaping from the crystal flasks left carelessly open. Above the French bedstead, was raised a slight frame supporting a canopy of

crimson silk, and beneath this reposed *La Belle Fulton*. One rounded arm supported her head, whose dark glossy curls wandered in thick masses over the pillow. Her neck and shoulders were bare, and as her bosom heaved in its restless throbbing, the perfect outline, and tempting roundness of the bust rose to view. She was sleeping, but it was evident from the feverish glow on her cheek, and the unquiet movement of her rich red lips, that her slumbers were by no means deep, or undisturbed.

What are the dreams beautiful sleeper, which now visit thy pillow,—causing that bosom to heave so wildly,—bringing such a fevered glow to thy cheek,—making those moist red lips quiver,—and the long lashes glisten as if a tear had escaped 'neath their silken fringes? These are the mysteries of woman's heart; let us not raise the curtain which veils the pure, sweet sanctuary from the cold and careless gaze

At length she moved restlessly, unclosed her eyes, and ringing a small silver bell on the table beside her bed, rose and proceeded to make her morning toilette. Coming out from the bath, lovely and blooming as Hebe, she threw a dressing robe of purple velvet around her, and standing before the mirror proceeded to brush out the long thick glossy masses of her hair.

Some time elapsed before her maid appeared, but she was not impatient. Her thoughts were wandering; she often ceased her employment, and suffering her hand to wander heedlessly through her curls, seemed lost in thought. At length, when her toilet was completed, and the girl appeared with her breakfast, she scarcely tasted the streaming chocolate and warm rolls placed temptingly before her; then dismissing her as if glad to be alone, threw herself into a *fauteuil* and abandoned herself to the delicious sway of reverie. It was rare to see the shade of thought on that bright brow, but it was there now; and those eyes, of that bewildering hue which is like the bluish jet of the summer midnight sky, had this morning a depth in their light, a soul in their swimming softness, which told that the thoughts burning within, were such as awoke the slumbering echoes of her deepest feelings. Long she sat thus musing. She thought of the party of the previous night, as she had never thought

before; of the thousand and one scenes of gayety and excitement, where she had been the queen of the hour. She hailed it as an era in her existence, the first glimpse of a new world that opened fair and bright in the future.

And the enchanter, whose magic wand called into life these fairy visions in the wayward heart of the spoiled beauty, was Claude St. Julian. As the reader has doubtless surmised she was ignorant of the fact that Claude was a married man, and this will not seem strange when we remember the seclusion in which she lived previous to her introduction into society, that she made her *début* while he was in Europe, and that though many of her personal friends were his also, she rarely heard his name in the gay and giddy circle in which she moved, save an inquiry as to when he was expected to return, or a regret at his long absence. His wife's name she had never even heard, she being of far too little importance to engross the thoughts or conversation of the *beau monde*.

We have already told how her romantic young heart had twined itself round her deliverer—how he became the hero of her day dreams, the embodiment of her ideal creations of the good, the noble, the beautiful. And now, when the spring bud of her life had burst into its summer bloom, the fair precocious child ripened into the brilliant and beautiful woman, she had at last met him, and he—HE had reminded her of the past; *he* had recognized her spite of the changes of time and circumstances; *he* had told her how her face had haunted his memory for years. Did he love her? and her heart bounded wildly at the thought. No, there was passionate admiration, but no love expressed in tone or manner; but yet there was a link already between them—a link of gratitude and tenderness; “and he may love me yet, if he does not now,” she concluded, with the pardonable vanity of her sex and age. A woman of more cautious temperament,—or, perhaps we should say more worldly prudence—would have checked any outflow of feeling towards a comparative stranger; but Florence never took any pains to check her wild and sudden impulses. Unaccustomed from her earliest years to discipline of mind, or heart, she had never learned that such things are necessary to our well-being here and hereafter. Naturally she had a passionate love for the pure,

the beautiful, and the true; but this feeling—an unfailling attribute of genius, and an essential element of greatness, if rightly developed and flowing in its legitimate channel—was perverted by education and circumstances, in the absence of higher aliment to support its life, into a mere love of novelty, a craving, intense and continual, after excitement. Alas! for her, the fair young years when the impressions are made, which so materially affect our after life, which give to our matured years the impress of greatness and goodness, or of sorrow and shame, were passed by her amid associations, but little calculated to develop the latent virtue of her nature, or give tone, firmness, and discretion to her character.

What is like the influence of firm and judicious parents, in moulding the after life of a child? and what more deleterious than the examples and precepts of imprudent and injudicious parents or protectors?

A ring at the door bell aroused Florence from her revery, and immediately afterwards she was informed that visitors waited below.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EAGLE WATCHES OVER THE DOVE.

“See what a grace is seated on that brow.”

“’Tis a throne, where honor may be crowned
Sole monarch of the universal earth.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“Oh! she was good as she was fair;
None, none, on earth above her;
As pure in thought as angels are,
To know her was to love her.”

SWEET Eva Moreton, how shall we describe thee? All things fair, all things pure, “all things lovely and of good report” remind us of thee; and like a lily flourishing in its stainless purity, in the heated atmosphere, and amid the voluptuous growth of a hot-house, so didst thou bloom fair, holy, and serene, in the luxurious and tainted atmosphere of the Moreton mansion, that temple of Fashion and Folly.

It was in one of the elegantly furnished parlors of this

abode that Eva sat some mornings after the party. She seemed intent upon some work with which she was engaged, lovely indeed she looked as she sat there in her simple morning dress with her golden hair parted from the fair brow, and braided like a crown of glory round her head; her Madonna eyes; her fair transparent complexion, tinged with the faintest blush of the rose; and more than all, the sweet, serene, nay even holy expression of her face, over which seemed evermore to brood the spirit of prayer.

Mrs. *De Vere* Moreton (as she chose always to be called) had thrown herself *en dishabille* on a luxurious lounge, and was chattering away, as fast as usual; apparently more for the pleasure of hearing herself talk, than any thing else.

"Well," she cried, half laughing, half pouting, "Moreton and I have had what I call a matrimonial *tête-à-tête*—in other words a quarrel—this morning. He actually tells me that my expenditures are greater than he can afford! How I do hate to hear men get on those everlasting subjects, what they can, and what they cannot afford, just as if they thought we cared. My expenditures! when he will spend more in one night at the *gaming* table than I do upon my dress, and other necessary expenses, in a year; but men are so selfish, they never think of any body but themselves."

She heaved a slight sigh and continued: "He can't support such extravagance! The idea! and we living on Fifth Avenue, with every luxury wealth can furnish us. Why did he place me here if he could not keep it up? I am sure I thought he was worth a million, when I married him." Here the embroidered kerchief was raised to the eyes of the aggrieved "female." "I wish I had never never left Paris, dear Paris, to follow *mon père* to this hateful New York,—though to be sure I was quite a child then,—but such a change! with my weak nerves too—it is more than I can bear. I don't think Moreton has any right to talk to me in this way. I shall spend as much as I please, and that isn't all, I shall pout for three days, on the strength of his ill treatment this morning. He will be glad enough to put me in a good humor by that time; even if it costs him a check for a thousand. A vile man!"

"But, aunt——" commenced Eva.

"Don't call me aunt, Eva dear, for the love of mercy

you make me feel as old as the hills, when in reality I was just five and twenty my last birth-day. But dear me! what am I thinking of—the clock has struck twelve, and Miss Virginia Smith is to call for me in a half hour to go shopping; I shall never make my toilette in that time in this world. There is the most beautiful cashmere at Stewart's, Eva, you ever saw; and so cheap; only five hundred,—trifling isn't it? Mrs. Stewart Graves had one last year not half so handsome, for which she gave a thousand. I must have it, notwithstanding Moreton's foolishness. My expenditures indeed!"

"A gentleman has called, madam; shall I show him in this room?"

"Heavens, no! don't let any one catch me in this fix. Ask him in the front parlor, but stay, who is it? How stupid you are, Watson!"

"It is Judge Woodward, ma'am."

"Oh! he is a visitor for Eva; let me escape and ask him here. New servants are such bores,"—and she disappeared through the folding doors at one side, as Judge Woodward entered at the other.

He entered with his usual dignified grace and easy suavity of manner. Eva saluted him with a blush and a smile, and taking both her hands in his own, he seated himself beside her with the privileged air of a relation.

"And how is my little coz this morning? Not suffering from dissipation I hope; but I need not ask; your blooming looks sufficiently assure me of the contrary. What are you so busy about?" he added, glancing at the embroidery frame. "You seem to prefer 'sober brown,' to the bright buds and flowers ladies are so fond of weaving together."

"I am embroidering a shawl for my mother," replied Eva. "I know she will prize it more as my work than any thing I could purchase for her."

"Just as of old; always thinking of your mother. By the way how do you like yourself in your new character of *La belle Débutante*? One would imagine, if you are like most young ladies, your head would be so engrossed with the compliments you have received, and the conquests you have made, that you would have no time to think of any thing else, not even *la chère mère*."

Eva looked at him in some surprise.

“ You jest, cousin.”

“ Oh, of course; I know you are a dear good girl, and it would be almost impossible to spoil you I hope; but seriously,” dropping his light tone and looking grave, “ I wonder your mother should have thrown you into such a vortex of society and dissipation as you find in this house; nor can I imagine how she could have reconciled herself to placing you in the hands of a woman like Mrs. Moreton. Your pardon for speaking thus of your uncle’s wife, but—” at this moment the identical Mrs. Moreton swept into the room, arrayed in the most becoming of morning costumes, completed by the most coquettish of hats, *couleur de rose*, and after gayly passing the compliments of the day with an air which seemed to challenge the admiration of the beholder, mentioned her engagement, and smiled and bowed herself out with the utmost grace imaginable,—to join Miss Smith, whose carriage awaited her at the door. Judge Woodward looked after the gay little butterfly with a glance of mingled admiration and pity, and resumed his conversation with Eva.

“ I am much attached to your mother, Eva, as you know; I look upon her as the most estimable of women. To her good counsels I trace some of the best impulses of my nature. The knowledge of her excellence has helped to teach me that tender regard for all which concerns the welfare of woman, which I believe I possess in as great a degree as most men. Is it strange then, knowing the careful way in which she has reared you, shielding you from every contaminating influence, striving to implant in your young mind nought but what was holy and true, and beautiful, that I should wonder when seeing her bud unfolding into the flower, with the promise of its bright childhood almost fulfilled—a thing all purity, yet tender, sensitive, susceptible to every passing impression—that she should place you here, where you are surrounded by many temptations, which your young heart may find it difficult to resist? ”

“ My dear cousin, you forget my poor mother’s situation—a widow, the cares of a family press heavily upon her. The education of her children devolves almost entirely on her; and though competent to fulfil the task, yea, taking pride in it, her duties must at some times prove onerous.

At home I have little or no society; our limited means prohibiting us from indulging in the luxurious refinements of the circle to which we belong. My uncle, Mr. Moreton, generously offered to give me every advantage of society in his power, and begged that I would accept his house as a home. Wishing me to see something of the world, knowing that I would have advantages she could not give me, my mother, my dear, tender mother, with many struggles, at last yielded, though I indeed felt, when I parted from her, as if I was leaving my guardian angel. I thought it best that I should come, therefore I murmured not; in fact, I strove to make my mother believe that I looked forward with great pleasure to this visit, and so well did I succeed in this innocent *ruse* (if deception can be innocent), that I overcame her reluctance, and she parted from me almost cheerfully." Eva wiped from her eyes the bright drops which had gathered and glistened there, as she spoke of her mother, then looking up with a smile bright as sunshine into the grave, thoughtful face beside her, she added, "Cousin, you must have very little confidence in my stability of character, if you think I could so easily forget the precepts of years, and be willing to exchange the happiness flowing from the practice of virtue, for the mere pleasures of fashionable life."

"Ah! Eva," replied her relative, "when you know the world better, you will find that pleasure can assume many alluring, and seemingly harmless shapes, to woo young hearts to her siren meshes; and that even the firmest and best of us, those who know full well the evil of sin, and its fearful consequences, are sometimes overcome by its potent influence. But God shield thee, dear one, and never mayst thou learn this lesson in the bitter school of experience." And the usually stern, grave man, looked with a woman's tenderness into the fair childlike face upraised to his.

"I do not think," said Eva somewhat hesitatingly, "that my mother knows the real character either of my uncle or his wife, that is, she does *not* know that they are the habitual votaries of dissipation. My aunt you know can assume almost any fascination of manner she pleases; and last summer when she paid us a visit at Oakwood, she seemed so pleased with my mother's arrangements, entered with such apparent interest into all the details of our little *ménage*, and had, to

use a common expression, so few 'fine lady airs,' that my mother was much pleased with her; and I confess I was never more surprised than when, on coming here, I found how differently Mrs. Moreton managed her own household; but I attributed that in a great measure to the difference in fortune and habits."

"And would Mrs. Moreton intentionally deceive your mother?" asked Judge Woodward sternly.

"No, oh no!" replied Eva, earnestly. "I don't think she had any such intention; I think it was from a good-humored wish to put us at our ease, that she thus adapted herself to those around her; and also because her prevailing passion being to please, she felt she could thus render herself most agreeable. With all my aunt's frivolity, I think she is naturally good-hearted. She has treated me with unvarying kindness; only chiding me sometimes for being too timid and retiring."

"And your uncle?"

"Is kind too, but let us not speak more of this now."

"Well, do not blame me for my advice, or my fears rather, Eva. You are just at that critical age when the heart trembles on the turning point between childhood and womanhood; when all things look bright to the ardent eyes and bounding heart of youth; when the dew is freshest on the flower, the hue brightest on the rose. There is reason enough for my fears in a world like this." He paused a moment, then taking her hand caressingly in his own, he continued in soft accents: "Would I could be thy protector, Eva. I have been thinking of marrying of late, wooing a sweet angel to cheer the solitude of my bachelor home; and then, Eva, sharing my home, you would be happy, at least I would use every exertion to make you so. But when I think of asking the bright and beautiful being I love to be the bride of a man many years older than herself, I confess I tremble for the result; yet," he added, after a moment's pause, "after all that has passed between us, I do not know that I have any reason to fear."

As he spoke, Eva's soft lashes fell, until they swept the down from her cheek; her hand trembled in that of Judge Woodward, and her bosom heaved. Attributing her emotion to mere timidity he smiled, and looking at his watch, spoke of an engagement, and rising rather abruptly, took his leave.

A strange joy, a mingling of hope and gladness, lit up the features of the young girl, as she walked to the window. She stood there with her hands clasped, gazing after the form of Judge Woodward, until she saw him pause before the stately building which claimed old Mr. Fulton as its lord and master, and the fair Florence as an inmate. She then turned away, while a slight shade fell over her before bright face.

CHAPTER IX.

VISITORS.

“MY dear Florence,” said little Mrs. Moreton, running unannounced into the boudoir of Florence with the freedom of an intimate friend, “you will join us in a pleasure party to-morrow, will you not? It was made up very suddenly. We wish to take advantage of this lovely weather. We are going to Gov. Vernon’s country seat—beautiful place—bowers, and fountains, and statues, and all that, and we will have such a delightful boat-ride on the Hudson. It is just two hours ride from the city. Mr. St. Julian has a beautiful yacht, which he places at our disposal, and we will return by moonlight.”

“There is no necessity for your looking so entreatingly at me,” laughed Florence. “You know you may always count on me in any thing which promises amusement. But we are to go to Gov. Vernon’s. I should prefer the party being somewhere else.”

“Oh! because you think you will be persecuted all day long by Harry Vernon; but, my dear Florence, it would be the same case any where, and permit me to say,” and Mrs. Moreton looked keenly into her friend’s face, “I think it extremely strange, that he should thus persevere in his attentions, unless he receives some encouragement.”

“Ah! Mrs. Moreton”——

“Don’t call me Mrs. Moreton—if I am married, I am nothing but a girl—call me Angele.”

“Well then, Angele, I—I—oh! don’t talk to me about Harry Vernon. Why spoil your agreeable visit by dwelling on such a disagreeable subject?”

"A very good turn off to my insinuation which you could not answer. Ah! coquetry, coquetry," cried the little woman, shaking her head and trying very hard to look grave.

"But you have not told me who is to be of the party to-morrow," said Florence, anxious to change the subject.

"Only a few of our set. Let's see, there is Mr. St. Julian of course, we couldn't do without him—what are you blushing about? The Vernons, Harry and Ella; Judge Woodward too has promised to join us if he can find leisure; the Plumdales, Lieut. Minton, and I believe that is all, with the exception of Moreton, myself, you and Eva;" replied Mrs. Moreton, heaping ladies and gentlemen all together, just as they occurred to her, without any regard to precedence or propriety. "Oh no! I forgot Miss Virginia Smith," with a merry laugh as she pronounced her name, "has promised to grace the occasion with her presence."

"Miss Smith!" echoed Florence. "Of all people on the earth she is the most disagreeable to me. I heard she was to have her portrait done by this new artist, who flatters people, Harry Vernon says, until they don't know themselves. I could scarcely forbear recommending her to have hers taken with finger extended—representing the finger of scorn, you know—pointing at some poor wretch, and a label extending from her mouth, pronouncing a malicious tale on the miserable offender, so that her friends, or rather her foes (the latter class being much the most numerous) may recognize it."

"A good idea, 'pon my word," laughed Mrs. Moreton. "I can't bear the idea of having her in our otherwise delightful party; but I am compelled to do so. I am her debtor for several invitations already, and she gives elegant *soirées*, and has such nice people at them, that really one can't afford to slight her. What a *bijou* of a room you have, Flory. Who sent you this bouquet? Beautiful bouquet!"

"That is a secret," replied Florence, smiling. "A very charming person though, I assure you."

"Oh! I can find out; here is the card on the table; permit me," and she read, "With Mr. St. Julian's compliments." "Mr. St. Julian," repeated the little woman, with an air of surprise, and an instant after a smile of peculiar meaning—unobserved, however, by Florence—flitted over her face; it seemed to be the sort of smile that would illumine

the features of one who had just lighted on a prize of some description; quick as light it faded away, and glancing at the clock on the mantel—"Bless me, how late it is, and I have a round of visits to pay. Flory, my dear, you are looking lovely. How becoming that morning dress is! you ought to see my new one—delicate lilac. Madame Montard says it is *thé* morning dress of the season. *Au revoir*, dear;" and thus rattling on without pausing for reply, she at last rattled herself off.

The boudoir of Florence, if such her favorite reception room might be called, was indeed, as Mrs. Moreton expressed it, a perfect *bijou*. The tall French windows were slightly open, to admit the balmy breeze, which wandered in laden with the fragrance of hot-house exotics, and bringing to the ear the music of the fountain, plashing merrily without in the autumnal sunshine. These windows were draped by light curtains of crimson silk, over lace of the finest texture. The carpet was soft as velvet, and fairy-like in its fresh and delicate hues—bright buds and blossoms on a ground of white, producing almost the effect of a fine painting. The chairs, sofas, etc., were of crimson and gold, and her favorite *fauteuil* was a model of luxurious softness and ease, seeming as if made to receive in its downy embrace, just such a goddess as she who now occupied it. A small but finely executed group of statuary, occupied a niche in one corner. A few fine paintings adorned the walls (save on one side, which was filled by a splendid mirror), and between these were little stands projecting, each supporting a vase burdened with beautiful flowers, supplied from the conservatory, where she had a small, but rare collection, and arranged by her own fair hands. The marble mantel was adorned at either end by statuettes exquisitely wrought in alabaster, and in the centre stood a *petite* French clock, of the finest workmanship. Books and musical instruments crowned the decorations of the room. It was differently arranged from boudoirs in general; but that very difference spoke much of the characteristics of the occupant. One might see, at a glance, that the presiding divinity of the temple was not simply a woman of fashion, but of soul and intellect;—too much for the narrow orbit in which she moved. Suspended above the little French clock, and where, by raising her eyes,

her glance could be thrown immediately upon it, was a small portrait by one of our finest artists, of one of the first writers of our day. Next in her heart to her early love-dream, dating its birth from the time when her young soul first woke to the power and glory of Mind, was her enthusiastic admiration of this author. She perused his works with the most impassioned avidity;—every word, every sentence, awaking with the magic of the enchanter's wand—with the power of a master, but yet a kindred spirit—the echo of her deepest feelings; until her enthusiasm for his works grew into an ideal, but intense admiration of *him*, whose thoughts were to her as love-fraught messengers of inspiration. It was not love,—not love for one, the accents of whose voice even she had never heard;—it was a sort of mystical adoration of spirit, a deep heart-filling intensity of Platonic soul-worship for one known, and yet unknown, *felt*, though unseen.

It was not a very young, though handsome face, that of the portrait; but it was the *wondrous soul* within, with which Florence communed, when, with clasped hands and upraised glance, the world of poetry in her own nature welling up from her soul to her lip, and beaming from her lustrous eyes, she gazed upon it. Perhaps it was a feeling more akin to the higher, holier nature of love, than the enchantment which the fascination of Claude St. Julian wove in fatal meshes around the heart of the impulsive girl. It matters not by what means she obtained this portrait; from the distinction of the name it excited no surprise. Not that she would have cared if it had, for she was peculiar for a haughty independence of the opinions of others, (by the way a dangerous quality for a woman to possess, and one which must have been implanted by circumstances, in a disposition naturally all womanly softness,) and never concealed her passionate admiration for the author in question. Some one suggested that were she to make her admiration known, it would not fail to be returned toward one so beautiful and gifted. "No," replied Florence, with such sad earnestness, it made her listener smile, "I shall probably never meet him; but I will not deny that I think, to be loved, if but for one hour, by a soul like his, would be worth a woman's whole existence."

But her gaze was not directed to the portrait, as she threw herself back in her *fauteuil*, and abandoned herself to

revery after Mr. Moreton's departure; it rested on the exquisite bouquet of flowers, blooming in a silver goblet on the little inlaid ebony table beside her, while her rosy lips murmured softly, "I wonder if he will come; he promised last night at the opera to do so."

The words had scarcely escaped her lips, when "Mr. St. Julian" was announced.

When Mrs. De Vere Moreton left Florence she met Claude coming up the steps. A gay salutation passed between them.

"What a funny man Mr. St. Julian is," thought the little woman, as she threw herself back in her carriage. "Visiting girls just as if he was an unmarried man. Well, thank heaven, whatever may be Moreton's faults, he does not run after every belle and beauty of the day, as some of these married men do—Mr. St. Julian, for example. However, I dare say, if he would, I should care more about him. There is nothing that provokes a woman into love like a little spirit of rivalry."



CHAPTER X.

"Oh! as the bee upon the flower, I hang
Upon the honey of thy eloquent tongue."

BULWER.

A rare and winning grace
Of word and look were his.

"I SEE you have not forgotten the book you promised," said Florence, taking from the hand of Claude a splendid copy of Tasso's "*Gerusalemme Liberata*."

"No," was the reply; "though the immediate occasion of my intrusion this morning, is to know if you will do me the honor to join the pleasure excursion in my yacht tomorrow?"

"With pleasure; I have already promised Mrs. Moreton."

"A thousand thanks. It will indeed be a day of pleasure to me." And he fixed upon her his dark eyes, those eyes which had in their lightest glance more than the fascination of a serpent, with a look which brought the blood to her cheek. A few more words of desultory conversation, and Claude turned to the bouquet on the table. "I see you are cherishing my flowers; how grateful I am."

"I don't deserve your gratitude; I prize those for the gift, 'tis true, but I am so devoted to flowers that I always cherish them, no matter how profuse. I am sure I would make the world a garden of roses, if I could."

"May it never prove otherwise than a path strewn with flowers to you," said Claude in a low tone, gazing with irrepressible admiration on the fair, bright being before him. The tone and expression were not to be mistaken for flattery, yet Florence replied, "I don't like flattery, Mr. St. Julian, I am weary of it, believe me; and I think," she added with a charming smile, and the most winning frankness, "we are destined to be very good friends, if you will only promise to be sincere."

"With the greatest pleasure, provided you will promise not to mistake truth for flattery. But to change the subject, you seem southern in your tastes; there is something which breathes to me of the 'sunny south,' in the very atmosphere of this room. You look, too, like an Italian. You ought to visit Italy, you would like it so much."

"Oh! yes," replied Florence, all the enthusiasm of her nature kindling at the thought. "Italy is my mother-land, and the land of my dreams. You are just from there, Mr. St. Julian. Do tell me about it; it is the most agreeable topic you could select."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," replied her companion, who was well aware before that the mother of Florence was an Italian (having heard the romantic history of her parentage), and had touched upon this topic with the magic of the enchanter, because he knew it was calculated to interest and awaken the dormant enthusiasm, which he saw at a glance she possessed. "I dislike to speak of my admiration of that enchanting land—in fact, my enthusiastic preference for it—to most persons, because such things are often regarded as affectation in a travelled man, and I do not wish thus to 'teach the world that I have swum in a gondola;' but I assure you, since returning to this land of prosaic realities, of modern progress, and invention, I often recur longingly to the voluptuous ease, and glowing beauties of the land of love and story. Often when indulging in revery, I shut my eyes, and try to imagine myself there again, beneath its moonlit skies; feeling its balmy breezes, and drinking into my inmost being the inspiration of its loveliness."

“And then,” said Florence, “its glorious works of art; what food for sublime thought must a poetic mind drink in from these.”

“Yes. I never expect to taste such rapture, that is, rapture so intellectual in its nature, as I have felt in gazing on the old classic ruins of Italy; monuments of the golden age of the past, breathing as they do of poetry, oratory and wisdom. What I have said of the classic ruins is peculiarly true of Rome; but Venice—you would like Venice, with her gondolas, and the songs of the rowers floating over moonlit waters. To a young romantic heart, this is indeed a scene of enchantment.”

“Oh, thus!” said Florence with flashing eyes, “have I pictured Italy a thousand times. And its society?”

“I like that, too. There are defects of government and religion, but with these the stranger need not meddle. There you find more freedom in society than here. There are not so many of those odious trammels which fetter those who long to wander from the beaten track, to gather stray flowers by the wayside, and embody in the real world the creations of the passionate soul. Love teaches the heart its faith, and needs no mummerly of words, to hallow the bright dream which is born of heaven, and is itself a heaven while it lasts. There is no tie there which can fetter the soul, while the pulse bounds, and the heart maddens for freedom.” He paused, fearing he had said too much in the excitement of the moment, and that Florence might be shocked by the but half-veiled meaning of his words. But if she was, she did not allow him to perceive it, though she changed the conversation, somewhat, by saying:

“I shall visit Italy, whenever I can find an agreeable party to join me.”

“An agreeable companion why not say?” said Claude, smiling. “When you go you will probably be accompanied by the chosen of your heart, whoever that fortunate being may be.”

Some feeling she could scarcely define brought a vivid flush to the cheek of Florence as he thus spoke. Was that flush prophetic? Claude continued: “A bridal tour to Europe is just the thing nowadays; and pleasant as it is to roam through Italy’s poet-famed scenes alone, I need not tell

you how much that charm is enhanced, when our wanderings are shared by one we love."

"Did you ever experience that pleasure?" asked Florence earnestly, though smilingly.

"No; though I have often pictured the enjoyment this would afford me, and longed in my inmost soul to realize the vision—this pleasure I fear will never be mine. There are few," he added, "who would sympathize with the emotions I experience in such scenes. It is rarely I meet with one to whom I can unveil my thoughts, and feel assured of sympathy, as in the present instance," and he bowed.

"Sympathy!" exclaimed Florence passionately, drawn out already by a power she could not resist to the revulsion of hidden sentiments and feelings; thus placing at once in the hands of Claude the master key to her character—" 'Tis seldom the heart finds sympathy. If, by chance, its holiest emotions rise to the lip, what is the answer? A cold stare or a sarcastic sneer. But I must not get on this subject, or I shall say too much," she added, checking herself.

"And I shall listen with such pleasure that I shall overstep all the bounds of etiquette in the length of my visit," said Claude, with a slight smile and a mocking emphasis on the last words, and rising at the same time. "And now instead of the cold 'good morning,' let me say that sweet old word good-by."

"How fascinating he is!" thought Florence as the door closed upon him. "There is something about him so superior to the *mass*—" and her lip curled. "There is so much congeniality too in our sentiments. Ah! I have met at last the embodiment of my beautiful ideal, but perhaps after all he is not for me, and I ought not to think of him." Alas! slight were the efforts she made to resist the spell which was fast weaving itself around her senses. How could she dash the foaming goblet from the lip, which had so longed for its sparkling draught? She did not seek to do so; her only thought was to revel in the delicious dream while it lasted, no matter what the future might bring forth.

CHAPTER XI.

“ YOUNG AMERICA ” IS CONFIDENTIAL.

An unwonted softness, and depth of feeling, comes o'er me when I think of thee, and I could weep at my own falsehood. Do I love *thee* yet,—and is all beside a dream which I will wake from to curse?

JOURNAL OF THOUGHTS.

“ By Jove ! ” thought Claude as he wended his way through the crowded throng of Broadway, “ La belle Fulton is a splendid woman ! What an eye she has ! how it kindles, flashes, melts, softens, with her feelings ! And what lips ! I engrossed too much of the conversation this morning, for I wanted to hear her talk ; but I could have talked all day just for the pleasure of watching her expressive face. She is very romantic ; but I like that in a woman. Heaven save me from those dull, commonplace women, or your soulless fine ladies ! I really believe ‘ la belle ’ and I will get up a flirtation, if we don’t take care. Well, I for one have no objection. But after all, it would be a pity ; she is all soul, and if she loved at all, would love to distraction ; and if she *were* to be so unfortunate as to (quite unconsciously to herself) glide into love for me—what then ? I am not a villain. But, good heavens ! what a fool I am making of myself—thinking of love in such a connection. I, a married man, and she—the greatest coquette in New York. Love ! pshaw ! when did I have a serious thought about love before ? Though I have whispered its pretty nothings in the ear of the high Spanish donna, the dark, passion-eyed Italian, the coquettish, sparkling, brain-turning nymphs of France, and, yes—softly breathed its burning vows to the coy ear of many a fair damsel of our own staid *Republic* : I loved none of them all. Did I ever love poor Marion ? I thought I did when I stood on the little moonlit porch of her mother’s cottage ‘ six years ago,’ and made her promise to give up all beside for me. Had she refused my request, or rather my order—for I was an imperious boy then—I should have left her for ever, but she wouldn’t let me go. Better if she had. Poor Marion ! but why the devil should I pity her ?—I don’t believe she cares for me,—it is very evident in fact from her conduct. Some women marry just because it is the custom

to do so. Well, Bob Gratton, my good chum, was right after all——”

“Health, wealth, women, and wine,” cried Henry Vernon, overtaking Claude, and slapping him on the shoulder. “A good motto that, my boy. Let’s go in at Delmonico’s for lunch.”

“Very well. I am glad you overtook me, Hal; I was on my way home, but however——”

“Home, the deuce! jolly good fellows, like you, have no business at home. They owe it to the world to be rambling at large, for the benefit of any poor wretch that is so dull he can’t amuse himself, and requires an agreeable companion to do it for him—and that is just my case now.”

“By the way,” said Claude, as they seated themselves over a lunch served up in Delmonico’s best style, “you are of our party to-morrow?”

“If La belle Fulton will allow me to be her cavalier on the occasion. If her ladyship happens to be in one of her fits of caprice, she will refuse. That woman treats me too badly; I don’t believe there is another boy in town that would stand it.”

“You astonish me; I didn’t think you were the sort of fellow to let any girl trifle with you,” said Claude—his curiosity somewhat aroused—assuming a serious tone.

“Well, I don’t believe there is another girl under the sun that could do it, but she has such a way with her. I would marry that woman if I could, and she is the only being under heaven that could induce me to commit such an act of folly.”

“Don’t turn Benedick, Hal, for heaven’s sake. If you do, I promise you’ll repent it. Matrimony has spoiled more fine fellows than any thing else under the sun.”

“Yes, you are an example of it,” replied Hal, coolly; cramming his mouth full of cold chicken, and speaking at intervals. “If such are your sentiments, why the devil did you run your head into the noose, before you had time to taste the blessings of freedom?—though you taste them pretty extensively as it is, I think.”

“No more of that an thou lovest me, Hal. Spare me.”

“But, Vernon, tell me something more of your affair with the Fulton. I feel interested in your success, my dear boy,” said Claude, as they emerged from Delmonico’s.

“Well, my friend, as ‘I do affect thee dearly,’ I will even ‘cleanse my bosom of its perilous stuff.’ The fact is simply this. At one time she is as cold as an iceberg, and the next she treats me in such a way as to elevate me—as Fitz Friske says—to the seventh heaven of felicity. Now I should like to know how I am to act under such circumstances. I am inclined sometimes just to throw up the cards and quit.”

“I should advise you to do so, Hal,” said Claude, gravely; “no woman never acts in that way, unless it is from downright coquetry.”

“Were I convinced of that, you may rest assured I should not sail under her flag much longer. But you do not know how I love that woman. Ties I deemed the most sacred have been sacrificed to her. The star of my boyish dream, which has ever beamed the same—lone, bright, and true; the worshipped star from which I never thought to wander—has lost its radiance before the splendor of her beauty. Call you not this love? Or tell me, St. Julian, is it only a passion-dream, fond, but fleeting? After all,” he continued musingly, in a tone of deep feeling, and with an expression so at variance with his usual nonchalance, that Claude gazed at him in surprise, “may not the senses be led astray, and the soul forget honor, and all beside, in the intoxication of a false delirium, to find too late, that the holiest impulses of the heart cling to the deserted shrine of its first worship?”

“First love,” replied Claude, as his thoughts recurred to the fading dream of his own youth, “is an idle dream, cherished only while the romance of passion, and imagination, lingers around it, and unable to withstand the commonplace realities of life.”

“No,” replied the other, with an enthusiasm which showed that noble feelings slumbered beneath the reckless surface, “the heart may have many dreams, it can have but one true love. Let that come when it will, when the purity of our virgin truth is as yet unsullied, or when the heart turns, wearied with its own fickleness, from many a shrine where it has ‘bent the knee and breathed the vow,’ to seek some purer fountain at which to quench the unsatisfied soul-thirst, still that is the *first*, because it is the only real love. Time is the nurse of true Love, but the source of its life is Eternity.”

“Strange doctrine for you, Hal,” said Claude, touched in spite of himself by the earnestness of his usually careless companion. “My own heart has often and sadly whispered that your theory must be the only true one. But we are growing sentimental.”

“Yes, and I am forgetting the sage maxim, that ‘words were given to conceal our thoughts,’” rejoined Harry, dropping his tone of feeling, as if ashamed of having indulged in it, and resuming his usual expression. “By the way, I promised Arthur Plumdale I would call and see his sisters this morning. He said they were quite lonely—having just parted with a friend who has been spending some time with them—and would be glad to see me. *Entre nous*, from the scarcity of food and fuel in that quarter, I suspect they were glad to get rid of their ‘friend.’”

“Do you affect the divine Augusta?”

“No, I like little Lettie better. She is not out yet, and never receives visits from any gentleman except myself—Arthur says—meaning, I suppose, that I should appreciate the compliment.”

“Young Plumdale (not very young either by the way) is a particular friend of yours?”

“Why yes, what do you think of him?”

“I can’t say I admire him particularly, but as your friend I ought not to——”

“Oh! that makes no difference. If I like a man, the condemnation of the whole world will not alter my estimation of him. Plum is a good fellow, and a deuced smart one—he can see about as far ahead as any man I ever saw, and, I verily believe, loves me like a brother. He is a little inclined to be ‘spongy’ sometimes, but he can’t help that, poor fellow. It is owing to his circumstances—but here we are at the Irving. Come in, and see how you like my rooms.”

“How the inner life mocks at the outer.” Even as I write these careless lines, I feel as if the spell of Death was upon me; I seem to hear his stealthy footsteps in the dark distance, slowly but surely coming. It struggles in my veins—that dread Power of annihilation—with the warm bounding lifeblood of youth. Which shall triumph? Is this death shadow a dream, or a reality? I gaze on the Autumn leaves as on a scroll which memory lays open before me;

telling of bright flowers dead in the pathway of life, as of Nature; of bright hopes dying even as these leaves, in a heart too early doomed to taste the bitter fruits of an irrevocable Destiny. The breeze wailing through the forest oaks, whispers—"passing away! all earthly things are passing away;" and *I*, loneliest of all earth's lonely children, why should I stay? A stray waif on life's wild waters; a single blossom on a leafless tree; clinging dependent, helpless, with naught to rest upon, not even the hope of a "better land." (Can there be a "better land" for those predoomed even on earth to suffering?) My whole soul goes out in the one wild prayer, Sympathy! Sympathy!—where is it to be found? The world courts our society; it woos our smiles; while we minister to its pleasures, while the gay laugh is on our lip, the light word on our tongue, it is willing to share our gayety—for gayety ever throws an atmosphere of warmth and sunshine around it—but the bitter tear, the agonizing moan, bursting from the surcharged heart, and overwrought spirit, *these* must be suffered alone.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLEASURE EXCURSION.

And.—"This is to be a day of pleasure."

Iro.—"Yes, but more than pleasure may come of it."

OLD PLAY.

"For love is oft a fatal spell,
That sweetly soothes but to betray."

J. MALCOLM.

BULWER says—and who should be taken for authority if he is not?—that "every thing relating to the author illustrates the book." This is the only apology I have to offer for the egotism displayed in the conclusion of the last chapter.

Gayly the beautiful Sea-bird flew over the sunny waters of the Hudson, bearing its precious freight of youth, beauty, and gladness. The weather had been balmy for a week; one of those spells which come only with autumn's changing beauty; so soft, so mysterious in their loveliness, that they fill the soul with rapturous dreams; not the less sweet be-

cause they are sometimes tinged with melancholy. Our gay party of pleasure were grouped on the deck of the yacht, apparently to enjoy the gentle breeze and admire the sublimity of the prospect, which stretches far as the eye can reach on the shores of this magnificent river;—though there were perhaps few who were not engrossed by their own thoughts, rather than the wooing loveliness of Nature. St. Julian was in high spirits; every body pronounced his yacht a perfect *bijou* of its kind; and there was no quiet pale-face there, with its sad looks, to mar his enjoyment, or check the gay badinage, light repartee, and sparkling conversation, which made him the life of the company. The most versatile of human beings, at one moment he was all gayety, and the next—if the occasion demanded it—some beautiful sentiment pronounced with thrilling pathos, would tremble on his lip; and through all seemed to breathe the soul of feeling, which was the great secret of his fascination. There was nothing which seemed put on for effect; even things which would have seemed *bizarre* in other men, in him took the charming hues of novelty, joined to that bewitching grace which is so rare a gift. Just now little Mrs. Moreton had seized upon him, to carry her round and show her the appointments of the yacht, upon each of which she pronounced with the air of a connoisseur, much to the amusement of her companion. In the mean time, he cast longing glances towards the spot where, apart from the rest of the party, stood Florence Fulton and Harry Vernon. They were both silent, and one might have imagined their thoughts engrossed by some very serious topic; but Harry was only thinking what a devilish fine thing it was to have a yacht at one's command, and wondering if he could screw "the governor" out of "small change" enough to purchase one; while Florence was watching the dancing waves, and the graceful movements of the Sea-bird as it flew over the waters, while her ear drank in the inspiring strains of the fine band which had accompanied them from the city. To her it was a scene fraught with enchantment. The remainder of the party seemed to be enjoying themselves, each lady with her respective cavalier. Augusta Plumdale, a fashionably dressed, elegant looking girl, was amusing herself at the expense of Mr. Fitz Friske, while affecting to be absorbed in admiration of the pompous little exquisite. Arthur Plum-

dale was playing the agreeable to the best of his ability, to Ella Vernon—a fair dignified looking girl, the exact opposite of her brother—but though generally successful, his efforts seemed not so much appreciated as they might have been in the present instance. In fact, Miss Vernon by no means shared her brother's good opinion of Plumdale, and this that gentleman had discernment enough to see; but still—on the present occasion—he was quite assiduous in his attentions. Lettie Plumdale, a gay pretty romp,—said to be just sixteen—whom her brother had “begged off from her mother for a day's frolic,” was chattering away to Lieut. Minton, who, if we might judge from the glances occasionally passing between himself and Ella Vernon, would have been better pleased with a different arrangement of affairs. Lastly came Miss Virginia Smith, a tall, thin young lady, of an uncertain age; bearing few marks of beauty, and so flounced and furbelowed, that it really took one's breath away to look at her. Miss Smith might once have had a sweet expression of countenance, but the “disappointments of life” had left legible traces on her features—and the expression now reigning there, was one in which pride, envy, and discontent struggled through the assumed gayety with which she sought to veil them. This interesting specimen of the softer sex, found herself—for want of another cavalier—*en tête-à-tête* with Mr. Moreton, who seemed as little pleased as his fair friend with the arrangement, and on that account took a malicious pleasure in choosing the subjects of conversation he knew would be least agreeable to her—namely, the charms of younger and fairer women, and the folly of women who were *passé* seeking the admiration they had lost with their youth; while Miss Smith turned the conversation adroitly, and descanted, in her turn, on the follies of the age, and her horror of dissipated men—particularly gamblers. Of course neither had the most remote allusion to the other;—they were too well bred for innuendo.

At length the splendid country-seat of Gov. Vernon appeared in sight, with its beautiful grounds and wide expanse of vale, hill, and forest. The grand old mansion, its marble pillars and porticoes gleaming in the sunlight, stood on an eminence crowning the whole. The Vernons boasted that this place had been in their family for several generations, an un-

usual thing in this country. When the Sea-bird was safely moored at the landing of Vernon Place, the party found carriages awaiting them; but as the distance was short to the mansion, many preferred walking, and among these were Florence and Harry Vernon. Bounding on before with the elasticity and gladness of children, they were soon far in advance of their companions.

"Let us turn into this path," said Florence, as they came suddenly upon one diverging from the road. It was a beautiful, secluded lane, apparently not much travelled—for the grass grew green and fresh, except in the centre—bordered by a hedge of cedar. "Oh! do let us take this path, it is so sweet, so quiet; and I can see, farther on, that it turns into another leading to Vernon House."

Her companion stammered out an objection; but she insisted, and, as a matter of course, carried her point. Suddenly a turn in the lane brought them in sight of one of the prettiest of cottages, built in the Gothic style, and half hidden in embowering vines. Quantities of perpetual roses bloomed within the tasteful inclosure, in all that rare luxuriance of leaf and flower, peculiar to them in early autumn. The Venetian blinds were closed except at one solitary window, and nought was heard save the clear, thrilling note of a canary, chirping and rejoicing in the bright sunlight streaming into his cage, which was suspended outside of the window. Over this sweet, quiet scene, the autumn sunlight lingered warm and lovingly. Florence burst into an exclamation of delight as she paused to admire its loveliness.

Suddenly a female figure appeared at the open window. Her dress was slightly disordered, and her thick brown tresses but negligently confined. She was pale and fragile too, but as Florence looked at the fair face with its large, soft brown eyes, beautifully moulded features, and the graceful outline of the perfect, though *petite* figure, she was struck by her beauty, but more by an indescribable air, or expression, which interested the beholder even in that passing glance. She looked very young, almost childlike in form and feature; but there was something of premature thought and sadness on the brow, which seemed to say that life's mysteries, too early read, had already brought her in their store of patient sorrow. In her arms she held a beautiful boy apparently about two years old,

in whose flashing black eyes and fearless expression, Florence recognized such a striking resemblance to the young man beside her, that it startled her. She looked again at the mother; her eyes were fixed on Harry Vernon, and never did Florence forget that look; there was so much of sadness, and tenderness struggling through it. Vernon saw that Florence was startled; his brow crimsoned, and he quickened his pace, saying they must walk faster or they would not overtake their party. At this moment the child in the cottage window for the first time saw, and recognized him, and shouted with glee, as the mother hastily disappeared with him from the window. The lips of Florence were sealed as far as asking questions were concerned; but she could not suppress the feeling of interest awakened in the beautiful secluded cottage, and its lovely habitants.

"Can it be some poor girl whom Hal Vernon has deceived," thought she, "so fair, so refined-looking, so evidently a lady? How shocking that there should be such things as wrong and deception in the world!"

They had walked on for some distance without speaking, and the silence commenced to be embarrassing.

"You wear a shadow on your brow, Mr. Vernon," said Florence at last, scarce knowing what she said, only anxious to break the pause.

"Yes," he replied, in a low tone of sadness, "and I wear a shadow on my soul, too, which I fear will never disappear. But," changing his tone, "here we are at the entrance of the avenue, and see, they are waiting for us."

They were gayly rallied for choosing such a secluded walk, and lingering so long. Florence drew up her haughty head, curled her pretty lip, and glanced at Claude. The next moment he was by her side.

Gov. Vernon came forward to receive his guests. He was a fine dignified specimen of the gentleman of the old school, urbane in manner, and polished in address. The grand old saloon was thrown open for dancing; an elegant collation spread under the trees on the lawn; and those who preferred the beauties of nature to the worship of the fleet-winged nymph, were at liberty to wander over the beautiful grounds. After the party had refreshed themselves with some wine, St. Julian proposed a stroll on the lawn, to which, however, no one assented but Florence.

"Any body may go who pleases," said Mrs. Moreton, who seemed to constitute herself mistress of ceremonies, "but I prefer dancing. I never did fancy green fields, ducks, geese, and such like rural sights." The gentlemen of the party, with the exception of course of him who had proposed the walk, surrounded Florence, entreating her not to forsake the dance, but in vain; she took the offered arm of Claude. Harry Vernon rose to join them.

"Come back, Mr. Vernon, we want you in the dance," cried Mrs. Moreton. "Besides, don't you know where there are three in company, one is always *de trop*?"

Harry thought he detected a little playful malice in her tone, but as no answer rose to his lip, he obeyed in silence.

And Claude and Florence were alone—alone with the fair blue sky, and nature in her brilliant autumnal loveliness around them; the soft breeze, wafting the inspiring strains from the band, like fairy music to their ear. A bower at the foot of the lawn terminated their stroll. The silver stream of the Hudson flowed broad and bright before them, and in the dim distance, far and blue, stretched many a mountain height, and many a vale and hill crowned by the magnificent forests of the New World, and glowing with the varied beauty of the season—and over all, lighting up the splendid picture with a dreamy magic effect, smiled the soft hazy sunlight. For a time Florence and her companion were silent; both were enthusiastic lovers of the beautiful, and both felt that the scene could be most eloquently enjoyed in silence.

At length Claude broke the pause, and as he uttered sentiment after sentiment with that glowing earnestness which is so sure of effect, because it seems to flow so warmly from the heart, and Florence responded, both felt that congeniality of thought and emotion, that eager interest in the other, we are all conscious of, with those whom fate, or perhaps we should rather say our own will, has destined us to love. An hour passed unheeded. St. Julian forgot, in that hour, all save the bewitching woman before him, who exerted her utmost fascinations to charm; he saw only the beautiful mesmeric eyes, beaming with such soul-speaking glances upon him, heard only the music of that thrilling voice, as its murmurs fell wooingly on his ear. He spoke of the never for-

gotten hour when he had preserved her life, and as he dwelt upon it, the eloquent looks of gratitude he received, filled his soul with passionate delight. Take heed, Florence! You have woven fetters for many a heart, but never did you weave a snare so fatal; never was your own heart, all that is best and dearest in woman, so fearfully interested in the issue, as in this.

They found on their return the party assembled on the lawn to partake of refreshments.

"Well I declare," said Mrs. Moreton in a low tone, turning to Miss Smith—who was endeavoring to sweeten her vinegar aspect, and give more fire to her glances, by a glass of that most delicious of cordials facetiously named, by the connoisseurs in such things, *parfait amour*—"Florence Fulton certainly deserves her reputation as a coquette. Just look how she is flirting with St. Julian."

"Yes," sneered the maid of the sour countenance, "if Mr. St. Julian was not a married man, I should certainly pronounce them in love with each other."

"Who is that in love now?" said Harry Vernon, coming up with both hands full of refreshments. "That is always the favorite topic with ladies, especially the unmarried ones," glancing mischievously at Miss Smith, who bridled up, and repeated with malicious emphasis her remarks. The blood mounted to Vernon's brow.

"I don't think you ought to speak of Miss Fulton in that way in connection with St. Julian, and more than that, it is not so," he said quickly, and with his usual brusque independence. "Miss Fulton flirting with a married man!" he repeated indignantly.

"La! just listen to Mr. Vernon," cried Mrs. Moreton; "as if married men never flirted. I am sure I see no harm in it. Moreton is at liberty to flirt all the time if he pleases. I wouldn't care."

"I am aware of that," said her complaisant helpmate, "and that is the reason I never indulge. If I thought it would worry you I would set about it instantly. Here is Miss Smith, who, I have no doubt, would second me in the laudable project."

This was carrying the war into the enemy's country. Miss Smith bridled up a second time, and looked more in-

dignant than ever, her countenance expressing all the scorn of offended prudery; while Harry Vernon, who stood behind her, drew his face into such comical contortions, that Mrs. Moreton could not forbear laughing, though she turned it off by saying in reply to her liege lord's remark:

"That shows what an amiable husband you are. You see, Miss Smith, what you will have to expect when you enter the holy state."

Judge Woodward, who was standing near with Eva Moreton, overheard the remarks on Florence, and a slight frown contracted his brow; but as he glanced involuntarily in the direction where she stood, a deeper, sadder shade followed it, which did not leave his face all day. Eva, who a moment before was laughing and talking gayly, looked up and caught that look of sadness, and her own face in a moment lost its gay expression, like a lake which mirrors every cloud in the heaven above it. As soon as the repast was over, Judge Woodward approached Florence, and requested a promenade with her during the day; as he wished to say a few words intended for her ear alone.

Florence "did not know; she had promised to dance awhile; after that perhaps—" Judge Woodward bowed gravely. "Enough—I see it is not agreeable to Miss Fulton." She was about to assert the contrary, but ere she could do so, he returned to Eva Moreton's side.

It might have saved Florence much, had she complied with his request. He intended to tell her frankly the remarks he had heard, so as to put her on her guard against what he chose to believe her blameless thoughtlessness, in permitting Mr. St. Julian's somewhat marked attentions. She would have thus been made aware that the divinity was the property of another lady, a fact of which she was yet ignorant—for as every body took it for granted she knew it, no one volunteered the information, and as for hearing poor Marion's name—pooh! she was scarcely even thought of.

Repulsed in this first attempt, Judge Woodward made no farther efforts; but he lingered on the lawn with Eva, when the others returned to the house, in low earnest converse. What was it in his words which blanched the cheek of the young girl, and caused her to tremble so she could scarcely stand? Her companion did not notice her agitation, and it

was evident she did not wish him to do so; for by a strong effort she recovered herself, and replied in low steady tones to his remarks, and walked slowly but firmly to the house. When they entered the saloon several couples were on the floor waltzing; among them Claude and Florence. Never had Florence seemed in gayer, more brilliant spirits, than on that memorable day. Her eyes beamed with the light of hope—and alas! of a deeper feeling, and her cheek burned with the rose flush of excitement.

How far different was it with Eva, as she forced herself to look gay and mingle in the quadrilles! (she never waltzed;) how wildly, deeply sad, was the young heart that throbbed in her bosom!

In the course of the afternoon, Florence found herself again in the bower which had been the scene of her *tête à tête* with Claude, but this time Harry Vernon was by her side. We fear our readers, before going much farther, will agree with the world in pronouncing her a coquette; nor can we, in the case of young Vernon, wholly absolve her from the charge.

Having at first rather a fancy for him—for his nonchalant independence pleased one whose passion was novelty—she had encouraged his attentions, lavishing smiles and kind words upon him merely for the sake of the amusement he afforded her; and again, when reflection told her that in justice to him she ought to repulse his advances, treated him with marked coldness.

“Why keep me ever vacillating between doubt and despair? Suffer me to forget your coldness, and to construe your smiles and kind words, as proofs of some answering feeling! Tell me, Florence, tell me at once my fate.”

There was so much feeling expressed in the intense passionate gaze fixed upon her, that she could scarcely repress a sympathetic shrill of emotion. She hesitated to pain, by speaking the truth, and yet she did not wish to give further encouragement. Thus, there was a silence of some moments. At last, she said, slowly and hesitatingly, “I cannot tell you now, but I will ere long; be patient and wait. I am sure,” she added with a smile, “I am not so cruel as to cause you so much anxiety.”

“No, but it has been so long thus. Love cannot live always on dreams and wishes, which may prove fruitless after all.”

“Then wait only a little, a *very* little longer, and you

shall be satisfied. I am not prepared now, I have not tried my own feelings sufficiently,"—she paused suddenly, for on the impulse of the moment she had said more than she intended; more than was actually true; for she left him to infer that her feelings were at least in some degree interested in him. His face lighted up with hope.

"Why wait longer?" he pleaded.

"Because I will it!" she answered rather imperiously, "and if you are not willing to do this, give me up now and for ever."

"Never!" exclaimed her lover, passionately. "And now on what shall love live, Florence; on hope? Fairest, best beloved, say yes!"

Florence made no reply, but large tears swam in her eyes. She thought of her own feelings, and love teaches sympathy for love.

Her head drooped until her long curls swept her lap. Interpreting her silence and apparent emotion favorably, and forgetting himself in the excitement of the moment, Harry passed his arm, though with trembling hesitation, around her waist, and imprinted his first kiss on lips which Beauty had moulded for Love.

'Twas but an instant of bliss, for releasing herself from his embrace she rose haughtily to her feet.

"You forget yourself, Mr. Vernon. Will you have the goodness, for appearance' sake, to return with me to the house? after which you can dispose of yourself, in any way you may think proper."

He murmured a thousand apologies, but the haughty beauty was not so easily appeased, and coldly and silently they returned. As they walked on, Harry thought he heard faint cries, and his own name called in a tone of distress in the direction of the river. After seeing Florence in, he hastened hither.

Lettie Plumdale, the wild romp, tired of dancing, and longing for a run in the fresh air, had lured off Fitz Friske, much against his will, for a ramble. Their peregrinations stopped on the banks of the Hudson, merely, as Fitz Friske afterwards declared, because they could go no farther. He "firmly believed she would have walked to China had there been no obstacle in the way to prevent."

A large apple-tree threw its branches over the beach where the water reached sufficiently to form a sort of marshy sand-bank, but not enough to be dangerous. The apples had been gathered in, save a few, which lingered on the topmost branches of the tree. Lettie espied these, and resolved to have some sport out of Fitz Friske.

"Oh! Mr. Fitz Friske, there are some nice apples, and I am so fond of them. Do climb the tree and get some for me."

"I climb a *twee!*" answered the exquisite, with perfect horror, and looking at Lettie as if he doubted her sanity. "Indeed Miss Lettie, aw, 'pon my soul I couldn't. The exertion is much too great, miss. Climb a *twee!* Howwible! Just imagine *me* climbing a *twee.*"

"Ah! now, Mr. Fitz Friske, that is nothing. In a wild pleasure party like ours, who thinks of ceremony? If Mr. Vernon were here, I know he could do it without any difficulty. But I forget, he is stronger, more active than you."

"Oh, no!" replied the nettled dandy, "'pon my soul, aw, no one is more active than myself, but aw—"

"Well," replied his mischievous companion, "I shall not believe in your activity until you display some of it. Come now, Mr. Fitz Friske, see if you can climb a tree gracefully. I consider it quite an accomplishment." Still Mr. Fitz Friske refused, but made several desperate but ineffectual efforts, by throwing into the tree, to bring down the coveted apples. This, however, by no means satisfied Lettie. She insisted that he should climb the tree, till overcome by her entreaties, the unhappy exquisite prepared to execute the "howwible task," muttering something about "school-girl fweaks!"

Now Lettie knew there was a branch, which, without great care, he could not avoid stepping on, which was so feeble that it must inevitably precipitate him into the sand marsh beneath; and this was exactly what she desired. Presently his foot came in contact with it;—crash! went the branch, but, quicker than he ever did any thing before in his life, Fitz Friske seized another branch and held on for dear life, and there, no available footing being within his reach, he hung suspended in mid air, shrieking with all his might for Harry Vernon, as though all his hopes of deliverance depended upon

the timely succor of that benevolent individual. Lettie was keeping up a chorus of stifled laughter, which she in vain endeavored to convert into frantic shrieks.

At this juncture Harry arrived in sight; he stopped very deliberately, and stood awaiting the crisis, laughing, as poor Fitz thought, in the most unfeeling way. In another instant down went the unfortunate victim, and there he was—he, *Fitz Friske*, the perfection of neatness, the prince of dandies, he, who gloried in a faultless costume, and prided himself on the most exquisite of cravat ties—up to his ears in a mud-puddle.

“Good heavens!” cried Hal, rushing forward as if just awakened to consciousness. “Let me help you out, Fitz. Miss Lettie, you had better return, while I attend to Fitz.”

Lettie returned to the house, where roars of laughter greeted her amusing account of the occurrence; nor did Fitz Friske’s appearance, when he again presented himself to public view, tend to lessen their merriment. He was clad in an old green hunting suit of Harry Vernon’s, a world too large for his pigmy proportions, and much the worse for wear, into which, after many remonstrances, and as many declarations from Harry that they were the best he had, his wardrobe being in town—all of course a fiction invented for the occasion—the unhappy dandy had permitted himself to be incarcerated. Stifling their laughter, the party crowded around him, tendering their condolence in tones of the utmost commiseration; but nothing would soothe his outraged feelings.

By the mellow light of the autumn moon, the yacht glided, like a beautiful spirit of the waters, on her homeward way over the bright Hudson, whose dashing waves glittered in the moonlight like a sea of gems.

The gayety of the party had given way to more subdued feelings, the effect of fatigue, or the hour.

Vernon and Fitz Friske, the only discontented persons, sat aloof from the others in moody silence; the one meditating on his own ludicrous appearance, the other on the morning fracas with Florence.

And Florence! St. Julian was by her side; the moonlight, the scene and the hour, adding to the influence of his presence. True, they said little, but their eyes conversed with a world of passion-fraught eloquence.

The very fact, that his lip never uttered what his eyes dared so fully to express, rendered him doubly fascinating to one whose heart, sated with the excess of homage she had received, required seeming difficulties as a lure to passion.

Alas! even over these happy hours, Destiny, smiling grimly on the future, held her wand of darkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BROKEN DREAM.

" 'Tis ever thus, 'tis ever thus; when hope has built a bower,
Like that of Eden, wreathed about with every thornless flower,
To dwell therein securely—the self-deceiver's trust—
A whirlwind from the desert comes, and all is in the dust."

WHAT were the words breathed by Judge Woodward in the ear of Eva Moreton, which caused the cheek of the young girl to blanch, and her lip to quiver? To explain her emotion we must glance back into her former life. In the seclusion of her mother's home, Eva had but little opportunity of mingling in the society of the other sex. Judge Woodward was almost the only unmarried man she could be said to know well. He had been a ward of her father, and in early life had resided with him. Afterwards, when grown to manhood the orphan boy attained in the stern battle of life competency and distinction, it was always a pleasant thing to return to the sweet cottage home where in childhood he had spent such happy hours. Eva's mother was a woman whom of all others he admired, for the virtue and energy of her character; and he loved, too, to watch the sweet blossom which was unfolding its leaves in the sunlight of a mother's love.

He indeed felt for Eva as an elder brother; watched her progress with the most affectionate interest, and cheered her on in her daily tasks, with such evident anxiety for her progress, that the lonely widow could scarcely be blamed if the hope entered her heart, that in this man, of such sterling worth and distinguished talents, her idolized child might one day find a protector for life; and what more could her maternal heart desire? Insensibly she entertained the hope

until it grew into a belief,—a belief strengthened by many expressions falling from Judge Woodward's own lips. True, he was double her daughter's age, but what of that? He was by no means old, and who could not love him—so lofty, so noble? What could any woman desire more?

Early the young Eva learned to look forward to the visits of her cousin, as the brightest epochs in her quiet life. Cherishing the hope she did, the mother was careful to encourage the growth of first affection in the heart of her child, for she would not have thought of her marrying without love. (She was shockingly old-fashioned in her ideas—don't you think so, reader?)

Woe was it for Eva that the love thus planted grew with her growth, till it became too firmly planted ever to be uprooted. 'Tis true, as Judge Woodward marked the dawning perfections of her he only thought of as a lovely interesting child, the thought of what a jewel the possessor of such a treasure would wear in his heart—of what she might even one day become to him—came over him; but these were in days when his own heart was free. For some time previous to Eva's visit to New York, his visits to Oakwood had been less frequent.

Mrs. Moreton knew enough of the heart of man to know that in the busy career of active life, the most constant sometimes forget. In the absence of *l'objet aimé*, the mind and gradually the heart become filled by scenes and things passing around us. We are almost perforce compelled to think oftener of the present than the absent. Under these impressions Mrs. Moreton resolved to send Eva to New York. She knew that once there, Judge Woodward would be ever by her side, to contribute as much as possible to her enjoyment, and she trusted with a mother's pride, to the attractions of her daughter for the rest. Had Eva known these hidden motives, the probability is, she would have refused to go. With maiden delicacy she would have shrunk from courting the attentions, even of one from whom she had been taught to expect them. Her mother knew enough of the sensitive nature of a young and modest girl, to fear these difficulties, and wisely resolved to say nothing to her daughter on the subject. Mrs. Moreton was by no means, in the general sense of the term, a manœuvring mother, yet in this

case, she managed with a skill and address worthy of the most adroit specimens of that exemplary branch of female talent. Her motives, however, were of the purest nature. She believed that by thus acting she could secure the happiness, not only of her daughter, but of one who, as a man and a kinsman, she admired and loved more than all others.

Agreeably to Mrs. Moreton's anticipations, after Eva's arrival in New York Judge Woodward was all kindness. He seemed to feel himself peculiarly called upon to watch over her. Many persons thought them betrothed; and this prevented Eva from receiving the admiration her beauty and gentle, sweet manners would otherwise have excited; but Judge Woodward always treated these rumors as though they pleased him rather than otherwise. He knew they kept from her side many worthless dangles, whose attentions would really mean nothing; or if they did, it would be harm rather than good to the gentle girl; and he suffered things to go on thus; and Eva lived in the sweet delusion which had been the sunlight of her young years. Little did she dream that the heart of him she loved was preoccupied.

"How malicious are those remarks on Miss Fulton," was his remark to Eva on the occasion of which we have before spoken. "How can persons speak thus of an orphan girl without protection; for old Mr. Fulton is a mere nominal one? Whenever I hear her thus spoken of I feel how much she needs a real protector. Ah! if I could hope that happy title would one day be mine."

"Yours!" repeated Eva, and her cheek blanched, and her lip trembled.

"Yes, mine; is it possible you have not discovered my secret? It was her of whom I spoke, when I said I would woo a sweet angel to cheer the solitude of my bachelor home. Yes, Eva, I have dared to aspire to be the husband, the protector of Florence Fulton, that most perfect of women;" and as he spoke the strong man trembled; his voice was low, and he seemed for the moment as timid and weak as the girl beside him. So much power has the magician love over the most powerful.

It was strange to Eva afterwards, how she got through that evening. With a fainting heart, a spirit wounded to the quick, she was yet enabled, perchance by that Power

which nerves our hearts for the greatest trials, to wear an outward appearance of calmness; and no one noticed her pale cheeks, or saw that her spirits were forced. When the apparently interminable evening was over, and in her own room she was at liberty to give vent to the long pent-up tide of feeling, she wept long and quietly; but oh! what bitter tears. Poor girl! she felt as if every hope in life had fled for ever; for all the hopes of life, the bright promises of childhood, the sweet passionate heart-dreams of youth, were linked with *him*, and *he* loved another, and perhaps knew her weakness; and she blushed and trembled with shame at the thought: but the next moment she felt convinced that he had not discovered it, and that, at least, was comfort.

And then her mother;—her long cherished hopes were to be disappointed too, and now Eva felt as if such hopes were presumptuous; felt ashamed to think her mother had ever entertained views, which yesterday seemed natural and right. Thus do circumstances change the current of our thoughts, even our ideas of right and wrong.

“What shall I do?” was her despairing thought. To return to her mother her first impulse; but no, she would not fly to that mother, to pour into her bosom a grief that must wake an answering grief in her own. And then, what would people think were she to shorten her visit? What would her aunt and uncle think? No, she must nerve her spirit to bear this trial; she must look upon the happiness of her rival; for she could not doubt that he would be loved in return;—all this she must bear, and give no sign of the agony within. With an irrepressible moan of sorrow, Eva threw herself on her knees, and there pouring out the depths of her tried soul, we will leave her.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SCRAPE WITH A BLACKGUARD.—A FRIEND IN NEED.

CLAUDE ST. JULIAN was seated one morning in Judge Woodward's law office. The conversation turned on Harry Vernon.

"It is strange," remarked Judge Woodward, "that a man like Governor Vernon, so exemplary in public and private character, should have such a son as Harry Vernon. His excesses must be a source of great anxiety to his father."

"I don't know; Harry Vernon is a noble fellow in many respects, though, unfortunately, too wild."

"He is in a scrape now, that, I fear, will involve him in some difficulty."

"May I ask what it is?"

"Certainly. As I heard it, this: He was some time ago at a gambling establishment; and after exhausting his supply of 'pocket change,' borrowed of a casual acquaintance, who, knowing his position, offered to lend it to him. As he seemed to have plenty of 'rocks,' Harry didn't hesitate to borrow a considerable amount, nor did he make any unnecessary exertions to pay. It seems that not long afterwards, the fellow heard in some way that Governor Vernon's affairs were somewhat embarrassed; and had the meanness to use some sneering expression with regard to Harry, and his inability to pay—which every one knows in the public code of morals is considered a much greater reflection than keeping a poor man out of his money, when you have only to make a few pen-strokes to draw your thousands. Harry is going to ——— to-night, expecting to meet him, as he is a constant *habitué* of the place, and I fear it may result in something serious."

"At No. ——— Broadway, is it?"

"Yes."

As Harry Vernon entered, that evening, the brilliantly lighted and *fashionable* gaming establishment of ———, he did not observe that there followed close upon him a stately figure, muffled in a cloak, whose entrance elicited a murmur of surprise from the door-keeper. It was very early; the games had not yet commenced, and only a few loungers were in the room. Harry looked among them for the man he was in search of; but he was not there. A few moments afterwards he entered, and seated himself at the other extremity of the room. Without approaching nearer, in bold, free tones, Harry Vernon called his name, and demanded if he had made certain remarks. The man—who was short, stout, dark, and with something of the tiger glare in his eye—hesitated a moment, and then, as the eyes of some in the room looked fixedly upon him, he answered in the affirmative.

"Then," replied Harry, "in the presence of every one in this room, I pronounce you a deliberate liar and scoundrel!"

The man leaped from his seat, and rushed upon him with the spring of a wild beast. Ere he could reach him, a third gentleman stood between them, and seized with an iron grasp his arm. His cloak falling off revealed the features of Judge Woodward. Mr. Augustus Smith started and trembled as he felt that grasp, and met the gaze fixed upon him.

"Mr Smith," said the judge, calmly and sternly, "you have already been before me for a case of blood and violence; you escaped well then; beware of the second offence. What Mr. Vernon said was true, and you shall here in the presence of these gentlemen apologize to him, or you shall feel the consequences of to-night's ill-doing."

The little man gulped down his rage with a visible effort; but it seemed that he had no appeal to make against the stern justice of the "dread powers that be."

Stepping up to Harry after a moment's hesitation, and a deprecating glance at the judge, whose stern gaze was fixed immovably upon him—he spoke a few words, though in so low a tone few could distinguish them. Apparently, however, they were satisfactory, for Harry bowed slightly and turned away.

Judge Woodward turned to look for the proprietor, but that functionary had been among the missing ever since the august head of his judgeship appeared within the doorway. He then inquired of a waiter in attendance, if he could procure a private room, and receiving a reply in the affirmative, requested Harry Vernon to accompany him to the apartment, into which, with many bows, he was ushered. He obeyed in wondering silence.

"And now," demanded the judge, "may I ask, Mr. Vernon, if you know the character of the man with whom you have had a rencontre to-night?"

"No," was the reply; "he is a mere casual acquaintance,—indeed, I never met him any where but here."

"Then let me bid you beware of him; for though gentlemanly enough in appearance, he is nothing short of a consummate scoundrel. He fears me, for I know him well; the duties of my profession often bringing me in contact with men whose deeds I abhor. Of course you would not put

yourself on a level with him, by fighting him, even were he to challenge you?"

Harry made no reply to this, but eagerly demanded what brought Judge Woodward to such a place.

"Your own danger. I heard it from a friend of yours, and knowing the influence my name and presence would have in suppressing any difficulty, I followed you here. And now I have one favor to ask——"

"Command me in any thing, sir; I shall be happy to obey."

"Then prove it," taking from his purse a roll of notes, "by accepting these, and acquitting yourself at once of all obligations to that scoundrel."

"A thousand thanks," murmured Harry, "for your generous kindness, but I cannot accept——"

"Pshaw! that is nothing from me. Do not consider yourself under obligations. Your father, when I was a young and needy aspirant, helped me on in my profession. Believe me, I owe his son this kindness, and if you will not take it as a gift, let it be a loan, and pay it when you please; and now no thanks, but come on and find Smith. I have a few more words to say to him myself."

They returned to the saloon. Harry succeeded in finding Smith, and discharged his debt to him; and Judge Woodward, then drawing him aside, spoke a few words in a low tone. Harry could neither distinguish the words of the judge, nor Smith's reply; yet there was something dark and sinister in the face of the latter, and his eye fell beneath the searching gaze fixed upon him.

"You are not going to remain here?" then inquired the judge of Harry.

"No;" and for once he felt ashamed that he had ever been seen there,—so much does Vice blush in the presence of Honor and Uprightness.

"Then come with me;" and unheeding the looks of astonishment which the various *habitués* of the place fixed upon his well-known form, he linked his arm in that of Harry Vernon, and they left the house.

It must be confessed that the latter felt himself in a strange position, as he walked up street arm in arm with Judge Woodward; and he could not forbear exchanging

sundry knowing winks and glances with such of his boon companions as he chanced to meet. He said at length, with some embarrassment,

“I shall never forget your kindness, sir.”

“Nay, do not think of that; if the scene of to-night can have any effect in causing you to shun such places—and let me add such society—I shall be more than repaid.”

“I was a fool,” said Harry, bitterly, “to lay myself under obligations to such a scoundrel. I received from my father quite a large sum, not long since; but I applied it to what I considered a more pressing purpose than my own necessities.”

“Of that you are, of course, the best judge; I know not the purpose to which you refer, nor would I seek to intrude on your confidence.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE WILD BOY'S FIRST LOVE.—THE TEMPTED BETRAYER.

“With thee were the dreams of my earliest love,
Every thought of my reason was thine.”

“Too early loving, and too fully wronged!”

THE soft sunlight of one of those warm, balmy, autumnal days, which sometimes shine upon us with a seductive and tantalizing sweetness, in this varied and beautiful season, shone brightly and wooingly through the half closed blinds of Rose cottage.

A child's cradle was drawn near the window, so that the soft south breeze fanned the cheek of the sleeping infant, and played gently among his light curls.

Seated beside the cradle, singing a soft lullaby, was the lovely, gentle looking being, who had attracted the notice of Florence as she passed the cottage.

There were traces of weeping on her cheek, and ever and anon tears swam in her eyes, and her voice was choked by emotion.

The child stirred presently—opened his large dark eyes, and stretched out his arms to his mother. He looked wist-

fully at her, and his bright face clouded as he saw the expression of hers—for how quickly children learn to read expression, long ere they can distinguish words. He seemed to divine the cause too, for he lisped out “Mamma, where papa?”

“I do not know, my darling,” replied the soft accents of the mother.

“Mamma, papa gone so long! Will papa never come see Harry?”

“Oh! yes, before long I hope.”

“Mamma, Harry see papa just now;” and he placed his tiny hands over his eyes for a moment, then removing them, repeated with an arch expression, “Harry see papa.”

“In your dreams, dear one, perhaps,” murmured the mother; “but even in dreams, that blessing is denied me. Why—why does he stay so long from me? It was not always thus. But there must be some good cause for it; it is not that he loves me less—loves me less, oh! no!” she added, with an expression that seemed to say, “the very thought was too keenly fraught with agony to be entertained for a moment. “But have I not his image in my own bright boy? Harry, darling, I should not love you half so much were you not like him; were you not his child—yes, *his* child, brightest;” and seizing him in her embrace she gazed long and passionately upon him, then half smothered him with kisses. At this instant the sound of horse’s feet fell on the gravel without. The door opened—little Harry gave a joyous cry, and the next moment the child and mother were in the arms of Harry Vernon.

In order to explain the mystery of the cottage, we must acquaint the reader with a little episode in the past life of young Vernon.

Three years before the date of our story, there lived at the country-seat of Gov. Vernon, as a sort of steward or major-domo, a man who enjoyed the full confidence of his employer, and was in every respect save the accident of fortune a gentleman. This man had an only, and very lovely daughter. Her mother died in giving her birth, and we scarcely need add, that this sole pledge of her love was idolized by the father. He gave her every advantage of education in his power, and as she was remarkably quick and at-

tached to study, she grew up into a graceful and accomplished girl, the sunlight of her home, and the solace of his leisure hours.

His leisure hours, however, were few; for his time was almost constantly occupied by his various duties; and his daughter was thus left almost entirely to the charge and surveillance of an aged, infirm, and half-blind grandmother. Lilian Stanley was one, in whose young, precocious heart a well of love bubbled forth, and poured its warm sunny streams on all around her. She was all life and gladness; ever on the watch for every thing which womanly tact could devise to render her father happy; soothing and cheering her aged relative, and flying from these to her books, flowers, and birds, with a song, gushing forth as clear and sweet as that of her own pet warbler. Harry Vernon,—an enthusiastic lover of sport,—in his vacations and whenever he could get leave of absence from college, was in the habit of coming down to the plantation to hunt and fish. They met,—the wild boy, and the lovely, artless girl. Harry had never mingled in ladies' society, and Lilian knew nothing of the world out of her closet and her books; need we say they met but to love. 'Neath the bright starlight, on the lone river shore, and in the deep forest, with no witness to their vows, save the blue heaven above them, Hal wooed and won the maiden's heart. His intentions were purely honorable; but when they reached the ears of his father, he laughed at what he considered his boyish folly, and bade him think no more of it. Gov. Vernon, however, a just and feeling man, had he been really convinced that his son loved truly and honorably, might have, in proper time, been induced to look favorably upon it; but his wife, a high-tempered, haughty woman, scoffed at the idea, and forbade her son on pain of her deepest displeasure ever to see Lilian again. She implored her husband to discharge Mr. Stanley; but Gov. Vernon knew too well the value of the man to whom he could intrust all his private affairs, when he was himself engrossed by the onerous duties of his political career, to hear of this; so he contented himself with adding his command to the mother's interdiction, and thought little more of it. Mr. Stanley, as soon as he became aware of these things, forbade Lilian to receive the visits of Harry. But when were commands like these

obeyed? Does not the boy god laugh at bolts, bars, and fetters? and when young hearts throb wildly, warmly for each other, will the commands of older and wiser ones, keep them asunder?

No. It is in the stolen meeting; the whispered vow; the kiss exchanged in secret that love delights. But every one knows that lone midnight meetings, with the calm stars smiling above, and the soft summer breeze wooing to love, are dangerous things. Lilian was sensible of the imprudence, and, young and artless as she was, at length felt that it was a duty she owed herself to cease them. Maddened by her refusal to meet him, and by his passion for her, Harry proposed a clandestine marriage, to which, overcome by his entreaties, she consented. And now came the rub. If discovered, this marriage would, perhaps, cause him to be disinherited, and his own Lilian with himself turned homeless on the world; for such things sometimes happen in this land of strictly republican principles, when wealth or rank stoops to wed with virtuous poverty. At this juncture there was an arch fiend at his elbow, in the shape of an older and intimate friend—one who “knew more of the world” than the boy of seventeen,—to whisper, “Why not get up a little sham affair, which could do no harm to yourself, and would satisfy her? I will assist you in it. These things are done every day. When you are your own man, you can do as you like; but for the present you must take my advice, or give her up altogether; and by heavens! I think the last would be hard to do; for judging from the glimpses I have had of your shy little bird, she is the sweetest piece of flesh and blood I ever saw. Come, my dear fellow, what will you do?”

Harry Vernon had not been educated, as are few young men of the present day, amid associations calculated to make him look with any superfluous degree of virtuous horror on this proposal; especially, as it seemed to him dictated by the most disinterested motives of friendship; yet some natural feelings of honor made him recoil from it; for the man who could deliberately cherish an evil thought towards the woman he loves, must indeed be the basest of the base.

But overcome at last by the artful representations of one who possessed more influence over him, than perhaps any one

else living, and by the violence of his own passion, he learned to look on this means of possessing the pure, true-hearted Lilian, at first with toleration, and then, as it was nursed by thought, and fevered by anticipation, with passionate pleasure. Harry was very wrong in supposing that disinterested motives dictated the advice of his "friend." Far into the future looked that friend, and beheld in dim perspective the wealthy Harry Vernon, the husband of his sister, the tool of himself. Wily fowler as he was, he had already twined his snares around the young eagle, who, unsuspecting treachery, allowed himself to fall into the net without a struggle. Which in the eyes of God was the worst, Harry Vernon, the actual perpetrator of the crime, or his so called *friend*, who, with the spirit, and art, and perseverance of a fiend, incited the wild, passionate boy to its consummation? For Harry, one might at least plead, in the beautiful language of one tempted and erring:

"Ye know not of the power
With which the dark temptation came in some unguarded hour;
Ye may not know how earnestly they struggled, or how well,
Until the hour of weakness came, and sadly thus they fell."

But for the Tempter—what could be said?

When Mr. Stanley was absent, heart, soul, and mind engrossed in the interests of his employer; when the good grandmother slept the sleep of age and unconsciousness, on the lone moonlit shore of the Hudson, Lilian and Harry were wedded; and it was by the impious lips of the "friend" (we had almost written fiend) that the sacred ceremony, thus rendered an unholy mockery, was pronounced. But as he clasped his trusting bride to his heart, Harry Vernon cursed himself for the deed he had done; and inwardly vowed to right her at last.

It was not until the consequences of this imprudent connection became but too apparent in the person of Lilian, that the unhappy girl tasted the cup of woe which the hand of Fate had mixed for her, brimmed to the full with bitterness. Her grandmother died a short time previous to this; but her father, almost heart-broken, raved against God, cursed the child who had brought shame to his house, and bade her follow him for whom she had lost all a father's love, home, honor

and peace. Lilian had promised Harry never to reveal her marriage to her father under any circumstances, until he, Harry, was of age; at which time he was to claim her before the world; and she would have borne any thing that could have been inflicted on her, ere she would, by breaking her promise, have involved him in distress or difficulty. Thus her lips were sealed, and she had no appeal to make against the stern displeasure of her father. It was then that Harry procured the cottage where we have found Lilian, and placed the suffering girl there, surrounding her with every luxury that his profuse allowance of money could supply. To this his family had no objection. Unaware that there had been even a semblance of marriage, they were only glad that the affair terminated as it did, without giving them farther trouble. Such was the love and respect which her gentle kindness had procured for her from every servant on the plantation, that never did a word pass their lips calculated to call a blush to Lilian's cheek. By Harry's orders she was treated with the utmost respect, and to strangers simply spoken of as the lady of the cottage. Few knew aught of the misfortunes of her history, and even these few, aware of the opposition of his parents, believed her to be privately married to young Vernon; for such things will get out, and people chance sometimes to put the most favorable construction on them. As for the grand Babel of New York, where nobody meddles with the other's business, the story had never reached there at all; or if it had, but to be faintly whispered, imperfectly detailed, and dropped. Mr. Stanley resigned his situation, and went none knew whither. Lilian never heard from him now. For a time Hal was perfectly devoted to her, and frequent were his visits to the cottage; but as he mingled more in society, and became more and more associated with gay and dissolute companions, his heart was in some measure estranged from the idol of his boyhood. When he met Florence, his senses became enthralled by her beauty and fascination, and forgetting for the time being all besides, he joined the throng of worshippers that bowed at the shrine of the brilliant belle.

Alas! for poor Lilian; alas! for man's constancy; he no longer dreamed of one day repairing the wrong he had done her, though he never thought of her without a thrill of

mournful tenderness, which he found it impossible to suppress. Lilian lived but in the future, in the time when Harry should call her his own before the world; when the shadow on her own and her boy's name should be removed. For the present—she had always lived a secluded life, and did not mind it now, and she had, she fondly whispered to herself, her child and Harry's love to make her happy. As to change in that love, she shrank from contemplating the possibility of such a thing; yet his long absences, joined to the coldness and silence of her father, caused her much unhappiness.

Such was Lilian, and such her circumstances, at the time alluded to in the opening of our chapter.

It was twilight. Harry Vernon was seated by the window in Lilian's pretty little chamber; she was on a cushion at his feet, her elbow resting on his knee, and his boy was in his arms. It was a sweet scene—the still, holy hour; the boy father, his handsome face beaming with pride as he gazed on his child; the loving, tender mother, and the bright, beautiful babe. Oh! that Purity could have shed her halo of heaven light on the brow of the father, as of the mother and child, and added a crowning glory to the picture.

“How much my boy is like me, Lily,” said Harry, fondly; “any stranger could recognize the likeness.”

“Oh! yes; and I am so glad, Harry. I often say I would not love him half so much were he like me.”

“Why not, dearest? I should like him to resemble you,—you who are so lovely,” and Hal looked down tenderly and half pityingly on the fair childlike face before him, and bending over, passed his arm around her waist and drew her nearer to him.

“Oh! no, Harry, not like me, I should then be deprived of so much pleasure. During your absences, which are now so long, and weary, I often turn to my child for comfort—I look into his face, and I think I see your dear eyes gazing on me! and oh! I bless my boy for this;” and she seized and half stifled him with caresses; while he struggled lustily to get back to his father. “He loves you, Harry, more than he does me, I do believe; and, Harry, you have no idea what a little man he is; I cannot chain him to my side. He doesn't

care for playthings, but dogs and horses—oh! he dotes on them—just like you;” and she proceeded to relate sundry accomplishments, and wonderful feats of the child,—the detail of which we will spare the reader.

“Harry,” asked the unsuspecting girl, when she had finished her recital, “who was that beautiful woman you were with, the day of the picnic,—when you passed the cottage?”

A crimson flush mounted to the brow of him who was thus questioned, but he simply replied, “Miss Fulton.”

“I could not help thinking then, Hal,” continued Lilian, “how long it would be ere you would walk by my side, and call me ‘wife’ before the whole world. But the time is not so far off now, is it?—only I have waited so long, I would, my husband, that it were here now.”

“Well, Lily, you know the fatal consequences that must ensue upon such a step, have alone hindered me from long since taking it. It is for your sake, and that of my child, I wish to wait.”

“Yes, Harry, I do not murmur. I will bear on bravely; though, heaven knows, I have sad hours sometimes, when hope seems to faint within me; yet I have never doubted thee, dearest, never!”

Hal made no reply,—how could he reply to a speech which touched him to the quick,—but drawing her closer to him, he kissed her tenderly, as if thus to stifle conscience.

And Harry *almost* forgot Florence, when with Lilian, for no one could see her loveliness, her sweet endearing ways, her gentle, touching tenderness, and fail to love her.

“Why are you so long, and so often absent from me, persisted she.

“Why, Lilian, a man”—and he drew himself up with the pride of twenty years on his brow—“a man has many things to engross his time, which you women know nothing about. I don’t think you ought to murmur.”

“I do not murmur;” said Lilian, stopping his mouth with a kiss, “but then I have many lonely hours, when you are not with me,—you, Harry, you who are my all in all.”

Harry yawned slightly; the conversation was growing wearisome. Lily perceived it with the quick instinct of her sex, and said no more, but with a sigh rose, and taking her boy, who had fallen asleep in his father’s arms, softly un-

dressed without waking him, and placed him in his little cradle.

When she again seated herself by Harry's side, in the soft moonlight stealing through the window, he was sitting—his face upturned to the moon—lost in thought. A shade was on his brow, and his large dark eyes seemed filled with a troubled light. To call him from his sad musings, Lilian took her guitar, and striking a few chords, sung, in her sweet-toned voice, the plaintive little air of the Hindoo mother, which accorded well with her own feelings. When she came to the words, "Fairer hands may press thee," her eyes swam in tears, and her voice nearly failed her; but the next verse alluding with such tender pathos to the child, it was Harry's turn. His lips quivered—a peculiar sign of emotion with him—and he leaned his head on his hand, and listened in silence until the song was finished, then drew her gently to him. Lilian wept, and it was no shame to Harry's manliness, that a few large bright drops from eyes, "albeit unused to the melting mood," glistened amid the brown curls of the head which rested upon his bosom.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE WIFE *vs.* THE IDOL.

"Look on this picture, then on that.

HAMLET.

OUR readers may think, in the course of this narrative, we have imitated the example of Claude, and neglected Marion shamefully; but the fact is, Marion, with all her troubles and griefs, was such a quiet little being; had so little connection with the sayings and doings of those whose actions it is in this veritable history our business to record; that we, like her fashionable acquaintances, have contented ourselves so far with the mere knowledge of her existence; but, like them, must occasionally call for appearance' sake, and to satisfy ourselves that she is still alive. We are far from entertaining towards her, however, the benevolent wishes of many

a fair one of the *beau monde* with regard to the length of her existence; who would give their little fingers were she fairly out of the way, and "that dear St Julian" a widower.

"Claude, will you stay with me to-day, and watch by Cécily?" said Marion, the morning after the picnic. "I think she is quite sick, and have sent for a physician." "Certainly, Marion dear, we have an invitation to dine out, you know; but I will write a refusal for both, and glad to be rid of it;" and drawing a writing-desk to him, he dashed off a few lines, despatched them, and then followed Marion into the sick room of Cécily. Every one knows the pervading air of a sick room. The quiet hush, the monotonous stillness, the low whispers, the close and darkened atmosphere. "I do not think Cécily worse than usual, Marion," said Claude, as he stood by the bedside of the child, "perhaps a little weaker." "Oh! that is always the way with you," replied Marion, somewhat peevishly. "*You* never think there is any thing the matter with the child; but any one can see," she added, in a lower tone, "that she is declining, and *I* don't believe will be very long in this world; but if she is not, it will be better for her. I am sure *I* have found it nothing but a vale of tears." "Hush! Marion, don't talk so," said Claude, gently, encircling her waist with his arm. "Are you not happy?" "You know I am not," replied his wife, coldly withdrawing herself from his embrace. "I don't know what I have to make me so, unless it be a neglectful dissipated husband." "Well, Marion, don't let us get on that topic: you know we can't agree; and if I must have a lecture, don't let it be in the sick-room of my child." "Must have a lecture!" repeated Marion, bitterly, "as if I were——" "Dear Marion, I beg you will desist. Say no more now, or I will have to leave the room. Don't you see it disturbs Cécily!" The child indeed (who had smiled faintly, as her father approached her bed in token of welcome) now looked from one to the other, as if annoyed by the conversation. Claude took her hand, and in soft, kindly tones, commenced to soothe her. She listened and repaid him by grateful glances, then lulled by the sound of his voice, sunk into a calm, sweet slumber. He gazed on her, as she slept in her fair angelic beauty; so tender, so *spirituelle*, like an angel with wings already plumed for heaven; and then at his wife, who was seated on

the opposite side of the bed. There was a cold, embittered, almost repulsive expression, on the marble set features of the latter; and in striking contrast to that cold, sad face, rose up one bright, beautiful, tender, wooing in its expression to him; that of Florence. For days he had lived, breathed, moved, in a bewildering spell; the spell which her beauty and fascination had woven round his senses. When conscience rebuked him for this, which it must be confessed was but rarely, he consoled himself with the reflection that it was not to be expected that a man of passionate impulsive feelings, should resist the blandishments of a woman who exerted herself to the uttermost to charm him, and who boasted that she had "but to look on a man to make him love her." No, he made no effort to resist, but gave himself up, unhesitatingly, to her siren influence. Every passionate feeling in his nature thus kindled, Florence's large loving eyes haunted him; her soft wooing voice echoed in his ear; her image, resplendent in the queenly consciousness of beauty, was before him day and night; and without reflecting that such feelings must be vain, or fatal to both, he gave himself up, soul and body, to the delicious spell.

Yielding himself to such thoughts as these, he leaned back in the arm-chair, and closed his eyes. The world of the sick room passed from before him, and his senses revelled in the new, vague, and intoxicating realm of imagination and passion.

Claude sat by Cecy all that day, and attended to her wants, with the careful tenderness and readiness of an experienced nurse,—for in no sphere did that man's ability seem to fail, he was equally at home in all;—and Cecy, who idolized her father, was delighted with his attention. In the evening the physician called, and pronounced her indisposition only a slight attack of weakness. Scarcely had he left, when a note was presented to Claude. It was from Florence, and his heart throbbed as he saw the delicate handwriting, and opened the neat little envelope. It contained merely her wishes that, if disengaged, he would meet a few friends at her house that evening, "very unexpected," &c. &c. Claude was delighted; 'how agreeable, after a long, dull day, spent in a sick room;' and he hastily wrote an acceptance. He then informed Marion of his intention to

spend the evening out, but added, that he should be at home early, to which she made no reply,—but coldly turned away to prepare some draught for the child, and Claude went to his room to dress.

All the guests had arrived, when he found himself in the presence of Florence. She came forward, with her usual beaming smile, and queenly grace to receive him. Mrs. De Vere Moreton; Eva, looking stiller and paler than usual; Gussy Plumdale, and some half dozen gentlemen, completed the party.

“Well, so you have come at last, Mr. St. Julian,” cried Mrs. Moreton. “We have been waiting for you this half hour, to sing a duet with Florence; so now, like a good boy, do go at it at once.” Florence seated herself at the harp, and they poured out their rich, musical voices together, in the wild, passion-breathing songs of Italy, and in the touching ballads of our own language.

“What a pity,” whispered Mrs. Moreton, “that Claude St. Julian is married. Would not he and Florence make a nice couple—so well matched in beauty, fascination, and grace?”

Eva smiled faintly. “That idea would never have occurred to me, knowing Mr. St. Julian to be a married man.”

“What is that you are saying about St. Julian?” said Lieut. Minton, seating himself by Mrs. Moreton.

The little woman repeated the remark.

“Ah! that is true,” replied the officer, who always made it a point to agree with Mrs. Moreton in every thing. “I never saw two persons better suited to each other. Well, perhaps St. Julian may be a widower, in time for Miss Fulton; she does not think of marrying yet, I suppose, and his wife is in bad health, I heard him say.”

“Heard him say!” repeated Mrs. Moreton. “Did you ever hear him speak of her? I have known him for years, and never heard him call her name three times, and then only when forced to do so.”

“Nor I either,” laughed Minton, “but I did happen to hear him say that, one evening.”

“What a poor, low-spirited, methodistical creature she must be;” continued Mrs. Moreton, “never to go out, or see any thing of life. If I had such a husband as Claude

St. Julian, he should not go out without me. I would go too, instead of moping at home, giving my husband 'the blues,' whenever he came in the house."

"Poor thing!" said Eva. "She is devoted to her husband, I have heard; she must be very lonely, so much separated from him."

"Nonsense! Eva, how you talk. Why, she is not more separated from him than other women are from their husbands. I expect she sees as much, or more of him, than I do of Moreton. I have no doubt if she would be gay, and agreeable, and mingle in society as she should do, that Claude St. Julian would be as devoted a husband as any; for he is a dear, kind-hearted fellow. Why, she does not even return visits. I have been to see her several times, and she has never shown the 'light of her countenance' within my doors, nor do I care if she never does—but do let's talk of some thing more agreeable, for this is not worth wasting breath on;" and she turned, and commenced an animated flirtation with the handsome lieutenant.

And *this* was the compassion of the world for Marion,—and thus were the names of Claude, and his wife, canvassed in her own parlors, and by some strange fatality reached not the ears of Florence; but that fatal knowledge was to come full soon.

Florence could of course devote no portion of time exclusively to Claude that evening. She was the centre and *soul* of her circle, and diffused gayety, life and animation around her. Her gayety, her brilliant conversational powers, her wit, united to a certain warmth of manner—not approaching to freedom—gave to her coteries their charm; and rendered her reunions, the most agreeable in New York.

It was a late hour ere the pleasant little party separated. Claude left Florence more fascinated than ever, and there was something in his too expressive tones and glances, that kindled in her heart the belief that she was beloved.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MATRIMONIAL TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

"Now that is just like you, Caudle—always trying to worry my life out about something."

CURTAIN LECTURES.

"My dear, may I come in?" said Mr. Moreton, tapping at the door of his wife's dressing-room. "Certainly," yawned Mrs. De Vere Moreton in reply. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, she was sitting half buried in a *fauteuil*, attired in a loose morning gown, her feet thrust into velvet slippers, her hair *en papillotte*—looking not quite so pretty as the Mrs. Moreton of the drawing-room, but still *dishabille* was not very unbecoming to the off-hand style of the little woman—languidly sipping a cup of coffee, as if the very exertion of raising it to her lips was wearisome.

Mr. Moreton entered; his face was pale, and had a care-worn expression just at the moment. He was a man who had dissipated much, and it was very visible in the haggard and marked lines of his features. He held in his hand a most ominous looking bundle of papers, which looked suspiciously like that greatest of horrors to many—merchants' *bills*.

"Oh! Moreton, *have* you come in to talk to me about expenses, and retrenchments? For Heaven's sake! if you have, spare me this once, for my nerves are not in a condition to bear it."

"It's useless to talk in that kind of style, Angele," replied he, bitterly. "I am forced to speak on the subject. I suppose you had rather have an execution in your house before you know any thing about it, than to have me 'shock your nerves,' by trying to speak in time. God help women's nerves! I believe they kill more men than any disease you can mention—tormented out of their lives. If women are fretful, and bad tempered,—it's *nerves*. If you dare to speak to them, and raise your voice a key higher than usual, 'Oh! dear, their poor nerves.' In short, *nerves* are the excuse for every fault in the female calendar."

"Moreton, I see no use of your tormenting me in that

spiteful way; go on with what you have to say, if I must hear it."

Thus adjured, Mr. Moreton proceeded.

"Well, the fact is simply this; I am over head and ears in debt,—and what is worse, I don't see how I am to get out; and if I don't find some means of satisfying the clamors of these hell-hounds," and he clenched the papers, and shook them as if, instead of their bills, he held the unfortunate victims of his wrath in his grasp, "why, I shall have a pack of duns at my door every day. Say, is that a charming prospect?"

"La! Moreton, where is my fortune? would not that more than pay——"

"What is the use of asking such foolish questions? As if you did not *know* that you had spent it long since, on your 'entertainments,' your 'opera boxes,' your 'equipage,' your 'dress,' and the devil knows what other follies. I had just got my father's estate in hand, when I married you (for, as you know, he disinherited Eva's father, my poor brother,—a better fellow never lived, except that he was a little too high spirited for his own good), and now where is it? I tell you I am on the brink of *ruin*, pretty near insolvent. It is impossible for you to keep up this establishment at this rate. Why, it would ruin a prince! You should have thought of this all along, only women never think of any thing. A milliner's block on their shoulders would do them as much good as a head, so far as thinking goes."

"Why do you blame *me* for your loss of fortune?" replied his wife with flashing eyes. "You know you spent it at the gaming table."

"I beg your pardon, madam, I have lost little at the gaming table. I know enough about that to be fortunate generally. No, it is the other things I have spoken of, that have played the devil with my purse. I know not what to do." And Mr. Moreton folded his arms and was gloomily silent.

"Oh, I have it!" said his wife suddenly, as if some peculiarly bright idea had occurred to her. "A thought has struck me."

"Miraculous event!" exclaimed her sarcastic husband, do let us have the benefit of it."

"Let us give a large, and splendid fancy ball, eh! Moreton."

“Is the woman mad? I talking to her about retrenchments, and she talking about a fancy ball, a thing that would cost three thousand at least!”

“Oh, but I want to do it for *effect*, you know, for *effect*.”

“And pray what *effect* can that have?”

“Why, if you give a grand ball, or any thing that requires a considerable outlay of money, your creditors will think you are *flush*, and not say a word to you.”

“Pshaw!”

“Now, Moreton, don’t ‘pshaw’ me; you know it’s a good idea, and I shall have the ball.”

“Well, you are certainly the most incorrigible——”

“I don’t care, I shall have my fancy ball, and you’ll see the good effect it will have.”

“And pray where will I get the money for that?”

“Where you have often obtained larger sums,” replied his wife significantly.

“Well, we’ll see about it. At all events it’s not worth while to try to talk reason into you, for that is something nature forgot to put in the composition of women. But where is Eva? I want her to look over these papers, and file them away for me. She is a dear little creature, a woman out of a thousand I think.”

“Moping up stairs in her room, I suppose. I don’t know what has come over her of late. She was always dull enough, but she is worse now. I declare it’s provoking—every thing seems to conspire against my wishes.”

“What’s the matter now?”

“Ah! Moreton, you needn’t speak in that sarcastic tone—you think my vexations are nothing, but they are more than my ner—more than I can bear. Now then, that provoking man, Juge Woodward, just as I thought I had secured him for Eva—decidedly the most desirable match of the day—all at once he takes it into his head to fall in love with that coquette Florence Fulton, who manages to make every man who approaches her, wear her fetters; or tries to do so, at all events,—married or single, it makes no difference with her. I wonder *you* haven’t been caught in her snares before now, Moreton. I actually believe the girl employs witchcraft. I hate to see a woman who cares for nothing but making conquests.”

“ Good heavens, Angele ! ‘ Satan reproving sin.’ When did you take up your new code of morals ? But that is just like women, they always condemn others most for that which they like best themselves. But if Woodward prefers Florence Fulton—who, beautiful, and fascinating as she is, has no occasion for witchcraft to charm the other sex,—what right under heaven have you to object ? Besides, I didn’t know you took so deep an interest in Eva ! ”

“ It is not that I take such a deep interest in Eva,—but the idea of a pretty girl like her, staying in one of the gayest, most fashionable houses in New York, under the protection of Mrs. *De Vere Moreton*, and not securing a desirable *parti*. It is a reflection on me ; and looks as if there was ‘ something wrong in the state of Denmark.’ And then, you know, Judge Woodward never visited us until Eva came here—which was shameful, considering we were connections—and I was very glad to get him in our set ; then, to have married him to my *protégée* would have been a crowning achievement. I should have been proud of it. And then too, I would have had an everlasting claim on the gratitude of Eva’s mother, and that would have been so pleasant. I do so like to lay people under obligations, just to make them feel what they owe me. I always feel somehow as if Mrs. Moreton was superior to me, in some way, I can’t tell how, I am sure—but I feel it, and that is so disagreeable. But just as I got the affair, as I thought, *en train*, for Judge Woodward to act in that manner ! I declare ’tis shameful ! Men are such provoking, unprincipled creatures.”

“ Well, my dear, it seems to me you arrogate to yourself, most unreasonably, the right of disposing of Judge Woodward’s hand, heart, and worldly goods. One would think he had no right to a voice in the matter. By the way, he first met Florence here. In the name of heaven, couldn’t you anticipate the consequences ? Why did you have her here so constantly ? Re-unions, promenades, opera parties,—nothing complete without Florence.”

“ Nonsense ! Moreton, don’t you know, in order to be agreeable, one must surround one’s self with agreeable people ? Now a woman like Florence always draws, as it were, a charmed circle around her ; and that is the reason I court her society. I am useful to her, and she to me. We radiate

light, as it were, one to the other. If I were unmarried it would be a different thing, I should dread her as a rival; but as it is, I only want to attract, for the sake of amusement, and to give my house the reputation of being the most agreeable, as it is the most fashionable in the city."

"But isn't this selfish?"

"Selfish? what a question! as if the world was not made up of selfishness."

"Yes, so I suppose," replied her husband carelessly. "I remember in my young days—when I was a verdant boy—imagining that there might be some such quality as disinterestedness latent in the human heart; but I have often felt since the fallacy of such an opinion."

"Yes, and made others feel it, I dare say," laughed his wife.

"Well, if I have, it was only paying them back in kind. If you don't wish to be cheated, be yourself a cheat." And with this laudable maxim, the gaming philosopher was about to leave the room, when Eva entered. The sweet girl came in, and in her usual affectionate, gentle way, kissed her uncle and Mrs. Moreton, for she had not seen them before that morning.

"I am glad you have come, Eva," said Mr. Moreton. "I want you to go in the study, and look over these papers for me. Find out the sum total, and let me know, will you? there's a darling."

"Certainly, uncle, with pleasure;" and she took the papers, left the room, and was soon deep in the intricacies of mathematical hieroglyphics, calculations, &c. An odd occupation for a heroine of romance, the reader will say; but Eva was no heroine of romance; she was simply a human being, lovely in form and disposition, fitted to make a gentle, good, loving wife; to make a man happy on earth, and lead him by her gentle example to heaven.

Few are there such on this cold earth,
Where false are oft the fairest smiles,
And e'en deeds seeming pure, have birth
In dark design's deceptive wiles.

"Judge Woodward is a fool to give up such an angel on earth as Eva for any body," thought Mr. Moreton. "She will be a treasure to any man. I believe if I had married a

woman like her, she would have reformed me completely. But pshaw!" he added, suppressing a sigh, "there's not one in a thousand like her. I dare say Angele is as good as the 'common run' of women." And with this consoling reflection he left the room, much to the relief of his wife, who had been sorely bored by this matrimonial tête-à-tête—which the unsophisticated might have thought calculated to awaken very serious reflections.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GLIMMERINGS OF DESTINY.

To be callous with the heartless,
 To be careless with the gay,
 To be led by passion's impulse
 From virtue's path astray;
 These are faults for which I care not—
 Mine they are, and still will be;
 But the thought which rends my bosom,
 Is, that I have injured thee.

MS.

Let the false and the guilty take heed how they raise the curtain, which veils the mysteries of the future.

THE SEER.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and Harry Vernon and his friend Arthur Plumdale were discussing sundry interesting topics over a bottle of wine, in the rooms of the former, at the Irving House. (For with the characteristic independence of "young America," and a "fast man" to boot—though, as for that matter, the two terms are almost synonymous—Harry kept his rooms down town, only occasionally condescending to drop in at his father's house in Fifth Avenue, just "to see how the old man and the old woman were getting on." This was the hopeful son and heir of one of the first men in the State of New York. Verily, the saying about the sons of great men ought to grow into a proverb, namely: that relying on the greatness of their progenitors, they are generally good for nothing themselves.) Harry, judging from appearances, was somewhat indisposed on this occasion. He was paler than usual, and reclined on a lounge drawn near the grate in which a

bright fire was burning ; for though it was only the latter end of October, the weather without was cold and stormy, and but for this cheerful blaze, the room, though thickly curtained and carpeted, and furnished with every imaginable comfort, nay luxury, would have looked dreary. Arthur Plumdale, to whom the reader has already been casually introduced, as one of the most intimate associates of Harry Vernon, was a young man, or rather a *ci devant jeune homme*, whose fashionable, and somewhat prepossessing exterior, covered a heart destitute of every principle of virtue or honor. A heartless, systematic libertine, a thorough profligate, he yet assumed an air of frankness, cordiality, and good fellowship, which made him popular with men who lived like himself, for the enjoyment of the passing hour ; and in the gilded saloons of fashion he was ever a welcome guest ; fair women smiled upon him, and forgot that he was any thing save the gay and agreeable gentleman. He belonged to a family which, moving in the first circles of society, managed always to keep up the appearance of wealth, without actually possessing it ; no one knew how, and no one cared, so long as the Plumdales gave "delightful parties," and had "elegant people" at them. The daughters were fine-looking, well dressed, and agreeable ; the son, the hopeful specimen we see before us.

Arthur Plumdale was older than Harry Vernon, and though inferior in mind, he yet possessed a degree of shrewdness and cunning, which enabled him to obtain great influence over his generous and unsuspecting friend, whose wild and reckless career was in a great measure attributable to the evil influence of this man—his tempter and initiator into every form of dissipation. It was partly from that fiendish disposition to lure others to ruin, which exists in depraved natures ; but more, perhaps, because, by mingling with him in such scenes, Harry could become useful to him, that Arthur Plumdale undertook to initiate him ; for the purse of the thoughtless and generous boy was often lightened—paradoxical as the expression may seem—by the weight of Mr. Plumdale's expenses.

"Was there ever such infernal weather?" said Harry, yawning, and turning over uneasily, after a pause of some moments. "Stir the fire, and pass the bottle, Plum ; that's a good fellow."

Mr. Plumdale submissively obeyed, assenting at the same time to Harry's observation, by the profound remark, that it was "demned uncomfortable, certainly."

"But," said Harry nervously, replenishing his glass, and swallowing a brimming goblet, "let us return to the subject of which we were speaking just now. Plum, I believe you are one of my best friends; but, by heaven! you have caused me to commit one deed, which has been the source of the greatest unhappiness of my life; the very recollection of which, to use a sentimental expression,"—and he smiled half mockingly,—"has cast a shadow over my young years, which I fear no time can efface."

"Pshaw! Harry, my dear fellow, that is an exaggeration of virtue worthy the Utopian age, but quite too sublimated for these days."

"No, Arthur," replied the other, his usual nonchalant expression lost in one of stern mournfulness, "I can be profligate with the profligate; I can be a devil among devils. You know well," he added, with a sort of mocking laugh, "that I make no pretensions to virtue, sobriety, or any of those fine sort of things; but," resuming his serious tone, "when it comes to seducing innocence—innocence pure and perfect enough for an angel; to betraying one whose dearest, best affections are mine; who, if needful for my happiness, would yield up her own life;—to condemning such a one to years of obscurity and shame—she, who is worthy of all the happiness heaven can bestow; when it comes to *this*, I must confess, if conscience be a weakness, that I am weak."

"Why, Harry, you never until of late spoke in this way to me! Has your conscience all of a sudden become tender? I am glad to see it; quite a hopeful sign! Shouldn't be surprised from this change, if we have Harry Vernon, the fast boy, in the Methodist pulpit before long. You'll have me on the anxious bench directly. I should like to see you giving out the hymns," and he snatched a book from the table, bearing some outside resemblance, from its bulk and calf-skin cover, to an old-fashioned Methodist hymn-book, but in reality filled with drinking-songs, etc.; and with the most doleful elongation of visage, proceeded, in a nasal twang that was inimitable, to "give out the hymns."

"No sneers!" cried Harry, his black eyes flashing fire.

“Not even from you will I bear sneers;”—and as Arthur laid his book aside, looking quite penitent, he continued: “I never spoke of it in times past, because I dearly loved Lilian, and consoled myself by thinking that some day I would make her my wife. But now—now I love and would marry another; and what will become of Lilian, poor Lilian, when the story of her shame is revealed, as revealed it must be? Would to God I had never deceived her!” and he covered his face with his hands.

“Well, my dear fellow, I am sure I am sorry the affair ever happened, if it bothers you so,” replied the Evil Genius, endeavoring to screw his face into an expression denoting sympathy; “but it’s too late now to make a fuss about it. It is not the first affair of the kind that ever existed by thousands. Pshaw! she is no worse off than she would have been if you had never seen her, and in the long run she may be a great deal better.”

“Well,” replied Harry, endeavoring to dismiss the topic from his thoughts by turning them in a channel in which he was even more interested, “I should like devilish well to know how my affair with the fair Florence will terminate. I have been in suspense now just about long enough; and the worst of it is, there’s no calculating what she will do with a fellow at last.”

“By the way, Hal, if you are well enough, suppose we go around to the astrologer’s in W—— street, and have a consultation, just for the fun of the thing. I have a little affair of my own up street, that I should like to know something about. I am afraid, from present appearances, there is some trouble ahead for me; but, however, I don’t mind it much. I will find means to manage the thing in my own favor somehow.”

What is it—a love affair, Plum?”

“Yes, but not one involving matrimony. Oh, no! you don’t catch me running my head into any such fool-trap as that. But it *is* a love affair, and the heroine is one of the loveliest girls in the city. What do you say to Miss Georgie Watts?”

“Georgie Watts!” repeated Harry.

“Yes, the daughter of old Dr. Watts—not the old psalm-singing sinner, but a lineal descendant of his, I’ve no

doubt, from the odor of sanctity which seems to linger around his worshipful presence. It does me good to see the old fellow rise in the pulpit on the Sabbath, with his face elongated to the precise measure of orthodox sanctity, looking down with calm benignity on his precious flock, who, after playing the devil all the week, come to listen and be edified by the 'savor of life unto life,' on Sunday; ever and anon casting a glance towards where I sit, demurely turning the leaves of Miss Georgie's prayer-book."

Harry laughed one of his reckless laughs, but then added: "I'll swear, Plum, it is too bad in you to trifle with that girl. Why don't you marry her? She has some money, and is a sight too good for you."

"Softly, softly, my good fellow; don't be so rough. The girl is rather verdant, considering that she has been brought up in this famous city; and I only wish to teach her a lesson of the world solely for her own profit; a most disinterested motive, you will acknowledge. Were I to marry her, she would curse her stars, and wish me in a considerable warmer climate than would at all suit my health, in less than six months. As it is, I will only carry her through a very quiet, very delightful, and very tender love affair, and whenever our sweet little tie loses its charm, we can just 'dissolve partnership,' and quit good friends."

"Why, you don't mean to say——"

"No more, I beg of you, now. I will tell you more hereafter. What say you to the astrologer's?"

"Oh! I'll go, and put the old fellow to his trumps, to coin a few more lies." And taking the precaution to empty the remaining contents of the bottle, the two young men sallied out. They walked on through the cold and blustering rain, for several blocks, till they came to W—— street, which they turned down, and a few more steps brought them to the door of a large, gloomy-looking tenement, before which they stopped. Their vigorous ring was answered by an old African, whose snow-white head, shining eyes, and ivory masticators, presented a decided contrast to his ebony skin, and rendered his hideous ugliness yet more apparent. There was something so frightful in the leer with which the half-savage-looking creature regarded them, that Harry Vernon whispered, "By heavens! I shouldn't be surprised if old

— has the devil himself in employ; or if this is not him, I'll bet it's the best likeness of him extant."

There was no light in the entry, though it was now nearly dark, and they were ushered into a large, damp, dreary sitting-room;—almost devoid of furniture, and wholly devoid of fire,—there to wait while the devil,—as Harry persisted in calling him,—announced their arrival.

They did not wait long, however, before his Satanic Majesty, intruding his visage in at the door, with a grin more hideous than ever, informed them that the doctor would "deceive them perfectly, if they would please to follow him." Saying which, he ushered them through several long, narrow corridors, so cold, so still, so dark, that his followers, careless as they were, could scarce repress a feeling of fear, (for the bravest man may tremble at a danger he cannot see,) until he came to a room in the back of the building, before which he stopped, and throwing open the door, showed them into the august presence of Dr. —.

However free the mind may be from superstition on ordinary occasions, when voluntarily exposing itself to the influence of its agents, there will steal over one a creeping feeling of awe, and doubt lest such things may be.

If such were the feelings experienced by Harry Vernon and his companion before entering the astrologer's presence, certainly their entrance did not tend to diminish it. Seated before a table on which burned a small, though brilliant lamp, the sole light in the room—engaged in consulting various charts and parchments covered with hieroglyphics, which were spread out before him—sat a man, whose age, judging from appearances, must have reached seventy-five years. His snow-white hair and beard reached nearly to his waist, and presented a strange, almost startling contrast to the long robe of sable which he wore, loosely fastened by a girdle around his waist. His face, or what portion of it was not covered by the heavy beard, was white, too, as death; and gleaming out like a lone star at midnight, there shone an eye, black, and piercing as the lightning flash from the surcharged cloud. Beside him was an astronomical globe, to which he occasionally referred. The windows were hung with curtains of a sombre hue; the walls lined with shelves supported books, (in which many a mod-

ern work of revealed mysteries, was intermixed with curious antiquated volumes,) save on one side, which was hung with a black curtain, through a slight aperture in which might be seen bottles of various sorts and sizes, some containing liquids, ruddy and deep in hue as the ensanguined life-stream; others, clear and colorless as water. It was in the shadow of this black curtain that the astrologer was seated.

He acknowledged the entrance of the gentlemen, by a scarcely perceptible motion of the head; waved his hand for them to be seated, and as they obeyed him, without speaking a word, he fixed his piercing gaze full upon them. Plumdale winced slightly under the infliction; but Harry gave from his bold, black eyes, a glance free and fearless as his own. After scrutinizing them thus a moment, he looked down, and went on with his occupation "with as much coolness," as Harry said afterwards, "as if we had been two fresh importations from Erin's Isle, in a rich man's house, begging for a place." At length he looked up.

"You wish to consult me," he said, in low, singularly sweet tones, "and love is the subject, at least with one."

The young men started slightly, and answered in the affirmative.

"You have a clear, bold eye, and a frank, fearless mien, young sir," he continued, addressing Vernon; "what is the date of your birth?"

Harry informed him, as he affirmed, to the "best of his recollection," and the same question was put to, and answered by Plumdale.

The astrologer drew a sheet of parchment towards him, and commenced rapidly covering it with hieroglyphics, occasionally referring to the globe. Rapid as were his motions, the process was a tedious one, and the young men found their patience rapidly verging towards the threadbare point, when he laid down his pen, raised his eyes, and once more looked fixedly at Harry. At the moment the eyes of the latter were fixed on a ring of Lilian's, which he always wore; he was thinking of her, and sighed involuntarily. When he looked up, and met the searching gaze fixed upon him, a burning flush rose to his cheek. Without asking further questions, the astrologer then said slowly, and distinctly, and with such sweetness of tone, such feeling, and

expression as made his language appear perfectly natural, though it might otherwise have sounded affected: "Young man, thou hast loved; thou lovest still; but she to whom thy earliest, truest vows were plighted, is not the light around which thy heart is fluttering now. She who now enkindles the glowing day-dream of thy young imagination is another,—it may be a brighter, but not a purer, or a truer, than thy first love; but *her* star shines afar off, bright, but lonely; and though thou may'st worship its beams, the star of her destiny and thine can never be united."

"Oh! say not so," interrupted Harry, who had listened from the utterance of the first word with the deepest interest, as his flushed cheek told.

"Would you seek to alter the decrees of Fate?" said the seer sternly. He looked again on the hieroglyphics earnestly, and then continued: "You have a rival, one from whom you think you have least cause to fear danger; but beware of that man; he will snatch the prize from your very grasp, and between you and him there will be blood—yea, a dark and fearful deed of blood. But"—he paused, peered down more earnestly amid the hieroglyphics, and examined the globe long and silently, with the air of one endeavoring to solve a problem—"there are contrary symbols here, tokens at variance with each other," he murmured, as if speaking more to himself than those around him. "Mars looks dark, red, and threatening, and Venus shines out clear, bright, and serene; but Mars is in the ascendant as yet, though there is a probability that their positions may change." He raised his head slowly. "I see a dark cloud overshadowing your fate. It moves slowly onward,—near, and nearer. Should you escape the thunderbolt of that cloud, your destiny may be a happy one. I can see, from the hasty calculations I have made, your danger, but cannot tell positively whether you will escape it or not;—at least, I do not wish to pronounce a doom which there is the slightest hope of averting. Give me time; let me cast your horoscope more fully, and——"

"Thank you," interrupted Harry; "I have had enough of it. Just despatch my friend's business here—which I fancy will give him small comfort, if you leave his fate en-

veloped in as much mystery as mine—and we will leave you to your own reflections.”

The astrologer made no direct reply to this unceremonious speech, but turning to Arthur, said, “And now, sir, for you.”

Mr. Plumdale now felt some misgivings as to whether it was not the best policy for him to decline hearing any revelations concerning himself; but a feeling of curiosity made him bow assent, to the last words of the astrologer.

The latter studied the hieroglyphics again, made some rapid calculations, and as he did so, his brow grew dark as night.

“Man!” he said suddenly, raising his head, and looking sternly upon Arthur, “has it ever occurred to you, that there is such a thing as *retribution*?”

Arthur started, and so confused was he by the abrupt query, that he made no reply. The astrologer continued: “Before me, in the map of your life, I see many a dark scene, and erring deed—affection betrayed, vows broken, friendship deceived, and ruined——”

“Pause, sir!” said the enraged Plumdale, throwing himself into a threatening attitude; for, though constitutionally a coward, he could not withstand this attack. “I allow no man to impugn——”

“Be still, Plum!” said Harry, forcing him with ease back into his seat; then whispering under his breath, “Why mind this cursed mummery? for it’s nothing more—let him go on.” With a smothered curse, Arthur signified his wish that he should proceed. The astrologer, who had risen slowly from his seat—his eyes flashing fire, displaying a figure which, though concealed beneath the sable robe which he wore, was yet commanding, and greatly exceeding the common height—now reseated himself, and, save from the lurking flash in his eye, with every appearance of calmness, continued: “Beware! you are even now rushing on to deeds which will bring retribution on your own head. A dark red circle hovers around your star; ere long that star shall set in blood; yea, in blood and crime—crime the darkest, most soul-revolting.”

“Enough!” said the recipient of these cheering omens of the future, rising hastily. “I will hear no more of this

mummery;" and he felt for his purse—which we may here mention in confidence to the reader, he knew perfectly well was empty. Affecting the utmost surprise at this remarkable occurrence, he turned to Harry, who threw down the sum demanded by the astrologer; and looking, it must be confessed, somewhat more crest-fallen than when they entered, they left the dread presence of the priest of superstition.

"That confounded old fool actually set my teeth on edge with his nonsense," said Harry, as they once more gained the street. His companion made no reply. Harry turned and looked at him. By the faint light of the street lamps, he could see that his face was pale as death. "Pshaw! Arthur, what is the matter? You surely are not thinking of the astrologer's prediction?"

"No," replied the other, endeavoring to shake off the gloom which had fallen like a dark cloud upon his spirit. (For once, Fear, beating at the door of his heart, awakened Conscience, as it often does, and for a moment over that callous heart, swept a far-off vision of reformation,—but for a moment.) "No, I am not well this evening. Where shall we go? to H——'s? I'm cursedly hungry, and we get our supper there *free*, you know."

"I feel too badly to go any where, or enjoy any thing to-night. Dr. M. will drag me through h—— to-morrow, if he finds I was out in this storm. You had better come and roost with me. We can have a bottle of wine, and a quiet little game all to ourselves before we turn in, and then go to bed, and spend the night like Christians. I have no money to bet at the faro table, having been regularly cleaned out last time. Luck is against me these days. I gave that old dog this evening the last cent I had to save my life."

"By the way," said Plumdale—for though he had not the most remote idea of paying, it was well to keep up appearances; "that couple of hundred I owe you—I must try——"

"Oh! never mind, my dear fellow; don't think of it. I guess I can squeeze the governor out of a dime or two, to-morrow. Come on, it's devilish cold."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ASTROLOGER IN A NEW CHARACTER.

"There are many men in this world, and many strange ways of living among them."

ANON.

SCARCELY had the two young men departed, when the astrologer rose from his seat, and ringing a small silver bell beside him, his negro valet made his appearance; the look of half idiotic fierceness and stupidity, which he had worn in the presence of Vernon and Plumdale, gone entirely, and in its place, a look of quiet, respectful attention, and shrewd observation.

"And now, Cesar," said the astrologer, as that individual followed him into a small dressing-room, neatly fitted up, "now help me to doff my insignia of sorcery for the trappings of the *beau monde*. I think I shall attend the opera to-night." As he spoke, he hastily divested himself of his long robe, removed his gray wig and beard, and encasing himself in the fashionable garments presented by the valet, stood confessed as the "illustrious Italian exile, the Count di Basquina."

We have before mentioned the count as figuring, to some extent, in the fashionable world; nothing, in fact, preventing his being a "lion," but his own apparent diffidence, and reserved, melancholy temperament. As to his actual employment, or whether he had any, the world around him never troubled themselves to inquire,—taking it for granted, perhaps, that "his excellency lived on his private fortune." (Private fortune! heaven help the man who has no other means of subsistence, than the private fortune of an Italian nobleman.) He ate and slept at the Astor, and as to what he did beside, it was nobody's business but his own. Perhaps the reader—after his peep behind the curtain—may surmise the cause of the reserve and quietude the count chose to throw around his manner, and his dislike to the publicity which is generally given to the actions of a lion. "Those fellows," soliloquized the count, as he adjusted his cravat before the mirror, "have gone away wondrously edi-

fied by my divine powers, no doubt; and with their faith in the stars marvellously strengthened by the revelations of to-night. After all, nothing is more likely than that my predictions will prove true. Plumdale, a consummate scoundrel, must, sooner or later, meet with his deserts; what man like him ever came to any other than a bad end?—at all events, I fancy I jarred his nerves a little. Hal Vernon is a good fellow, wild as he is; but I've no doubt his headlong passion for Miss Fulton will lead him into some scrape yet. As for her, I can see her fate, glassed in the mirror of destiny, without the aid of aught but natural eyes. Poor girl! she is not the first star that ever faded in darkness, from the sphere where it once shone brightest amid the bright."

He completed his toilet and his soliloquy at the same time, and turning to Cesar, said, "And now, my boy,"—he was sixty, at least—"if the No. — Fifth Avenue lady comes to night, tell her I will see her to-morrow at five, p. m. I have not yet collected all the information I want in her case," he added, to himself, "but I think I can do so to-night. Thanks to my free *entrée* in the fashionable circles, I am generally *au fait* on most of the topics concerning that important portion of the community, and then to foresee their termination, requires only a certain modicum of reflection and worldly wisdom. 'Tis rather a shabby calling, this of mine, I must confess; but this is a world of deception. People dupe others, and in turn are duped themselves, and we are all duped, at last, by the great Master Duper, the devil. I am sometimes compelled, in order to satisfy those from whom I gain my bread, to lend my magic aid to some very mean purposes; but then, again, I am enabled to do good acts—or prompt others, by my prophecies, to do them; for, believing a thing is to be so, very often makes it so—and I fancy my accounts will come out about square, in the next world, after all. A few more years in this good city of Gotham, and I shall have accumulated enough to support my barren title handsomely for the rest of my life, and then for 'home and native land' once more." Thus saying, the worthy count departed, leaving the castle,—as he chose to designate the old tumble-down tenement,—in the care of the faithful Cesar.

The count had shown his discernment in selecting Cesar

as his trusty valet, steward, and major-domo of "the castle," for, apart from his fitness for the office, there is not under the sun a more faithful and devoted race than that of the negro, if well treated.

CHAPTER XX.

"BENEDICK THE MARRIED MAN."

Was it for *this*, I hoped and dreamed,
And wore thine image shrined in my high heart,
Which spurned at all beside?

MS.

It was one of those fair, bright days, which sometimes smile upon us in that month of "cloud and storm," November. Over the ordinarily busy city of Gotham, reigned that solemn air of decorous quiet, which is peculiar to the very atmosphere of the Sabbath. The lofty spire of Trinity seemed to hide its head amid the fleecy clouds which hung suspended from the clear blue sky; as if it sought to bear aloft the rich full notes of music, which swelled through the stately dome below. In one of the richly furnished pews of the church, sat Florence Fulton, and Judge Woodward. The head of the latter was bent reverently, for he was a man of prayer, a man whose religious sentiments were lofty, sincere, and open. Not so with his companion; her eyes wandered over rich velvets and waving plumes, over pious saint and decorous sinner, and at last rested in a dreamy gaze on the stained glass windows, while her ear drank in passionately the rich tide of swelling music, which rolled in waves of melody through the dim arches and proud old dome of Trinity.

She was aroused from her reverie by a slight stir in the aisle; and the next moment she saw Claude St. Julian enter a pew nearly opposite her own,—a lady of small, slight figure leaning on his arm.

Her features were concealed by the thick veil she wore, but when she removed it after taking her seat, Florence saw that her face was fair, but pale, almost to a sickly wanness;

her features delicate, but wearing an expression of listless despondency, painful to look on in one young, and otherwise pretty. She held by the hand a little girl of some five summers, so fair, so bewitchingly beautiful, and yet so fragile, so *spirituelle* in appearance, that the eyes of Florence wandered involuntarily from the mother, to gaze with delight, mingled with painful interest, on the child. It was the face of an angel rather than a human being, and in that face were mingled all the fairy tints of summer heaven;—the soft, serene blue of the sky in the eyes; the fleecy white, and the rose-tinged hues of the evening clouds in the exquisite complexion; and the golden tints of sunset in the shining hair. It was a feast to the artist soul of Florence, to gaze on the unconscious little being, as she sat there with calm, reverential look, her tiny hands clasping her prayer-book; her childish accents lisping the prayer, a halo of innocence and loveliness encircling her. “Who could they be, that mother and child?” for such was the position they seemed to occupy towards each other. Perhaps the lady was a relative of Claude? perhaps she was a widow? and a pang of jealousy shot through her frame;—for every body knows widows are proverbially dangerous. She glanced at her dress; though grave, almost sombre in hue, it was not mourning; and the next moment she smiled at her own folly, in supposing for a moment that the possessor of that face—with its cold, marble-like features, and listlessly mournful expression—could fascinate the gay, *degagé* St. Julian. Still she felt arcused within her all the latent power of that feeling, whose fatal indulgence in our first mother, lost Paradise to her unhappy children; and we fear the services of that day were of little profit to Florence. Nor was she the only one in that still, decorous crowd of beauty, wealth, and fashion, by whom the solemn services they had nominally assembled to hear, were unheeded. Many a velvet-robed bosom throbbed with feelings far different from those of devotion—to heaven at least; many a fair head beneath its waving plumes, was filled with far different thoughts from those which the place and occasion should have inspired. Immediately behind that of Florence was the Moreton pew. It was in vain that Eva endeavored to compose her thoughts into their usual serene, devotional frame—in vain that she tried to listen with atten-

tive earnestness to those sublime truths, those divine doctrines of life and love, which generally awoke so deep an echo in her grateful heart; with pain she felt her thoughts revert to other and earthly objects,—to objects, too, upon which she, alas! had no right to fix them. Before her was the man who had awakened every feeling of love, her young heart had ever known; and by his side was her rival, her regal charms set off to the greatest advantage by the most tasteful and exquisite toilet.

“That adornment, rich and rare,
Which makes the mighty magnet set
In woman’s form more mighty yet.”

She had often heard Judge Woodward express his admiration for a pretty hand. She saw the fair hand of Florence, whose delicate beauty, and soft, creamy whiteness, seemed to woo the beholder to touch its velvety softness,—she saw that little hand—upon which glittered a single diamond of intense lustre—resting coquettishly on the crimson velvet cushion, which enhanced its whiteness; and she saw the eyes of Judge Woodward riveted admiringly upon it. What wonder that the scene swam before her, and a painful sickening sensation thrilled through her whole frame.

And had she known how little Florence cared for the being beside her, aside from the gratification she felt at the open homage of so distinguished a man; had she known how few thoughts she gave him in return for the devotion he lavished upon her, would it have afforded her any consolation? No, she would but have felt more deeply pained, to see that noble heart sacrifice its dearest feelings—those feelings so lofty, so deep, so true, on an ungrateful shrine. She hoped that Florence loved him—how could she help loving him? was he not the very man to call forth the feelings of her proud ambitious nature; to awaken the love of her warm, enthusiastic heart? And with one sigh for her own lonely life, Eva bent her head on her cushion, and prayed fervently for his—for their happiness.

The stranger lady noticed the eager, though not impertinent gaze, which Florence fixed upon her; and as she read the manifest interest expressed in that look, particularly

for the child, her pale features assumed more an expression of life. Claude, too, saw that gaze; as he marked it, a shade, half of haughty impatience, half of melancholy, swept over his features. As they passed out after the conclusion of the services, Florence, who was on the *qui vive*, distinctly heard the stranger lady say, in soft low tones: "Claude, who is that beautiful woman who has just passed us?" His reply was lost as the crowd moved between them.

Scarcely able to repress her impatience until they reached the carriage, the first question of Florence then was—

"Who was that lady with Mr. St. Julian, at church?"

"His wife. Have you never seen her before? However, it is not strange, she goes out so little."

"His wife!" almost screamed poor Florence. "Is Claude—is Mr. St. Julian a married man?"

"Certainly! Is it possible you did not know it? He has been—but pardon me, you are ill?"

"No, only a passing spasm at the heart, to which I am at times subject; it will be over in a moment," and she made a violent effort to recover herself; though when she spoke, her voice was changed, and she was pale as death.

"How long has Mr. St. Julian been married?" she summoned up nerve to say.

"Oh! some years. It was a boy and girl match, I believe. I am glad to see Mrs. St. Julian out; it is the first time I have seen her at church since their return from Europe; or rather since his return, for she did not accompany him."

"Did not accompany him?" echoed Florence, almost betraying by her eager questions the interest she felt. "Was he not absent several years?"

"About three years, I think. Mr. St. Julian has not the reputation of being the most devoted of husbands; so I suppose the separation was not a grievous one, to him, at least."

"And she—his wife—remained in New York?"

"No, with her mother at New Haven, I believe. My dear Miss Fulton, you seem interested in Mrs. St. Julian."

("Mrs. St. Julian!" what a name that was to her.)

"No, oh! no; nothing but woman's curiosity," she re-

plied, with an effort at equivocation that caused her cheek to burn; and pulling the check-string, she desired the coachman to drive faster, though he was then going at almost furious speed.

What was the agony she endured in the effort to suppress her feelings during that short ride home! When the carriage stopped at her own door, Judge Woodward assisted her to alight, and was about to follow her into the house, but she could endure his presence no longer.

"You will excuse me, I am sure!" she said hurriedly. "I am quite indisposed. Any other time I shall be happy——"

"Of course. Judge Woodward regretted very much that Miss Fulton found herself so unwell;" a stately bow, and he was gone; and Florence breathed freer, and walked with a hurried step to her own room, locked herself in it, and hastily throwing aside her bonnet and mantle as if their weight was suffocating—so hastily, that in removing the former, she pulled down the whole mass of her beautiful hair, which fell dishevelled, but unheeded, around her—she paced wildly to and fro the room for half an hour, without pausing for an instant; her hands clasped tightly over her throbbing bosom, her lips and cheeks scarlet with agitation. How wildly the waves of disappointment and despair rolled through her storm-tossed soul in that wretched half hour, can only be imagined by those impassioned beings, who, like her, have staked the heart's most cherished feelings on the throw of a single die—and, like her, lost. After the first torrent of emotion had subsided, bitter regrets for the manner in which she had acted with Claude, tormented her already distracted brain. Had she not almost wooed him to her side? Had she not evidently in her manner showed the greatest preference for his society—neglected, nay, almost shunned others, when he was near? Had he not, during the short period of his acquaintance with her, been ever by her side, and, though never breathing a word of love, lavishing a thousand lover-like attentions on her? And what would the world say to this marked flirtation with a married man?" But after all, with her usual haughty scorn for the opinions of society, she felt that the "world's dread sneer" was nothing, compared with this

sudden crushing of her deepest feelings; this total destruction of the bright hopes which one short hour before were blooming so brightly and freshly around her. Bitter indeed to her was the awakening from love's sweet dream of madness. The lightning blight had fallen on the enchanted garden of the heart's paradise, blasting every bud and blossom there; and now, what was left? Her heart refused to answer the question. Had he not already read her secret? Though lip had not answered to lip, had not her eyes, her tell-tale eyes, returned full often the lava flood-tide which had poured from his own into her inmost soul? Could she but forget it; but sink into a deep, dreamless sleep, to wake utterly oblivious of the past;—of all bygone hopes, of all present feelings, fears, despair!

Such wild, incoherent thoughts as these, dashed madly and tumultuously through her soul. There was but one resource on earth for her; the sparkling cup of pleasure yet wooed her fevered lip; vanity still whispered, 'Drink, drink deeper still, of the magic draught; it will bring forgetfulness; it must not be said that the proud Florence, the triumphant, worshipped belle, mourns over a broken heart-dream.' No, she must be gay, proud, triumphant still; yea, she must learn to look on him, and tremble not beneath his gaze, thrill not at his touch; and this was the hardest task of all; could she ever accomplish it? Pride, prudence, all that was best and loftiest in woman's soul, must come to her aid. She would avoid him; she would school her look and tone, to be unto him as unto others. And *then*, when she had untaught her heart its passion-dream, what then? She could not tell. All she knew was, that love for *him* was guilt; all she felt, was the horror of that word.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ORPHAN'S PROTECTOR—A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

"What shall be done with this refractory girl?"

OLD PLAY.

'Tis not to thee, 'tis not to thee
I look for hope, or sympathy.

It was several mornings after the events detailed in our last chapter, that Florence sat in her dressing-room, lonely, and unhappy. A thousand varied thoughts swept wildly through her mind. In the midst of these painful meditations, there was a tap at the door, or rather three low, deliberate knocks. "Who can it be?" thought she. "I see no one at this hour; besides, I have given orders to be denied to every one to-day."

Her languid "come in," was answered by the door opening, and her uncle's entrance. She rose, received him with the utmost kindness, and placed a chair for him.

"I am happy to see you, uncle. I have not seen you at meals for some days. You have been quite well, I hope."

"Quite well, I thank you," answered Mr. Fulton, or rather a cold calm voice, for not a muscle of the stern, hard face softened in acknowledgment of his niece's salutation; and but that the lips moved, you would not have known from whence the voice proceeded.

"What a man you are, or rather what a lump of ice," thought Florence, as she looked on the cold, world-hardened visage before her, and then at the "customary suit of solemn black," scrupulously neat; for it seemed not even dust could attach itself to Mr. Fulton; in that respect certainly resembling its frail kindred dust, mankind.

"I have come to speak with you on business," continued her uncle in the same tone. "Mr. Fitz Friske has written me that he intends making you an offer of marriage, and requesting my approbation of the same. What are your sentiments on the subject?"

"I think Mr. Fitz Friske," replied his niece, with curling lip and flashing eye, "might have contented himself

with receiving my answer to his suit, without exposing to others intentions that have no value in my eyes."

"It is merely the respect due me," replied her uncle; "but you said (if I heard aright) that his intentions had no value in your eyes. Do I understand by that, that you mean to refuse him?"

"Refuse him!" echoed Florence. "Could you suppose that I would accept him?"

"And why not? He is, to be sure, the most insignificant little simpleton I ever saw; but then, he has a very large fortune, and you may go farther, and fare worse; you should think of that. I assure you his fortune should form a very considerable item in the calculations of a woman with your habits of outlay."

"His fortune! And you would have me marry an 'insignificant little simpleton' for his fortune—a man I can neither respect nor love!" said Florence indignantly.

"Love!" echoed her uncle in a tone of surprise. "And do you feed your imagination with any such absurd idea as marrying for love? I suppose this is the consequence of those foolish romances you are so fond of. When I think of it, I blame myself, that I had not taught you book-keeping, and employed your leisure moments in settling up my accounts, instead of leaving you to pore over such trash. And pray, on whom have your 'maiden affections' centred themselves? On Mr. Vernon, I suppose; I see he is a frequent visitor, and just the sort of fellow to captivate a romantic young lady—a handsome, black-eyed boy. He has only a few small vices—among the number the trifling ones of drinking and gaming; and his father has a splendid estate—in his creditors' books. A fine match, truly!"

"I assure you, uncle," replied Florence, scarcely able to suppress a smile, "that my aspirations do not tend that way at all."

"Then if you do not intend to marry Mr. Vernon, upon whom (if I may be permitted to ask Miss Fulton) do you intend conferring that *honor*? for one might judge, from your conduct, you consider it such. I assure you, it is time you were making up your mind on the subject."

"I was not aware that there existed any pressing necessity for such a step," said Florence firmly.

"You were not? Well, then, are you aware, that in the two years you have had your money at your own disposal, you have spent nearly half of it?"

"I was not," replied she indifferently. "My bills are sent to you, and I hear no more of them. But if I have, you surely have enough to spare," she was about to add, but she checked herself. Her uncle, however, seemed to divine her thoughts, for he answered:

"You think, I suppose, when that is gone, you will come upon me. Let me assure you, once for all, that you are mistaken. I have other uses for my money; and if I had not, I never liked fine ladies, and never intend to support one. I have worked too hard for what I have, to make ducks and drakes of it, in that kind of style."

"I assure you," replied Florence ironically, "I have no intention that you should consume it in that way; indeed, I think the operation you speak of would be a difficult one."

"I did not come here to jest," replied her uncle testily; for in spite of his habitual coldness of manner, he was excitable, as such persons generally are. "My time is valuable. I wish to warn you, Miss Fulton, that it is time you were endeavoring to secure an establishment, suitable to your expensive habits, and a husband to take care of you. You can't go on this way always; and when what little money you have is gone——"

"It is time enough then to sell myself," interrupted Florence bitterly.

"Pshaw! you talk nonsense, as all romantic, idle girls do; you could marry well if you would, and more the fool you if you don't do it. You are an orphan, and need a protector. You seem to have a knack of taking in men, though heaven knows how; I have never seen any thing captivating in you—once an awkward, bad child, now an airy, fine lady."

"Taking in men?" echoed Florence, her fine eyes flashing with scorn.

"Well, captivating them, if it suits your ladyship better," replied her imperturbable uncle. "It's all the same thing in the long run. But to return to my subject: I have no doubt, if you play your cards well, you will receive an offer from Judge Woodward."

"I have already had that honor," answered his niece coldly.

"Ah! and have accepted it, of course. I beg your pardon. I didn't know——"

"I have not accepted him, nor do I intend to do so," she interrupted, firmly. "I shall not marry Judge Woodward."

"Not marry Judge Woodward!" repeated her startled hearer, now fairly thrown off his equilibrium. "Is the girl mad? Not marry one of the most distinguished men in the State? a man that any woman might be proud to secure; worthy, far more than worthy of you!"

"It is for that very reason that I do not marry him," she answered with calm dignity. "I do not love him, and I would not wrong such a man, by marrying him without love."

"Very well," replied her uncle, relapsing into his former cold, stern manner. "Do as you please. Were you my daughter, I should force you into measures, but as it is, I don't care enough for you to make any unnecessary exertions for your welfare. Go on to the devil, if you will; make such a match as your mother did, when she ran off with my harum-scarum nephew, and came to me to be dependent."

"I am not dependent," exclaimed the orphan girl, her feelings wrought up beyond the pitch of endurance, by her uncle's coarseness and harshness.

There is no saying where this scene would have terminated, had there not been at this juncture a tap at the door, and the harsh visage of Mrs. Sharp, the housekeeper, intruded itself, to say that a "gentleman on business wished to see Mr. Fulton directly."

The housekeeper manifested no surprise at the looks and tones of Florence and her uncle. Such things were of too common occurrence to cause surprise, for it was thus, that almost every interview between the two terminated.

Mr. Fulton left the room, and again Florence was alone. Alone with her crushed spirit, and wounded feelings; alone with her own wild, sad thoughts. She paced to and fro the room, as was her custom when much agitated; her face covered with her hands, while tears coursed through her fingers, —bitter tears, wrung from her very heart depths. Nor

were such tears, rare with the gay, the elegant, the admired Florence. So much does "the inner life mock at the outer." With all the adulation lavished at her feet, she was indeed a lonely being,—for whatever the plaudits of the crowd, 'tis to the circle of home, that the heart looks for companionship. In the gentle and kindly influences of home, we seek for happiness—for our dearest meed of approbation—and lonely indeed is he, who has none of these to cheer his way,—to woo his heart from the falsehood, the sin of worldly pleasure, to higher, better things,—to the holy aims, and lofty purposes, which spring to life around the household altar. Alas for Florence, with her warm, passionate feelings, that such a lonely lot was hers!

She had not even a female friend or confidant to whom she could confide the thousand sentiments and feelings which are ever bubbling up in a maiden's heart,—and for her griefs, where could she turn for sympathy? 'Tis seldom that a woman forms many female intimacies, whose society is courted with avidity by the other sex; perhaps because her time and thoughts are too much absorbed for the formation of those little sentimental friendships, in which young ladies who have nothing else to think of, take such especial delight; perhaps the greater cause may be traced to that secret feeling in the female heart, which prompts the sex to look with coldness, or dislike, on those who have the "balance of power" on their side.

Reader! do you pity Florence? If you do not, she will not care, for she is too proud to ask for pity; but if you do, we shall be rather grateful than otherwise.

Her gloomy revery was interrupted by a note from Mrs. Moreton, remonstrating with her, for refusing to attend one of her "evenings," saying she was sure it was caprice, and begging, if she was not too much indisposed, she would alter her resolution, and come.—"I will go," she said, after a moment's thought. "After all, I cannot avoid meeting *him* in society, and my resolution must be weak indeed, if I cannot stand the test of his presence."

It was true, as Florence had told her uncle, that Judge Woodward had made her an offer of marriage; not as if sensible of the honor he conferred, by laying at her feet a hand and heart which had been assiduously sought by the

most experienced “anglers” of the day,—but with as lowly and reverential homage, as ever knight of old bowed at his lady’s shrine, did he “woo this sweet angel, to cheer the solitude of his bachelor home,”—offer his protection, and name, to the lonely orphan girl. “I do not ask you,” he said, interrupting the reply which trembled on her lip, “to decide my fate at once,—I dare not hope that you love me now. I know that yours is not a heart to be won without wooing, and you may not have anticipated my intentions; but if, after months of devotion, that heart may be mine, I shall be more than rewarded.” And after the interview was over, Florence retired to her room, to weep bitterly at the thought that her wayward heart could give no return save gratitude for the love of one so truly noble. “Oh!” she murmured,—“Oh! that I could love this man, who of all others commands my respect and esteem. I will try to love him, yes, I will try; for I must stifle this unfortunate passion for—for—” she hesitated; not even to herself could she breathe that name—she trembled with agitation. Ah! woman, well may’st thou tremble, when a name has such power as this. “But I feel it is vain,” she continued passionately; “never can I feel for Judge Woodward as I have felt for another. For me there can be but one on earth. Every dream of my deep heart, every aspiration of my lone, proud soul, has been his. God created but two souls like ours; why, then, did He permit a cursed fate to separate us—and why should I be doomed to love thus wildly, and, oh heaven! *now* thus guiltily?”



CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE’S GAME OF CROSS-PURPOSES.

Love has many ways to decoy hearts, but perhaps he is oftentimes most dangerous when he seems coldest.

WITH a heavy heart, Florence dressed for Mrs. Moreton’s party; yet from some motive of which she was scarce conscious herself, she bestowed more than usual pains on her

toilet; and when she finished that important operation, never had her mirror reflected a more beautiful image. There was no gayety on lip or brow; none of that proud, calm, queenly consciousness of beauty in her expression she usually wore; but there was a world of melancholy feeling shining far down in the depths of her dark eyes, a deepened flush on her cheek, a subdued *tone* in her loveliness (if we may use the expression), that rendered her, if not more striking, certainly more interesting.

When she made her *entrée* in Mrs. Moreton's drawing-room, leaning on Judge Woodward's arm, Claude was the first person her eyes fell upon. He instantly approached her; her heart throbbed wildly, and the flush on her cheek deepened; but drawing herself up with a cold bow, she swept past him, made the salutations of the evening, in her usual graceful way, to Mrs. Moreton, and then, unheeding the number of eyes fixed eagerly on her, and the dandies on tiptoe about to encircle her, she moved to the farthest corner of the room, and seated herself—with Judge Woodward by her side—in the recess of a window, on a divan holding but two. This was precisely what the judge liked, for without wishing to monopolize, he yet disliked to stand amid the crowd of dandies—their ages ranging from sixteen up—generally surrounding the fashionable belle.

Claude followed her with his eyes, and when she turned her own almost involuntarily in the direction where she left him, he was standing precisely in the same spot, his arms folded, his eyes fixed on her with an expression of mingled pain and mystification. She felt a pang of self-reproach as she saw the expression. "I have pained him," she thought. "He does not know the cause of my coldness, and he is innocent of any intentional offence. I ought not to have acted thus;" and she again raised her eyes, which had fallen beneath his gaze, and looked for him, but he was gone. He was standing by Eva Moreton's side, conversing with an air of assumed gayety. "How pretty Eva looks this evening," said Florence languidly, more for something to say than any thing else, for her usual brilliant flow of conversation forsook her.

Judge Woodward looked towards Eva, and lovely as he always thought her, he never was more struck by her loveli-

ness than to-night; she was attired in a robe of crape of the faintest rose hue, her beautiful neck and arms, fair and soft as the fleecy clouds, wreathed with pearls, and her golden hair braided around the fair Madonna face, the color on her cheek like the inner rose-tint of the sea-shell, and her blue eyes wearing that subdued expression of sadness, like the gaze uplifted to heaven by a penitent in prayer.

"She is looking indeed lovely," replied Judge Woodward, "and I am glad to see it, for I have of late felt some uneasiness about my dear little cousin; she has been looking pale and sad."

"Pale and sad!" echoed Florence. "I didn't know any one could look sad in the atmosphere of the Moreton house."

"Eva, you know, is not very fond of gayety; and she is such a little home-bird, I expect she is beginning to long for the cottage at Oakwood, and her mother's smiles."

"Ah! yes," said Florence mournfully; "she has a mother," and her large dark eyes filled with tears.

Her companion looked on her with deep sympathy, and low, earnest tones of tenderness fell from his lips. Florence, whose eyes were still fixed on Eva, started slightly. Judge Woodward's eyes followed hers; and he too was struck painfully by the expression of Eva's face at the moment. Her cheek was white as death, her eyes cast down, and she seemed vainly endeavoring to conceal the agitation she could not control. As she replied to her companion's words, she looked towards Judge Woodward and Florence, and seeing their eyes riveted on her, she blushed like a guilty thing, and turned her head quickly, but continued to listen with absorbing interest to the words of Claude St. Julian. A moment afterwards, the whole expression of her face changed, as her features lighted up with an answering smile to that which glowed on his lips. An instant after, several gentlemen approached and surrounded her, and Florence could see no more, but she was thoroughly mystified. A pang, sudden, sharp, and quick as death, shot through her soul. "What could have been the words of Claude, to Eva, to produce such an effect? Perhaps he is a universal lady-killer," she thought, "and may possess the same power over others that he has over me;" but a moment after she discarded the

thought, for it was too utterly at variance with her knowledge of Eva's character to be entertained for a moment.

"Miss Fulton seems to be carrying on a desperate flirtation with the stately judge to-night," were Claude's words to Eva. "He seems very attentive to her of late. You ought to assert your prerogative, and forbid a flirtation in that quarter. If rumor speaks true, you have the right to do so."

The color forsook Eva's cheek. "You are mistaken," she said, with an endeavor at firmness; though so unused was she to disguise or dissimulation, that her voice trembled perceptibly. "I knew to what you allude. The report is false. My cousin is devoted to Miss Fulton, and intends addressing her, if he has not done so already."

St. Julian gazed at her for a moment, her death-white cheek, and quivering lip, and said:

"I am sorry to hear you say so."

"Why?" asked Eva eagerly.

"I don't like to say; since, if repeated, he might think it a subject on which I had no right to express an opinion."

"I shall not mention it," replied Eva; "do tell me why?"

"Then, simply, because he will not be loved in return; which he deserves to be."

"Why do you think so?" demanded his listener, quickly.

"Because Miss Fulton is a woman of too much romance, too much passion—if I may use the expression—to love a man like Judge Woodward. I do not mean to say that he does not come up to her ideal standard—he may be superior to it—but he is not the sort of hero to captivate her fancy. She will not, like some women, worship and venerate him for his superior mental gifts, for Miss Fulton is too peerlessly endowed herself, to bow to any one on that score. Judge Woodward is a strictly practical man; the outlines of his character are strongly and distinctly marked; there is no scope for imagination, or romance, about him. Oh, no! she will never love him—I should sooner suspect her of fancying Harry Vernon—and Judge Woodward will not regret it long; I foresee that also," he continued, looking kindly on her, and smiling one of his ineffably sweet smiles, which always

went like a ray of sunshine to the heart. So it seemed to Eva now; for in spite of herself, she felt a thrill of mingled joy and pain at what she had just heard. Claude moved away as other gentlemen approached.

"I have read one secret in a lady's face to-night," thought he, as he once more stood alone in the crowd. "That poor innocent little girl loves her cousin with her whole soul; and he, *he* loves Florence. Well, I have shed one ray of comfort on Eva's heart; and it was for this I spoke as I did; otherwise I should not have expressed my sentiments so freely, true as they are. Florence love Judge Woodward? No, a man must have a dash of the Spanish cavalier, dark curls, black eyes; and jetty mustache,"—and he stroked his own mustache complacently,— "to captivate her fancy, and even a slight air of the Italian brigand would not go amiss. I wonder what is the matter with the haughty beauty to-night, that she treats me so coldly. By heavens, I'll not submit to it. Here she has been for the last two weeks playing the fascinating to perfection; lavishing her sweetest smiles and glances on me, to the exclusion of every other aspirant, and now it is 'Mr. St. Julian;' and he imitated her haughty bow and manner. "She is a regular coquette, and wants to discover the extent of her power over me. Well, we'll see who will beat in this game. *Veni, vidi, vici*, has been hitherto my motto; but I have a formidable foe to contend with now, and my own heart is for once in danger."

Mrs. De Vere Moreton, who had not as yet given up all hopes of Judge Woodward as a prize for her own *protégée*, did not at all like the aspect of affairs between that gentleman and Florence; so, upon her first disengaged moment, she flew around the room, to the corner where they were enconced.

"Florence, love, allow me to intrude upon your sweet solitude; you have been quite long enough immured in this solitary corner. Here are a train of gallant knights, dying with envy and despair, and afraid to approach within the charmed circle; but I have broken the ring. We want some music on the harp. Come forth, and give us the light of your countenance. Judge Woodward will, I am sure, excuse my interrupting your *tête-à-tête*, but we cannot permit him to monopolize."

Judge Woodward disclaimed any such intention.

"Mr. St. Julian, I am just looking for you to sing a duet with Florence; come!"

"Pardon me," replied Claude, "but——"

"Oh! no excuses, but come on; you must oblige us."

St. Julian approached Florence timidly; deferentially he bowed, and said in low tones:

"Perhaps it would be disagreeable to Miss Fulton for me to accompany her."

"No! oh, no!" replied she; "but I don't wish to sing to-night, and must persist in refusing. The harp is not in tune, nor is my soul attuned to song," she added in a lower tone, and her eye-lashes drooped mournfully, and her cheek flushed deeper, but no one noticed it but Claude; and him no look or tone ever escaped.

"Well, if you *will* refuse," said Mrs. Moreton, "Mr. St. Julian, give us one of your songs with the guitar."

Claude did not refuse, for the request was precisely what he wished for at the moment. Song with him was the expression of feeling, and he knew how to make every note, and every word "tell." His voice was remarkably fine, clear and musical, and he sang, too, without affectation. He took the guitar, and striking with a bold hand a few chords, sung with feeling a song, the burden of which was, "wounded friendship, admiration—nay, affection, pure, platonic, *spirituelle* in its nature, born of the congeniality of mind with mind—thrown back upon itself, chilled and repelled by the sudden coldness of its recipient;" and as he sung, his deep, passionate gaze, unheeding all beside, fixed itself on Florence, and vainly she tried to suppress the conscious blush which rose to her cheek.

"Miss Fulton," said a low voice at her side, as she was standing in the shawl room, at the close of the evening, awaiting the announcement of her carriage, which she had sent Judge Woodward to see after. She turned; Claude was by her side.

"Miss Fulton," he said, in frank, though sad tones, "in what way have I offended you? I am certain, from your manner this evening, that I have, though unconsciously, given offence. Let me beg——"

"No, no, Mr. St. Julian," interrupted Florence, tho-

roughly ashamed of her coldness, knowing that he could not divine the cause. "I meant nothing, I assure you."

"Then I am too happy. I may come, then, and read to you to-morrow, the poem we spoke of the other day?"

She hesitated.

"Ah! I see," said Claude, looking disappointed, "it will not be agreeable; pardon me."

"Yes," she replied, scarcely knowing how to act; "yes, it is; you may come."

"A thousand thanks! Here is Judge Woodward. Good night."

"Good night;" and she held out her hand with a kind smile, though her heart throbbed, and her pulses beat painfully in the effort to preserve her usual gay self-possession. He took that little hand with a low bow, and the slightest imaginable pressure; but slight as it was, it thrilled burningly through his own veins, and sent a yet more painful throb to the heart of its recipient.



CHAPTER XXIII.

MR. FITZ FRISKE IS WOUNDED ON A TENDER POINT.—SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND PARENTAGE OF THE BROADWAY DANDY.

"Would that the world had a shorter memory."

THE NEW-MADE MAN.

IN a large and handsome mansion, whose aristocratic, or rather fashionable locality, is sufficiently guaranteed when we say it was on Fifth Avenue—in an apartment furnished with more pretensions to gaudy show than elegance—reclined, on a *chaise longue*, the *élégant* Mr. Fitz Friske. This epitome of mankind was attired in a dressing-gown of flowered satin, his feet elevated as high as possible in the air; the stump of a cigar, which had burned itself out, resting, as if unconsciously to himself, between his lips. His attitude was one of extreme dejection, and his thoughts far from agreeable, if we may judge from the expression—no!

we beg the little gentleman's pardon, he had no expression—but the general air which reigned about him. His mustache, generally trimmed and arranged in the extreme *à la mode*, looked neglected, and, to use an expressive phrase, somewhat seedy. His hair, generally so faultlessly arranged, and glistening with Macassar oil, hung negligently around his face; and his cravat, that *ne plus ultra* of a dandy's ambition, was absolutely awry.

Occasionally he heaved a deep sigh,—or rather a long-drawn inspiration; and pulling a note from his pocket, read and re-read it. He was the picture of a man who had just received a refusal—a very severe one—from the “idol of his affections.”

“Isn't it too bad, to think that Florence Fulton should treat me so,” he muttered, dropping the affected phraseology he used in the drawing-room. “Not that I care much about her, or any other woman; but then she would have made an excellent mistress for this establishment, and it needs one bad enough. What could have made her refuse me? and then so demned cool about it too. The woman must be perfectly heartless, to resist such personal attractions as these;” and he walked up to a large mirror, which reflected a little dapper figure, and a countenance, the insignificance of whose features was rendered more conspicuous by the silly smirk of an overweening self-conceit.

Mr. Fitz Friske, however, seemed to contemplate the image reflected in the mirror with infinite satisfaction, and to derive much consolation therefrom. “Well, if she won't have me, there are many others who will. In fact, I don't know a woman in New York that wouldn't be glad to be Mrs. Fitz Friske, the wife of the ‘man of ton,’”—and he drew himself up, as if the very thought would elevate his pigmy proportions to those of a giant; “saving and excepting the one I had the demned folly to choose out of them all. Who *does* the woman expect to marry, I wonder?” and he fell into a thinking fit, as if this was a problem difficult indeed of solution. “Well, I give it up for a bad job,” he said at length. “I can't imagine what she *can* be looking for. Refuse me! The more I think of it, the stranger it seems. She must have some secret reason that I know not of. Oh! I have it; it's that cursed soap business my

father was engaged in, and be demned to it. I will never get over that; it will be my death yet;" and Mr. Fitz Friske shook his head, and looked as despairing as if already on the verge of the tomb, brought hither solely by the killing reminiscences of the "soap business." It was but too true. The respected parent of the Broadway dandy commenced life a soap-boiler, and continued in this business, finding it lucrative, until he became well known by all dealers in soap—quite an extensive portion of the community—as being the best manufacturer of the article in the city.

The worthy couple who enjoyed the distinction of having given birth to the illustrious Fitz Friske, hailed as their "own native land," "the blissed ould counthry, Erin's green Isle;" and the name stamped on their joint productions—soap, and their infant hope—was Patrick O'Friske. Time passed on, and, as he passed, threw golden showers into the dirty apron of the soap-boiler. His son, sole heir to the honors of their house, was placed at the best schools. It was the old soap-boiler's system to place him at schools where he would receive a good education, and associate with children of his own rank in life; but the mother entertained higher aspirations for the son and heir of this illustrious house.

"Suren't, Pathrick, and why shouldn't the precious darlint be put at school, avie the quality? He shall do no less; he shall be with the *tong* of the city—may the Virgin bless him. Who knows what our little sprig of Ameriky, grafted on the tree of ould Ireland, may come to be yit, in this great counthry. Arrah! Pathrick, ye have no pride of your own, ye have not," and, as usual in such cases, the mother triumphed.

She very wisely reflected, that if brought up in New York, amid the society and associations surrounding herself and lord, little Patrick would be likely to continue among them all his life; or that, at least, it would be much more difficult to impart to him the polish of refinement, opposed by such influences. So he was placed at a fashionable institution, at some distance from the city; which piece of self-sacrifice on the part of his parents, he repaid when he returned home in the vacations, by snubbing both; affecting the most lordly superiority over them, and looking down

with ineffable contempt on the associations of the family roof-tree; all of which Mrs. O'Friske regarded as the most decided manifestations of high breeding and refinement, and rejoiced to think that her dear Paddy had fallen so readily into the manners of the *tong*. She "always knew her jewel was born for a raal jintlemon, and now he proved it." Her worthy lord and master (in name) was not quite so much rejoiced at these evidences of gentility, on the part of his son and heir, but he merely shook his head, and deprecating a domestic hurricane, remained—perhaps unwisely—silent.

As Patrick, Jr., grew up to years of maturity, he became more and more ashamed of his father's employment; and, moved by a continual storm of entreaties on his son's part, ably seconded by tears, scoldings, etc., on that of the meek and tender partner of his bosom, Mr. O'Friske resolved to shut up shop, and retire from business. Just as he had reached this glorious era in the lives of all business people, Death called round upon the old gentleman, and politely informed him that his time had arrived to quit all the cares of this sublunary sphere, and betake himself to another; but whether higher or lower, "deponent saith not." Mr. O'Friske, in some doubt—good Catholic as he was—as to whether he should find the other world as agreeable as this, demurred very much at this proposition, and Death, finding him so refractory, dropped his politeness, and took him,—will I, nill I,—not a great deal to the regret of his son, who, if the truth must be told, would have been rather pleased had his "mamma dear" accompanied "the dear departed" on his voyage home; and whose sentiments, had they been sounded on the day of his father's funeral, would have been a decided approval of the Hindoo method of disposing of widows. Thus satisfactorily would he have disposed of the two greatest drawbacks upon his advancement in life—his vulgar parents. They had finished their work, as far as he was concerned; they had given him life—but then this was, it was true, rather a mortifying reflection,—nurtured in love his infant years, showered upon him every advantage in their power to bestow, and now nothing remained but to give him their wealth, and get out of his way. - He would have borne the death of both with the serene fortitude of a Christian, and murmured not at the blow, had Providence

chosen to inflict it. But Mrs. O'Friske, if not destined to shine in the circles of high life, was to live for many years yet, to watch over the rising fortunes of her "darlint."

Patrick O'Friske, Jr., was of age at his father's death. He determined to make good use of the large fortune which had fallen into his hands. At first he proposed boarding; he would have rooms down town, at some fashionable hotel, and his mother could board at a more retired private boarding-house; but this last, that lady would not hear to, and for once he found it vain to argue the point. She was determined on having a house "right on Fifth Avenue, among the *tong*," and there alone would she consent to go; and as she was quite able to do so, having been handsomely provided for by her deceased lord, there was nothing left for Patrick but to acquiesce.

A mansion was accordingly purchased in Fifth Avenue, and furnished throughout in the most showy and expensive style. To be sure, things were not put exactly in their right places; some articles, whose legitimate sphere seemed to be the chamber, usurping dominion in the parlor, and *vice versa*; but Mrs. O'Friske was in happy ignorance of this; and "where ignorance is bliss," etc. The O was dropped before the name of Friske, and the youthful aspirant had serious ideas of placing "De" as the prefix thereunto; but at last he decided, in despair of being able to give it the Parisian touch, on Fitz, as having an aristocratic sound; and "Fitz Friske" shone resplendent on the door-plate of the mansion. It is said that society in New York is extremely accessible, and that the door of Fashion yields readily to the golden key of wealth.

We are inclined, in some degree, to doubt the truth of this assertion; but be that as it may, the young millionaire was not long in gaining access to the halls of the "upper ten." In this laudable enterprise he was greatly assisted by Arthur Plumdale, who, being a shark that was ever on the look-out for gilded fish, happened to be the first one among the *élite* to honor our friend with his acquaintance. As long as Patrick was inclined to play the liberal, and be bled freely, without groaning under the infliction, Mr. Plumdale was equally willing to load him with an everlasting weight of obligation, by introducing him gradually (only gradually,

so as always to leave a *corps de réserve*, to be paid for in case of need), to the numerous and fashionable circle of his acquaintance. But for once Mr. Plumdale was foiled at his own weapons. A first introduction was all that was required for Patrick; there was a magic sound in the name of "the young millionaire," which secured him at once a favorable reception, and opened the doors of even the most exclusive—where there were marriageable daughters, or extravagant sons—and there are few families which cannot boast a liberal number of these blessings. He made a brilliant *début*, and soon became "the dandy of the day." This position once secured, the first efforts of the ungrateful little wretch was to get rid of his expensive friend, for he—Mr. Fitz Friske—was one whose ear was deaf to the calls of the needy, and whose fingers clutched instinctively over every guinea in their grasp, unless that guinea was to purchase a gratification for his own precious self. Not vicious enough to like vice for its own sake; too narrow-minded and cold-hearted to be easily led astray by the follies and temptations, which often lure the generous and unsuspecting to ruin; he indulged in dissipation no farther than the imperial edicts of the autocrat Fashion required. Mothers and fathers admired him in due proportion, and pointed him out as "a good, safe chance—a young man of such exemplary habits," to their daughters, who mentally responded, "horrid little simpleton! I am sure I like that dear, dashing Bob Such-a-one, or that wild scapegrace, Harry Thingumbob, much better; but then—he has the money." Mr. Fitz Friske found much more difficulty than he anticipated in getting rid of "his friend," who had no idea of being thus taken in by his own dupe—considering Patrick as his own property, by the right of precedence,—and who, moreover, entertained such an overpowering affection for that interesting young man, as to lead him to declare, a dozen times a day (in his presence), that he loved him like a brother. No doubt he would have been his brother, if he could; but that being in the course of nature impossible, he was willing, instead, to bear towards him the somewhat less endearing title of brother-in-law. Towards this last point the efforts of the whole family were, for a time, directed; but it was in vain that Arthur lavished upon him so many demonstrations of fraternal affection. in

vain that the mother expressed the deepest interest in him, and begged him always to "feel at home in her house;" in vain that the charming Augusta lavished her most enchanting smiles upon him, and when these failed, as a *dernière* resort, the tender and budding loveliness of Lettie, the sweet miss of sixteen (or "by'r Lady," twenty), was paraded before his fastidious eyes; the fish would *not* bite; and at last, in a fit of despair, he was given up for a hopeless case, and in their hearts, no doubt, fervently consigned to the tender mercies of an individual whom it is unnecessary here more particularly to mention, as our worthy and intelligent reader no doubt understands perfectly to whom we allude. His acquaintance with the Plumdale family still continued, as we have seen, on terms of apparent friendliness, though he had long since dropped the intimacy of Arthur,

" Which to him had been once so *dear*."

It was impossible to metamorphose old Mrs. O'Friske into a fine lady, and, after some good-natured efforts, the stars of fashion quietly ceased their exertions, and contented themselves with leaving cards now and then. Occasionally an invitation found its way into her sanctum, but this was rare, for Patrick gave orders to the servants—who were as much ashamed of their mistress as he was of his mother—to bring all such missives to him, and once in his hands, they rarely went farther; and thus he was spared the mortification of seeing her expose herself in the circle where he *seemed* to be a favored guest. True, there were covert sneers and sly jests, every now and then, but Patrick was content with his lot, and willing to swallow the pill of patronage, however bitter, provided it was administered by the hand of Fashion.

The reader will pardon this digression, and we will proceed with the soliloquy of Patrick, or Patterson Fitz Friske, as he now wrote his name, much to the disgust of his mother, who thought it quite a compliment to him to bear the name of his patron saint, and insisted on writing her own name with the "good ould Irish O'" still.

"Yes, it's that demned soap business, I have no doubt. Let's see what she says again;" and for the tenth time Mr. O'—we beg his pardon, Mr. Fitz—Friske, proceeded to abstract from his vest pocket the fatal missive, which had, to

use a favorite expression of his mother, "totally discomborated his narvous system."

"Miss Fulton is at a loss to imagine how her conduct towards Mr. Fitz Friske could have been misconstrued by him into the slightest encouragement of his addresses; but since Mr. Fitz Friske seems, in some unaccountable way, to have formed this erroneous opinion, Miss Fulton feels it her duty to assure him that he is laboring under a delusion; hoping this will be sufficient on her part, and that this silly, and—Miss F. feels confident—but momentary affair, will soon be erased from the memory of both parties!"

"Cool, upon my soul! I'll go straight and pop the question to Gussy Plumdale, demned if I don't! I always liked her, only I thought I ought to court Miss Fulton, as it was the fashion, and *this* is what I get for my pains. Gussy hasn't much money, I guess—which I hate consumedly—but then she is an elegant woman, and will grace my establishment—and, moreover, I want to be revenged on that demned Fulton girl!" and he shook his fists in the air in a towering rage. At this juncture the door opened, and a face, jolly, round, and fiery, as a full moon just rising, presented itself in the aperture, accompanied by a form, whose voluminous proportions were clothed in a dress of bright-hued silk, though it was morning; and whose head rejoiced in a cap adorned with multitudinous ribbons, set very far back on a redundance of tow-colored hair. A large gold watch was displayed at her side, attached to a massive chain, and her short, thick fingers were adorned with a profusion of rings.

This elegant figure planted her arms akimbo, and stared in blank amazement at Mr. Fitz Friske.

"Arrah, honey darlint, I niver seed ye in such a flustration before. What is the matter, my jewel? Come, tell yer mother, and sure ye know, ye are the light of her eyes, Pat-thrick;" and with this she proceeded to throw her fat arms around the neck of the refined exquisite, and inflict upon him a motherly—or rather a suffocating—embrace. Mr. Fitz Friske disengaged himself from her arms, with an expression of unmitigated disgust.

"Mother, will you never cease your odious, vulgar ways? Why should you call me Patthrick? I suppose you wish to make a laughing-stock of me, in my own house."

“Not the least in the world, my darlint,” replied his mother, not disturbed in the smallest degree from her equanimity, “but that is the name yer own blissed father, who is in heaven, thè saints be praised,” and she crossed herself devoutly, “give ye; and that is the name I, for one, shall always call ye by. Ye ought to be proud of it. I remimber well, as though ’twere but yisterday, when his riverence, the praste, handed you to me after sprinkling you with the holy water, and pronouncin’ the blessin’. Now says he, Judy, Judy, says he, take him, and may he prove worthy of his name; and ye are ashamed of the name of the Patron Saint of ould Ireland! Shame on ye, say I.”

“Well, for heaven’s sake, mother, let the name drop now; but as I said before, why don’t you drop your vulgar ways, and try to improve?”

“How can I improve, Pathrick, when yer high-flyin’ set don’t visit me often enough, for me to larn how they behave themselves?”

“You can read, mother; why don’t you read?”

“Read! and do you s’pose I’ve tiled day in and day out to make a fortin, just so I could sit down and fold my hands, and wear my silks and satins, like the rest of the quality?—faith, and why shouldn’t I?—and you think I’m going for to set down now, and bother my eyes over yer books, worryin’ my life out with sich trash? Indade, but it’s myself that will do no sich thing.”

“Ah! I see you are incorrigible,” sighed Fritz.

“Arrah! now don’t be spoutin’ your dictionary words, and turnin’ up your nose at your poor old mother. It has a natural inclination that way, any how; and if you keep a curlin’ it in the air in that kind of style, it will be after looking clane over your head after a while; it will, indade.”

Mr. Fitz Friske deigned no reply to this remark, but proceeded to doff his dressing-gown, and encase himself in more suitable habiliments, brush his hair and his mustache, —his mother looking on, meanwhile, with intense interest— and when these important operations were concluded, after a glance of infinite satisfaction in the mirror, he completed his equipment with the addition of his eye-glass and cane, and, without condescending to inform her of his intentions, left the house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GLIMPSE AT THE ARCH FIEND AND HIS VICTIM.—GUSSY
FULFILS HER DESTINY.

"The fish is caught! what a beautiful gold-fish!"

"Ah! methought a moment since, 'twas scarce worth the bait."

DIALOGUE ON ANGLING.

GUSSY PLUMDALE was seated in her handsomely furnished parlor;—we say handsomely furnished, for though an acute and knowing eye might have guessed the furniture bought second-hand at auction, it looked extremely well in the subdued light of the rooms. The young lady's morning toilet, too, was simple and elegant. She was engaged in conversation with a friend, a fair, attractive-looking girl, save that her beauty was voluptuous rather than intellectual, her figure betraying rather too much *embonpoint* for the symmetry of maidenly beauty, and who had—though she was laughing and talking quite gayly—a sleepy, heavy look about the eyes, and a restless, uneasy expression, visible all the time about her face. Occasionally she glanced nervously towards the door. Suddenly pausing in her conversation, Gussy looked at her friend steadily for a moment, and then said, "Georgie, what is the matter with you? A change seems to have come over you of late. You are not as gay as you used to be, or rather, all your gayety seems forced. You look paler than usual."

If the face of Georgina Watts was pale a moment before, she could have denied the charge now. A burning flush shot over brow, cheek, and neck, and a starting her eyes from the keen glance of her companion, she rose hurriedly, and drawing her velvet mantle more closely around her, walked to the window, as she answered,

"Pshaw! Gussy, it is all imagination; changed indeed!—but here is some one coming in; who is it?"

Gussy rose, and peeped through the blind.

"My horror of horrors! that odious little Fitz Friske! What on earth can he be coming here for this morning?"

"I'm sure I don't know; but do let me escape before he is announced;" and hastily kissing her friend, she hurried out. At the parlor door she met Arthur Plumdale. Her

face lighted up. "Oh!" she said, "I am so glad you have come; I thought I would not see you. Come with me; I have something to tell you."

As they passed out, they met Mr. Fitz Friske, whose audible inquiry was for "Miss Plumdale" alone.

It was not long before Gussy discovered the object of that "odious Fitz Friske's" visit; and the rapid revulsion of feeling which she experienced when she learned his errand, could only be accounted for by remembering that she was a needy and extravagant woman of fashion, he, the fortunate possessor of a large fortune.

"His vulgar mother, what shall I do with her?—but I mustn't stop for trifles, where a million is in question," were her thoughts, as Mr. Fitz Friske, endeavoring to throw into his face as much of a lover's impatience as he could muster for the occasion, was awaiting—not very anxiously, it must be confessed, for he knew well what it would be—her answer. At length it was faltered forth, with as many sighs, blushes, etc., as were becoming the occasion; answered, in fact, with such well-feigned tenderness, that Fitz Friske felt certain that Gussy must have been secretly dying in love with him, for heaven knows how long; and inwardly reproached himself, for having been thus blind to the merits of one who could so well appreciate his own attractions.

CHAPTER XXV.

SCENES BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

"Child, let that curtain alone! How dare you raise it?"

"Because, ma, I heard pa tell you a man might keep out of many a scrape could he only get a peep behind the curtain."

"BREAKFAST waiting this hour, sir," said a very small specimen of the genus homo, dressed in an antiquated suit of blue, to which was attached some faded strips of red velvet, by way of representing the livery of the Plumdale house, and who looked as if the sight of a plentiful dinner had not gladdened his eyes for many a long day—opening the door of Arthur Plumdale's chamber.

"You villain! how dare you disturb me the third time?" replied that amiable gentleman, rushing out of bed, and launching a boot-jack at the head of the unfortunate delinquent.

"Please, sir," returned the boy, taking refuge outside the door, through which his voice issued in a weak nasal twang—"please, sir, your mother says, you had better make haste down; she has a surprise for you."

"Surprise the devil!—if you don't stop your infernal mewling at that door, I'll——" but it was useless to continue the threat; the small boy's footsteps were heard rapidly retreating down the stairs.

"Well," soliloquized the head of the Plumdale house, as he proceeded to ensconce himself in his sundry habiliments, "it is a cursed hard thing that a man has to get up as cold a morning as this, and dress without a fire. I think it would be a blessed thing if some of that superfluous portion we expect hereafter, could be granted us here sometimes. Poverty is a curse, and I am a miserable example of it,"—and certainly, as he stood shivering in his nether garments, the proportions of his figure, generally full and manly, looking somehow strangely diminished; a bald space visible on the top of his head, generally covered with glossy locks of redundant thickness—his superb mustache and whiskers having, by some unaccountable metamorphosis, changed their position from his face, to a box on the dressing-table—he was a pitiable object to behold; looking at least ten years older than the Mr. Plumdale we have before seen. The toilet, however, effected a material change, and when it was completed, "Richard was himself again," or rather he was himself, and a good deal more.

With a discontented expression he made his way to the little hole—as he chose to denominate it—in the basement, where the family were at breakfast. Here the aspect of things was more cheerful; a fire burned brightly in the grate, and Mr. Plumdale seated himself at the—it must be confessed,—somewhat scantily furnished table, he noticed the look of scarcely suppressed joy which reigned in the faces around. In that of Lettie mischief seemed predominant.

He cast an inquiring glance upon them, but without deigning to speak, proceeded to gulp down his tea and toast.

Finding he did not intend to show any curiosity, if he felt it, Mrs. Plumdale could hold in no longer, and dismissing the thin young man—quite an unnecessary operation, for he was too much absorbed in devouring the victuals with his eyes, to heed any thing else—she made the important announcement that the fish was caught;—the millionaire had proposed at last.

Mr. Plumdale nearly leaped from his seat with astonishment and delight. ‘A change came o’er the spirit of his dream’ in an instant.

“By heavens! Gussy dear,” becoming all at once very affectionate, “that is good news. Proposed at last! Well, better late than never. I only hope that you will not forget your loving brother, when you get that little fool’s purse in your hands.”

“Now, brother,” broke in Lettie, “gentlemen ought to make money for themselves. Sis’ Gussy must bring me out in society, and oh! won’t it be nice to make my *début* in that elegant house in Fifth Avenue!”

“Silence!” commanded her mother, “a mother’s claims are before any others; and I have said nothing as yet.”

Augusta bit her lip. “So,” she thought, “my family think nothing of *my* prospects, they think only of themselves; but,” suppressing a sigh, “’tis the way of the world. Heaven knows I marry Fitz Friske solely for an establishment, but I am a fortunate woman after all.”

“But what on earth, Gussy, will you do with his vulgar mother at your receptions—which must of course be very elegant?” asked Mrs. Plumdale, with maternal solicitude.

“Oh! we must manage to get her out of the way somehow. They say Fitz Friske never lets her go out now.”

“I wonder if he has forgotten the day I made him fall into the sand-marsh,” cried Lettie, bursting into screams of laughter. “Oh! I never saw such a sight, as the horrid little goose was, in Hal Vernon’s old clothes. He ought to borrow that suit for his wedding, Gus.”

Augusta looked furiously at her sister.

“Lor’! sis’ Gussy, you needn’t look that way; you laughed more than any of us that day.”

“Silence, Lettie!” said her mother with dignity, “and never let me hear such remarks again, about the affianced husband of your sister.”

‘And now, Lettie,’ said her brother, ‘if we can secure Hal Vernon at last for you, all our purposes will be accomplished.’

‘I fear there is not much chance of that,’ replied Lettie, her countenance falling.

‘I don’t know; there seemed to be as little chance of Fitz Friske a day or two ago.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE WIFE *vs.* THE IDOL.

“Oh! I would give the fairest realm beneath the all-seeing sun,
To win but such a form as *thou* might’st love to look upon.”

“I deemed at last the time might come, when sick of passion’s strife,
Thy heart would turn with quiet joy, to thy neglected wife;
Vain, foolish hope! how could I look upon that glorious form,
And think the time would ever come, when thou wouldst cease to charm;
For ne’er till then wilt thou be freed from beauty’s magic art;
Or cease to prize a sunny smile, beyond a faithful heart.”

• MRS. OSGOOD.

FORREST was performing at the Park theatre, drawing nightly crowds of admiring auditors. Claude wished Marion to go, thinking she would find it a pleasant recreation; and besides, every body went to see Forrest.

“No, she did not like the theatre; and why should he wish to force her to attend a place of which she disapproved so much? Was it a concert, now, she might think of it.”

The discussion dropped. Some days afterwards, her sister came, with her husband, to spend a few days in the city. She manifested all the eagerness of a person fresh from the country for places of amusement. The very first evening of her arrival, she wished to see the great actor in a celebrated piece which he was then performing. She persuaded Marion to accompany her. She hesitated; she had refused her husband so positively; but at last she was overruled, and consented to go. Claude had gone out, and did not return before the last moment to which her impatient friends would consent to wait, and she departed without even informing him of her intention.

The house was thronged to overflowing, and Marion shrank back with her usual timidity, as she encountered the blaze of youth, beauty, and fashion, around her.

The curtain had risen, and she soon became absorbed in the scene going forward on the stage, when her attention was recalled suddenly by an exclamation from her sister, whose eyes had been busily roving over the house to "see the latest fashions." "There is your husband, Marion, talking to the most beautiful woman I ever beheld! Who is she? and what is he doing there?"

Marion's eyes, following the direction pointed out, fell on a face and form, glorious in loveliness, as the most inspired creation of the poet; loveliness, too, enhanced by the most exquisite toilet, and all that high-bred grace, that sparkling fascination of manner which is charming in itself, and, united to beauty, irresistible. Marion recognized the lady who had attracted her attention at church, but whose name she could not now recall. In her chaperone she recognized Mrs. De Vere Moreton, with whom she had a slight acquaintance.

These ladies, or rather the younger and more beautiful, was the centre of a group of gentlemen, but none in that group showed the *empressement* of manner, the passionate admiration manifested by her husband; it might have been merely a jealous fancy of the wife; doubtless no one else noticed the same thing. The house was brilliantly lighted, and every action was perceptible to her eager gaze; nay, she almost fancied she could hear the thrilling tones of his voice, as he bent over the beauty, until his dark curls almost touched her flowing tresses. With a wild, deep sense of pain throbbing at her heart, a cold chill benumbing her, from her head to her feet, Marion drew slightly back, so that the glare of the gas lights might not fall so directly on her face. In that thronged house, amid the glare, glitter, and strange faces, she saw but two forms; those of her husband, and the lady beside him. To Marion, that envied being seemed to be the incarnation of all the fascinations under the sun, and so she would have imagined any one, who could be the recipient of one look of admiration from *him*.

"Oh! that I were like her," was the prayer which welled up involuntarily from the tortured heart of the wife.

Yet the features of Marion, *petite* and pretty, were perhaps more regularly perfect than those of Florence; but where was the animation, the soul, that lighted up the face of the latter into almost superhuman beauty; the glorious world of intellect and feeling, breathing and speaking in every sparkling glance, in every graceful movement? Ah! this, the magic power to charm, was wanting.

At length the attention of Florence became riveted on the stage, and Claude, raising his lorgnette, commenced scanning the faces around him. Suddenly the glass was directed full towards the cold, distorted face of his wife. He started with surprise; a look of deep displeasure passed over his face, and with a haughty curl of the lip, and an air of perfect *insouciance*, he turned to Florence once more, and devoted himself to her with more *empressement* than ever. Nor did he glance once again towards Marion the whole evening, or, when she to her long and torturing play was over, approach to hand her to her carriage. Mechanically she wound her way through the crowd, leaning on the arm of her brother-in-law, who whispered to his wife, "St. Julian must be a strange sort of husband."

"Why, Marion," said her sister, as the carriage door was closed upon them, "do you allow your husband to flirt with other ladies, and neglect you in this kind of style?"

Marion struggled with the emotion which choked her utterance, and replied in a tolerably steady voice, and with an attempt at gayety painfully forced:

"Oh! sister, you have not a fashionable husband, or you would have become quite accustomed to such things by this time."

"I thank heaven, then, that I never made a 'brilliant match,' if neglect and bad treatment must be the inevitable consequences," responded her sister, as Marion thought with very little feeling.

She made no rejoinder; she could not speak. It was not until she reached her own room, that her mortification and wounded feelings found vent in tears.

Had Claudio returned to her side that night, he would have found that her cheek was pallid, and pillow wet; and he might have bent over her in pitying tenderness; for marble-hearted must be the man who can resist a woman's tears. But through the long, lone hours, he came not.

When he met the strained gaze of his wife fixed upon him at the theatre, his first feeling was of displeasure—that after positively refusing to gratify his wishes, she should then come hither unknown to him; the next thought, which followed the first like lightning, was that her motive must be to watch in secret his actions. It was this last thought that curled his haughty lip, as he turned once more to Florence. “Does she imagine that I will submit to this *espionage*?” he said to himself. “No, by heaven! I will show her that I defy her Argus eyes, watch as she will.” As he walked out with the Moreton party, not ten steps behind Marion, a voice hissed in his ear, “Beware!” in the same tone in which he had heard it on the memorable occasion of his first meeting with Florence. He turned fiercely, but recognized no one in the throng pressing immediately around him, but the Count di Basquina, whose attention seemed absorbed in another direction.

The husband and wife met at breakfast the next morning; she, cold, constrained, silent, but making no allusion to the preceding evening; he, with a look of freezing hauteur marbling his chiselled features, though he was polite and respectful to his guests.

“By the way, brother Claude, who was that beautiful girl to whom you were paying such devoted attention last night?” said the sister, determined to rally him on the subject. “I told Marion, were I in her place, I positively would not permit it.”

“My actions are independent of the surveillance of any one,” he answered haughtily; then, casting a glance of defiance at Marion, he added with much animation, “It was Miss Fulton, the most beautiful woman in New York, and as fascinating in manner as beautiful in person. I admire her more than any other woman I ever met, decidedly.”

Mrs. A—— looked at her sister quickly. Marion rose, and left the room. The conversation terminated rather abruptly and awkwardly. That day, and for many days afterwards, there was coldness, sadness, and gloom, even deeper than usual, in the heart of the wife: and a more studied avoidance of her society than ever, on the part of the husband.

The sister departed, and it was a relief to Marion when

she was no longer there to see the state of affairs between herself and husband—her once adored Claude. As she listlessly occupied herself day after day with her child, (poor little caged bird, scarcely permitted to breathe the fresh air of heaven,) it seemed to her that the clear winter sunshine was a mockery, and that the whole earth should have worn a dull, cold, leaden aspect, to suit the character of her own morbid and sombre feelings. Marion's sister was a woman of much stronger mind than herself. She had a good deal of firm, practical good sense. She did not leave without painfully reflecting on the situation of her unhappy sister; but while she blamed the gay and thoughtless husband much, she did not altogether exculpate the wife.

In her letters to Marion, she implored her to overlook the errors of her husband as much as possible; to endeavor to be gay, agreeable, and affectionate in her manner towards him; to yield more to his tastes and fancies in her arrangements and pleasures, and by thus making his home happy, woo him from other and less holy sources of pleasure. She was sure, she said, that there was a fund of latent tenderness in his nature, which Marion might draw out towards herself if she would.

“Coldness, reserve, and want of confidence,” she wrote, “is surely not the way to attract, or fix the affections of your husband. What was attributable to timidity in the maiden, is chilling and repellant in the wife; and instead of becoming less reserved, it seems to me you are ten times colder, more constrained in your manner, than ever. Ah! Marion, believe me, there are faults on both sides; but learn to correct your own, ere you exact too much from Claude. The happiness of a wife is locked up in the affections of her husband; therefore it is worth a lifetime of labor to her, to retain the love which, once lost, leaves her nothing, so far at least as this world is concerned, to hope for.”

Marion burst into tears over this letter. “How can I be otherwise than constrained in the society of one who I know must feel his superiority over me? A neglected and injured wife! how can I be gay and affectionate?”

She did not try, but buried the world of idolatrous love which she felt for her husband, deep in her hushed heart, and

gazed at him over the barrier which her own reserved silence, or cold reproaches, had fixed between them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CLAUDE ST. JULIAN TO R. GRATTON, ESQ.

“How specious are the excuses of a libertine.”

“Marriage is a desperate thing; the frogs in Æsop were extremely wise; they had a great mind to some water, but they would not leap into the well, because they could not get out again.”

SELDEN.

“It does not appear essential that in forming matrimonial alliances, there should be on each side a parity of wealth, but that in disposition and manners they should be alike.”

TERENCE.

To you only, my dear old college chum, the boon companion of many a happy day, the friend of my after years, would I confide the thoughts and feelings which for the last six weeks have attained the mastery over my soul.

Would to heaven, my dear Bob, that I could have foreseen the future, when, six years ago, in our little room at Yale, you, an older and wiser man than I, bade me beware how I entangled myself too early in the fetters of matrimony. Alas, for me! I had not your cooler judgment. I thought only of the gratification of a boyish passion, and for once Damon differed from his Pythias. You told me that she was far from being my equal in intellect, and in no way congenial in disposition. You told me, as well might the fires of Vesuvius strive to mingle with the eternal snows of the Alpine glaciers, without the destruction of one or the other element, as I seek to commingle my nature with hers, without the destruction of my, or her happiness. As to your assertion with regard to the difference in intellect, I do not pretend to say you were right, but the last was but too true. And here is another triumph for you, in your favorite study, human nature. Oh! that I had believed in your infallibility then. How much it might have saved me. And yet, poor Marion, I sometimes think she loves me still, but *cold*—Gratton, she is a block of impenetrable marble to me. Were it not for our child, the only link between us, I think our union, save in name, would long since have been

over. You know why this is so, for I have before spoken to you of the dissimilarity in our tastes and pursuits, as being the first cause of it; a cause, it seems to me, strangely inadequate, in producing such an estrangement of feeling in a wife towards a husband.

In spite of this utter dissimilarity in thought and feeling, she cannot accuse me of ever being aught save kind, nay, at times even tender, in my manner towards her; and, in fact, until of late, I *have* cherished for her some lurking remains of tenderness. She is my *wife*; there is something sacred in the name, after all; and I would have continued always to love her, if I could.

It is surely not my fault, if I have been so unfortunate as to meet, too late, alas! a being before whom my very soul bows down, as the embodiment of every ideal creation of loveliness, of womanly perfection, ever formed in my craving heart, since first nature revealed to me the dreamy mystery of the existence of love in the soul.

When I look upon one who seems to be the concentration of icy indifference, who never addresses me with one accent of tenderness, and think that *she* alone separates me from a world of bliss, which, save in dreams—dreams which tantalize me to madness—can now never be mine, can I be blamed if I feel the very presence of this being as a weight, an incubus on my very life? Yes, when she is in the room where I am, I feel as if the air suffocated me. But you will say, tell me something of this divinity, of whom you speak so rapturously! Listen, and pity. I know I have weaknesses. I know your firm, strong nature, and therefore, though of no one else on earth would Claude St. Julian ask it, yet of you I beg *pity*.

Weeks, which seem ages, from the to me important events crowded into their space, have passed since I first met her, who is now the passion-dream of my soul.

It was a gay and brilliant scene. Lights were beaming, starry eyes flashing with joyous light, music breathing its seductive strains around; all that breathed of life, love, and happiness, shone in that glittering circle. Woman, with "all the charms that nature could lavish, or art adorn," was before me.

I had just returned, after long absence, and was of

course, a conspicuous character, and expected to make myself very agreeable, but I never felt so *distract*; never were my efforts at gayety so forced. In vain I endeavored to divert myself with the bewitching coquetries, that fell from the ruby lips, and beamed from the starry eyes around me. Bewitching glances, sentimental whispers, and playful *badinage*, were alike dull and tame to me. Occasionally my eyes, and I confess my thoughts, wandered towards a brilliant-looking beauty, to whom my attention had been called as the belle of the season; but I had only half made up my mind to be presented, when she raised her eyes, and her gaze fell full, as it were, into my own. Had those eyes,—those deep, glorious, soul-filled eyes,—been the portals of paradise, and I for the first time permitted to feast my ravished soul with a glimpse of its eternal, vein-thrilling, pulse-quickenning delights, I could not have felt a deeper thrill than that which went like liquid lightning, to my heart of hearts.

I have gazed on woman in the sweet freshness of her spring-time beauty; in the matured loveliness of her glowing summer, in all the fascinations of yielding love; but never realized before all that my soul yearned after in its wild, young dreams; in the bright illusions of the golden age of the heart.

But you will weary of this rhapsody. You will say, "Ah! my dear Claude, you were born under a fiery planet, and this is only one of the momentary ebullitions of your impetuous nature; it will be over in a month." I am not endeavoring to make you believe I fell in love at first sight. It was only—I am convinced—one of those momentary enchantments which sometimes fling their illusive spells over our senses, and fade away like a dream; and probably, had nothing transpired afterwards, to add fuel to the flame, I should soon have ceased to think of the captivating beauty, save as a charming woman, with whom it might be pleasant to while away a passing hour.

I was presented to her. You may think it fancy, but from that hour, she seemed to single me out from the crowd of her adorers. Her manner towards me was marked by an *empressement*, a preference, which was flattering in the extreme, coming from a woman like her, and which would have

intoxicated many a man of less feverish temperament than myself. She has a notorious reputation as a coquette, and I entered the lists with no deeper intention than a passing flirtation with one who—the malicious declared—sought to entangle all men in her chains. Unheeding the danger I was in, I spent hour after hour at her side. I did not realize in those first delicious moments of intoxication, any feeling of love; it was a spell, an enchantment—I paused not to think what it was; sufficient for me, that I could gaze unchecked into those two glorious worlds—her eyes, where beauty and love have enthroned themselves; before whose mingling spirit I bow in silent worship. I paused not to think of consequences, and if I had, of what avail would it have been? In the midst of this dreamy Elysium, a change, a coldness, came over her manner towards me. At first, I thought it some passing pique, and heeded it little, but I soon found it was the effect of a deeper cause. I have watched her closely, and I know it does not proceed from dislike; no, it is evident, in this studied avoidance of me she has to struggle with herself. The suspicion has crossed my mind, that perchance when I first met her she was not aware that I was a married man; this would account for all; but, by heavens! Grattan, this must not be. Never, until now, did I realize that I loved her. Now, when she avoids me—when a thousand obstacles rise up against all pursuit of her—when my eyes are opened, and reason, duty, every thing bids me cease, for her sake and my own, to think of her;—now it is I feel that I love her with a passion that controls my every thought and action. Her coldness maddens me, and only renders more intense the flame which is devouring me. I cannot stand this. To lose at once all the thousand sweet influences which wrapped my senses for a brief space in Elysium; to feel that the woman I was created to adore might be mine, but for *one obstacle*; one obstacle, which brings in its train a thousand difficulties in the way of happiness; is it not too much? Who would not curse that obstacle? who would not wish it removed? But these are wild words. I scarcely know what I write; I am feverish and excited. I have seen *her*, this morning, and her alternate warmth and coldness of manner, has fevered my overwrought feelings into madness. As I have said, it is not the mere charm of

her beauty, which has thus fascinated me—I have never worshipped mere beauty more than a passing hour—but it is the fascination of manner, too captivating to be resisted, the mysterious and bewitching soul influences, which I feel in her presence.

I know that I could win her love; for I know that woman's nature,—deep, romantic, passionate as it is,—even better than my own. Yes, in spite of all, of every thing, I could win her love; and she is one who would glory in sacrificing every thing to the being who could once make her sultana-like soul bow before him. An accidental circumstance has given me a claim upon her gratitude, which I can always urge, should every thing else fail to overcome her coldness. I spoke in the commencement of this letter of having met her for the first time, and to me it did seem as a first meeting; not so to her. Several years ago, when she was quite a child, I had the good fortune to rescue her from a situation of imminent peril to her life. The deep feeling of her woman's nature has exaggerated this trifling service into a debt of never-ceasing gratitude. So, you see, I have always a *dernière* resort to fall upon, in case of need. But shall I attempt to make her love me? Beautiful, brilliant, admired as she is, shall I tempt her to sully the purity of her maiden faith, by loving me, who can never be to her more than—But pshaw! where am I rambling to? you have, doubtless, long since tired of this epistle, which has grown to a lady-like length. Write soon, and I will report to you faithfully the progress of this affair.

As ever yours,
ST. JULIAN.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

“And now your matrimonial Cupid
Lashed on by Time grows tired—
He sighs for freedom.”

PRIOR.

“Mine eyes
Were not in fault, for she was beautiful.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love ”

IBID.

I HAVE just received your letter—my kind, though severe Mentor—which is little more than a criticism on my own. Two weeks have passed since I last wrote, and I have made but little progress with the fair Florence, but find myself more hopelessly *gone*, than ever. Your advice may be good, but I fear it is too moral for me. You condemn my course of conduct *in toto*. You say I ought to shun Florence, and talk about reason, duty, principle; but if you were in my situation, you could no more talk thus, than you could freeze in the crater of Vesuvius. The heart cannot be controlled.

Talk not to me of the claims of matrimony. Must I be always thwarted, crossed in my every wish, by that damning word? You know my refined, fastidious taste. You know that, with all my adoration of the sex, there are few capable of pleasing long, one who requires that, while the senses are bathed in a sea of voluptuous enjoyment, the soul should not be shocked by any thing gross or sensual, any thing common or sordid.

You say, that 'tis only in matrimony, that this rational refinement of pleasure can be attained. *I*, alas! have tried it, and, from bitter experience, deny the assertion. The daily necessities of life, must lift the rose-hued veil, seen through which, our vision of love was so delightful to the senses, so bewildering to the imagination. I like the society of France and Italy, and think their code of morals vastly preferable to our own.

* * * * *

When the glowing life of love is over, the soul should

not be bound by the cold and clanking fetters of a legal necessity. No! give me that bridal of souls, which alone is perfect and holy. Separated from the mere forms and conventionalities of the tyrant world, it appeals to the pure, the warm, the immortal portion of our nature, and asks of love but the constancy which needs no fetter in its own undying truth.

The blood which for thousands of years coursed through the veins of my ancestors, in the genial clime, and beneath the glowing sun of la belle France, has not become sufficiently chilled by a single century, in our more temperate land, to reconcile me to "that dull bondage with which women and fools are content, yeleft matrimony." Yet I ought not to speak thus, though 'tis a bitter experience which has taught me my present creed. Linked with a woman whom I really loved,—one suited to me in thought and feeling,—I believe I could have been as devoted a husband as ever lived; but none can know, save those who have felt it, the misery of an ill-assorted marriage. Of what avail is it, that both be amiable, both virtuous, if the essential elements of their natures are so different, that like oil and water, however constantly brought into contact, they must still preserve their separate identity, wholly unable to form a union, save in name?

Could the eagle be happy, chained to the nest of the dove? the lion to the fold of the lamb? Then God save man and woman from being unequally yoked together.

But to return to Florence. Her conduct puzzles me; we meet in society necessarily very often; in fact, I believe a mutual friend of ours—a pleasant little woman, by the way—takes every opportunity she can make of throwing us together. She must, *entre nous*, have seen that we fancy each other, or she would not do this. The charms of la belle Florence have been very much in the way in a match which she has been exceedingly anxious to make for a protégée of her own—infer the rest; I don't like to talk about schemes and manœuvring.

Florence still preserves her coldness towards me, save at times, when her natural manner breaks through this affected constraint; and she is the same fascinating, alluring being as of old. Yes, at times, there is almost a reckless *abandon*

of observation, or consequences, in her manner; then, *then* do I bask in sunny smiles, and drink the lovelight of eyes, the deepest, the most soul-thrilling, I ever gazed into—and you tell me to shun this. Do you not know that there are some draughts so sweet, that once tasted, we cannot forbear, though we know, to drink is death? Thus it is with me. I am conscious of the danger, but like the inhaler of ether, I have no power to dash from my lips the soul-seducing draught.

You say, “where is the virtue, the truth, the faith of manhood—cannot these come to my aid?” Ah! where are they indeed? You will confer an everlasting obligation on me by informing me, for in my intercourse with the world, I assure you I have been unable to find them. You, in the calm seclusion of your home, beset by no seductive temptations, free from all the distracting excitements of city life, with nothing to do but to dream and speculate on the sublime theories of truth, and virtue, until their existence becomes to you a reality; you, who, wrapt in calm contemplation, can look “through nature up to nature’s God,” and put perhaps into practice in your daily life the Divine command, “Be ye holy!” oh! Grattan, you know little the temptations of a career like mine. I, too, once had bright and glorious dreams of virtue—and even now, from my inmost soul, do I reverence, and bow down before the might, the majesty of excellence—yea! even of human excellence—the more so that I see so few examples of it in the world around me. But those dreams, have long since faded with the many other glowing visions of aspiring boyhood. The golden age of the heart, when hope, and truth, and purity shed their heaven-borrowed radiance over the future, passed very quickly with one with whom knowledge of the world was coeval with the opening dawn of manhood.

I had grown *blase*, pleasure-wearied, when I met Florence. Fancy had no more dreams for one who had drunk to satiety of every cup of bliss, over which the young imagination loves to linger, in its passionate visions of delight. Woman—the fever dream of my wild and passionate boyhood (as you doubtless well remember, Bob)—the idol before whose shrine I have bowed “in every change of elime, and scene,” drunk with the splendor and the glory of her charms—even she could scarce awaken a thrill of delight in my sated soul.

But Florence! she burst upon me like the Eve of a newly created paradise. It seemed to me, as if with the first glance at her, the freshness, the life, the passion, which vitalizes and animates this wondrous creation of soul-filled, mind-deifying beauty, passed into my own exhausted soul. My senses seemed to awake from the trance which had bound them, my heart to throb with the vigor of renewed life; and the passionate blood of other and fresher years, coursed warmly, wildly, as ever through my veins.

Gratton, she is unlike any other woman under the sun, or rather, she has the varied charms of fifty women embodied in one glorious whole. It is impossible for me to describe her sparkling *naïveté*, her depth of soul, her wondrous fascination of manner, joined to beauty, which—ye gods! man,—would set your brain in a whirl, as it did mine, at the first glance. It seems to me, that could my pen approach an accurate description of her, the very paper would catch the fire of my thoughts, and burn with a congenial flame.

My love for her is a new era in my existence; and yet you tell me to shun her! You bid me turn with fevered lip from the one sparkling fountain in the waste of life, which woos me to its brink. And you expect me to do this? Woman might make such a sacrifice, but man never! And yet I have no evil designs against her peace, her purity—my soul revolts from the thoughts of actual dishonor. But her love—Gratton, I pine, I madden, I die, for that woman's love! and even though fatal to both, her love I must win. I must close this lengthy epistle, for John has announced dinner for the third time—heavens! what a sound to break in upon such a vision as mine—and after that, I am forced to keep an engagement at Mrs. S——'s, which I hate most consumedly, as I shall not see *her* there.

I feel devilish badly. It is certainly the worst thing in the world, for man or woman, body, mind and soul, to have no pursuit but pleasure.

I shall give you in my next—by way of amends for my egotism in this—all the *on dits* of the day.

Until then, believe me as ever, yours.

ST. JULIAN.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CLAUDE AND FLORENCE.

Lure her not onward, oh ! if thou
 Hast honor—pity—truth !
 Seek not to cloud with love like thine
 The fair hopes of her youth.

“His soul like bark with rudder lost,
 On Passion's changeful tide was tost ;
 And oh ! when Passion rules, how rare
 The hours that fall to Virtue's share.”

SCOTT.

FLORENCE found it almost impossible to avoid St. Julian, thrown together a great deal as they necessarily were in society ; and as day after day passed away, in the busy routine of fashion and folly, and he was ever near her, the chain his fatal fascination had woven around her became each day more firmly riveted, and consequently more difficult to break.

Claude had never breathed to her one word of love, not even in the lightest tone of *badinage*—better if he had ; she would then have felt and shunned her danger ; but she believed he dared not thus approach her ; and as long as their intercourse was free in word or deed, from aught which the most punctilious could censure, she was content to wander amid flowers, unheeding that serpents might sleep beneath them.

Not so with Claude ; he felt that he had been playing the sighing Strephon, and worshipping in secret long enough, that is, he chose to believe it in secret, though the world had already begun to comment upon his open and undisguised admiration of *la belle* Fulton ; still, so long as he had never disclosed his passion to her, he neither heeded nor cared for the remarks of the world. Like Florence, he scorned the opinions of the many,—better, alas ! if they had not, for the weak many often triumph over the great few.

Strange though it sounds, a woman's seeming coldness often increases a man's passion ; that is, if that coldness is at times broken through by a tenderness of look or tone, a passionate *abandon* which may induce the lover to believe that it is but assumed as the veil of timid love.

Maddened, as he himself expressed it, by the alternate warmth and coldness of Florence, Claude resolved at some favorable moment to pour forth the burning confession of his passion; yet he trembled at the thought. He felt convinced already that she loved him, but whether that proud, high nature, could ever be moved to listen to the declaration of his love, and confess that the feeling was returned, he scarcely dared to ask himself.

The more he thought of it, the more convinced he felt that such a step on his part, might, in all probability, be one of mortal offence to her; yet still he resolved, cost what it might, to take it.

A sudden thought struck him, as he lounged back in a huge *fauteuil* in his dressing-room, the last new novel lying unread beside him, the fire burning low in the grate, the winter sunlight stealing drowsily in through the crimson curtains, and himself, with head thrown back, building castles in the blue smoke-wreaths, which curled upward from his cigar; dreams of blissful moments past, and more blissful ones to come; passionate heart-thoughts revelling in chaotic but fascinating assemblage, in his brain;—we say a thought struck him, the offspring of a thousand others, and the only defined and practical one in the mass.

“If I could only once bring her to confess that she loves me, I am safe; but how to do this? The moment I say ‘love’ to her, her pride, her reserve, and all the other humbuggerly which women choose to dignify by the name of virtue, will take the alarm; and then—and then, by heaven! I should like to know how I could stand the explosion that might ensue.”

He pondered a moment, and then added, half aloud, “Now, perhaps that would do; I wonder if there are such things? I have heard of them, but have had precious little occasion heretofore, to employ any such means. If such things are in existence, I know where to get them; but then this dear, noble-hearted girl—it would be a pity to resort to such measures to——but pshaw! I am moralizing, which doesn’t agree with me.”

The casual observer will think the character of Claude St. Julian a strange mixture of good and evil; but to the careful student of human nature, his heart, with its tangled

web of high impulses, and generous feelings, linked with fiery passions, base errors, and theories fatal to truth and virtue, will be laid open, and he can trace its wild and wandering course from the pure years of infancy, when his first errors (fearful thought!) were fostered by parental indulgence, to his wayward, reckless youth, whose uncontrolled impulses, generous though they were, and warm, impetuous temperament, led him into a thousand follies; and from thence to the maturer years of manhood, when, the heir of immense wealth, he was launched into a world which cagerly offered every temptation in its power to the young and gifted St. Julian, and used its utmost efforts to debase all that was left of nobility in his soul. Hearts naturally noble, may become the slaves of passion; may, in moments of excitement, be led to commit crimes the most daring—(unlike your deep and thorough villain, who wraps the mantle of base hypocrisy around him, and commits his fiendish deeds in darkness and secrecy, and whose footsteps can only be traced by the serpent slime he leaves behind him;) but there will be times when such hearts will look back to their first days of purity and peace, and with the recollection of the green fields, and sunny streams of their childhood, will come fond yearnings after, and sad, passionate regrets for, those sweet years of innocence.

Oh God! it is a sad sight to see a noble soul, ruined by that fiend of fiends, dissipation! Men gaze upon the crumbling ruins which remain of the proud old temples of former times—mere monuments of art, and sometimes of tyranny—and sigh, and sentimentalize, and write poetry over them; and see daily around them, the temples in which God has shrined a soul, perchance a high, generous, and gifted soul, going to ruin, and say no word, extend no hand to save them.

Perhaps for many a day the good ship struggles against the whirlpool, but at last its powers of resistance one by one give way; all is at length over, and the gallant vessel finds its early grave beneath the surging waters; and people, when too late, mourn “the wreck of a first-rate,” and draw their own moral, and turn away, and forget it.

Though we see no broken column, or tumbling wall, to tell us of ruin; though the haughty form move more proud-

ly than ever, and the polished brow bear no letters of fire to stamp the damning tale, is it not true that many a lordly bearing, and form of beauty, conceal a heart which is the sepulchre of hope, truth, and virtue?

“Why this appeal to our sympathies in favor of the dissipated and the worthless? We feel no pity for such as these; they bring their degradation on themselves.” Thus sneers some sober and respectable member of society, whose vices are not those which glare openly before the world, and defy its reprobation! Perhaps that “sober and respectable member of society” may have often turned away unheeding the wail of the orphan, the bitter cry of the widow; may have seen destitution, without relieving it; driven the erring (who, perchance, “by gentle words, and tones of love,” might have been recalled), by harshness and scorn, farther onward in the reckless road to ruin; narrow-minded, selfish, and cold-hearted, he may be austere and forbidding in his household—blighting in the bud the kindly sympathies, which should ever bloom freshly around the household altar—and without the walls of that home, living as if life were but a market-day of sale and traffic; yet *this man*, wraps the mantle of his “respectability” around him, and with Pharisaical sanctity, “thanks his God that he is not as other men.”

There are many like this man in the world; many who have no more sympathy for their erring and unfortunate fellow-beings; but who, in the Dread Judgment, will have much to answer for, in those very errors which here they so harshly condemn.

The damp, cold grave elods, rest over many a once stout heart, which laid itself down to rest in the weariness of a morbid misanthropy, the broken agony of a feeble and chafed spirit, who, if the gentle spells of love and kindness had been thrown around its lot, might have lived to give love, and life, and joy in return.

More people die of broken hearts, than the world dreams of. They see the eye losing its light, the cheek its bloom, and the form bowed down beneath the weight of a deep, though speechless sorrow, and they cry out, Consumption! or Heart disease! Ah! it is consumption; a slow consuming of all the bright, the joy-giving, the healthful elements

of life, by the corroding canker of misery; it is a heart disease, for the grand organ of life grows fainter, weaker, beneath the agonizing tension, until the last chord snaps, and the weary dream is over; and *then*, over the quiet grave is shed the bitter mockery of tears—*tears!* from those who helped to crush the life, out of that now pulseless heart.

There are none, seemingly, so recklessly defiant of all moral control; so stoically skeptical of all belief in human goodness, as those whose feelings—perchance too warm, too sensitive, too confiding—have been embittered in early years, by the broken faith and cruel harshness of those around them.

Preach the canting creeds, of worldly hypocrisy, the mockeries of right and wrong, stamped “the opinions of men,” to those whose fair, calm destinies, have never taught them their fallacy; but tell not the early darkened spirit—the heart which is the silent sepulchre of its own dearest feelings—of truth, faith, and kindness, it has never met on earth; or if you will, blame them not if the scoffing word, the curling lip, or the scornful laugh, is the only answer you receive. You know not the dark ordeal which has taught that heart its fearful disbelief, in the existence of the good, and the true.

Heed it not; but be gentle, be kind, be forgiving, and thus prove to the erring one, that such things are; strive with the sunshine of your kindness to melt the ice of reserve, until feelings long frozen, and locked in darkness, gush out warm, free, and unrestrained, and the Prodigal returns to the deserted shrines of his youth, to his first trust in truth, to his earliest hopes of happiness.

Your pardon for this long digression, most gracious reader, and we will return to the gentleman, whose fascinating society we have—perhaps too long for your patience—left.

Three years spent in foreign lands—principally France and Italy—taught Claude the fanciful theories—so fatal to all morality—in which we have seen him indulging in his letters to his friend. He had mingled much from his earliest youth with women; he understood their nature well, and to do this, is to have power over them; but in one thing he erred,—he believed that the virtue of most women depended more on the relative warmth, or coldness, of their temperament, than the purity of their principles; yet he drew his

opinion from actual experience, but erred in making a few examples, the test of the sex. The character of Florence—mysterious as it might have been to the many—was read by him at a glance. He saw in her a rare, glorious and beautiful woman, with much of heaven in her nature, but with something of this world too. He felt in his inmost soul that the high spirit, the impassioned soul, might be led to err, though even in erring she would be like those fallen angels, who, after darkening their bright plumage with the passion-stain of this lower world, yet retain enough traces of their original heaven to mark them as beings not of the earth, earthy. It was natural that a soul like hers should scorn the adulation of the mass, even while receiving it as her due; but she might—nay she must—find one before whom that soul would pour out all its wealth, and, with blind adoration, hesitate at no sacrifice which it believed to be the will of its idol.

Did he then, like the cold and cruel voluptuary, deliberately and systematically plan the ruin of his victim? Far from it. With some compunction, with far more hesitation than could have been expected of one tutored in vice, as he had been, he strove in his better moments to persuade himself that a confession of her love was all he sought; that this once gained, he would go no farther. With wilful blindness, even while alluring her to the brink of the precipice, he shut his eyes to the depth of the chasm below. Such thoughts as these, however, came only to silence the whisperings of conscience, for at other times he felt that the crisis of the future must rest with her alone; if it was to be a sacrifice of passion on the shrine of purity, she must make it in opposition to the hopes, the prayers, the pursuit of his guilty love. It was thus,—but we are weary of this theme; we turn from it with a sense of relief, leaving our readers to pursue for themselves the progress of the net, which fate seems determined to weave for the unfortunate girl, feeling assured that they will join us in the wish that she may escape its meshes at last.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WIFE *vs.* THE IDOL.

And think'st thou—peerless as thou art,
That I can smile on thee,
Whose smile has lured the heart, whose love
Belongs 'fore heaven to me ?

IT was an unusually clear bright morning, in early December, that Florence Fulton's carriage stopped before the elegant mansion in Waverley Place, which was designated as the "at home" of the St. Julians. The footman's ring was answered by the announcement that the lady of the mansion was in, and would be happy to see Miss Fulton.

There was an air of quiet, which was for the moment refreshing, but which the visitor felt must grow monotonous in a short time, reigning through the spacious, and elegantly furnished rooms. There was only a small fire burning in the grate in the apartment to which she was shown, and Florence drew her rich velvet mantle more closely around her; but as she gazed around, a glow of delight succeeded this first chill.

The carpet, curtains, etc., were, though rich, sombre in hue, for Claude left these minor details to Marion, and she seemed, from appearances, to endeavor to make every thing in life present as gloomy a coloring as possible;—but relieving these with the taste of an artist, and a poet, her husband had ornamented the spacious rooms, with statuary and paintings.

There was an exquisite copy of the Medicean Venus, before which hung a veil of the thinnest rose-colored silk, which, while it half concealed, gave to the marble the glowing hues of life; a sleeping Cupid, by Canova, reposed in a niche; flowers, so arranged, as to seem to spring freshly around it.

Here slept in sunshine, one of Claude Lorraine's exquisite landscapes, which to gaze on, was to lose the soul in dreams of some bright, far-off land, where all was peace, purity and love,—so inseparably are pure and holy thoughts linked with nature's wild and sunny beauty. There a group

of Titian's—"faces that seemed to combine the loveliness of all lands,"—looked out fresh and glowing from the canvas.

Here, too, the divinely beautiful faces of Raphael's Madonna, and her wondrous Child, wooed the observer to adoration.

Florence was lost in a trance of delight, from which she was aroused by the entrance of Claude St. Julian's wife. Reader, have you ever felt, in meeting with a person of cold, forbidding manner, a sudden chill run through you,—felt at once, and for ever, that there could be no warmth of feeling, no congeniality between you? Thus felt Florence, as she returned the constrained and distant bow with which Marion greeted her.

Could she have read the war of emotions beneath that calm exterior, she might have pardoned what she almost felt inclined to construe into a deliberate repulse. It would be vain to attempt to describe the feelings of the wife, as she gazed upon the brilliant and beautiful being, upon whom she had seen her husband lavish the most passionate admiration; the most open and devoted homage. The scene at the theatre once more swam before her eyes, and a world of emotion rose chokingly in her throat, impeding the utterance of the few constrained and monosyllabic sentences, which she felt, through politeness, compelled to address to her visitor.

Nothing of the unfavorable impression produced by Marion's reception was visible in the manner of Florence, as with perfect ease, and her usual graceful fascination of manner, she proceeded to converse on the general topics of an opening acquaintance.

She determined, however, to make the visit as short as possible, and was about, after the lapse of a few moments, to rise and take her leave, when the folding-doors were opened suddenly, and the little cherub face of Cecy, surrounded by its halo of golden curls, peeped in, and the next instant she bounded into the room, forgetful or heedless of the presence of a visitor. Florence greeted the lovely child with enthusiasm, and in a moment they struck up a lively acquaintance, and were conversing as if they had been companions of a lifetime.

So delighted was she with the child, that she half forgot

the coldness of the mother; and as for Cecy, as she gazed into the beaming face bending over her, she felt, with a child's ready intuition, that she might love and trust it. At length Florence rose once more to leave, and as she made her adieu, begged that Cecy might be sent round to see her sometimes—declaring that she had fallen perfectly in love with her; to which Mrs. St. Julian, touched on her tender point, graciously consented.

Cecy ran after Florence to the door.

"You must come and see us often," she cried. "I love you. What a beautiful little carriage, and what pretty black horses! Oh! mamma, I wish I could take a ride with this sweet lady."

"Oh yes! let her go," pleaded Florence eagerly; "I will be delighted to take her, and will soon bring her back."

"Oh! no, Miss Fulton, I couldn't think of such a thing. Cecy, come in directly; you will catch your death in that draught."

"Oh! mamma, just *one* ride. It is so bright out."

"Cecy, are you deranged? Come in, I tell you."

"Nonsense, Marion, let her go;" and Claude St. Julian appeared. A bright flush shot over his face as he bowed to Florence, but with his usual ease he said,

"Let me assist you to your carriage, Miss Fulton. My little Cecy shall have her ride, if you say so, and I will go too, to take care of her. Run, Cecy, put on your cloak and mufflers."

"My pretty blue cloak, papa; and white hat and plumes?"

"Oh! yes; look as pretty as possible."

"Dear papa!" and off she bounded. A moment after, spite of her mother's remonstrances, she was in her father's arms, and in the carriage; which flew off at a rapid rate. Yet there was scarcely reason for the bitter, vengeful feeling, with which Marion turned from the door.

It was more than Florence anticipated—perhaps more than she wished for—the ride with Claude. She said little to him, but so charmed the child by her caresses and attentions, that the little girl never felt so happy; and when after a ride down Broadway, and round the park, they returned, and Florence set St. Julian and his child down at their own residence, Cecy cried out as she parted with her:

“Dear lady! do come to see Cecy every day. I love you so much! You are so bright, and so beautiful, just like my papa.”

St. Julian laughed, and his eyes flashed.

“To be like ‘papa,’ is the highest perfection to which mortal can attain in her eyes,” he said, as he bade Florence good morning.

When Florence concluded to waive ceremony, by calling on Mrs. St. Julian—when the civility ought first to have been extended by that lady to herself—it was with the magnanimous intention of seeing Claude’s wife, hoping that feelings of sympathy, and friendship, might be awakened towards her; and that these new feelings would serve as counteracting influences to the fatal passion, which still grew triumphant in her heart. But when she left her, how changed were her feelings! True, sympathy was awakened, but it was sympathy for Claude, instead of his wife.

“Good heavens!” she thought, “what strange freak of destiny could have linked the high-souled, impassioned St. Julian, to such a cold, selfish being? a mere soulless automaton! Poor Claude! it must be sad, indeed, to call such a woman the companion of his bosom.”

And such is the effect of manner. Many a friend has been lost or won, by this potent spell. If you would carry about with you a talisman to charm all hearts, let your manner be winning, cordial, and affectionate. If you come in contact with a person not exactly your “equal in society,” do not pass them with a cold and slighting sneer. Even if you are a slave to the sordid, heartless conventionalities of a *soi-disant* aristocracy, there is no fear that an act of kindness, or politeness, will depreciate you in the estimation of any one whose good opinion is worth having; and the time may come, when you would crawl in the dust for the notice of the very man you now consider an inferior. Such things often happen in this world of chances and changes; more especially in our own land, where there is still enough of “Republican vulgarity” left, to sometimes punish the vices of “the patrician” and elevate the virtues of the “plebeian.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

FLORENCE DISCOVERS A SECRET.

“ Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lids were charged with unshed tears.”

JUDGE WOODWARD still occupied towards Florence the position he had of his own accord taken; that of a patient and devoted lover, awaiting the fiat of the mistress of his heart. Yet his was no servile or officious homage; he was not ever at her elbow, lavishing a thousand superfluous attentions, wasting a thousand unmeaning words; duty called him elsewhere; but he strove to show her by a steady and consistent course of conduct, that he regarded her with that deep affection, that protecting tenderness, a man like him must feel for the woman he intended to make the sharer of his destiny.

Engrossed by a thousand pursuits, varying and frivolous although they were; hearing daily tales of love, until they fell upon her careless ear like the echoes of a familiar song, —and with but little of the importance which would have been attached to them by a person differently circumstanced,—Florence had not so many thoughts to give the intentions of Judge Woodward, as their consequence demanded. Almost unconsciously she permitted the affair to linger, day after day; though her conscience reproached her, at times, for not at once declaring to him what she felt in her inmost soul to be true, that she loved him not, and could never be his wife.

Our readers are doubtless even now curling their lip, at the idea of a girl brought up in the circles of fashionable life, being guilty of the extreme folly of refusing a man of distinction, for no other reason than the paltry excuse that she could not love him. Yet strange as it may seem, examples even of such folly as this, may be found (though we confess rarely) among the disinterested and unworldly (?) class of people to whom we allude.

Claude confided to Florence, quite inadvertently of course, his surmises with regard to the state of Eva Moreton's feelings towards her cousin; and she was thus recalled to the

consciousness that she was thoughtlessly trifling with the feelings, not only of this noble and honorable man, but perhaps those of a pure and true-hearted young girl, whose happiness was closely interwoven with her attachment for him.

Naturally generous and warm in feeling, her first resolve on hearing this, was to endeavor to discover from Eva, if possible, without letting her see through her intentions—whether her feelings were really interested in favor of her cousin ; and if so, to terminate at once the affair between herself and Judge Woodward. Acting upon this impulse, she threw on her mantle and bonnet, and walked round to Mr. Moreton's, with the intention of paying Eva a visit. Arrived there, she paused not to ring the door-bell, but entered with the freedom of privileged intimacy, and passed up stairs to Eva's chamber. The door was slightly ajar, and as the gaze of the intruder fell on the only occupant of the room, her steps were arrested on the threshold.

Eva was seated with her side-face towards the door, reading, evidently so lost in the volume before her that she had not noticed the approach of any one. Her face was very pale, and Florence was struck by its expression of sadness. As she scanned the pages upon which she was intent, the silent observer marked a solitary tear steal down her wan cheek, and as she did so a pang of self-reproach smote her. "Can I," she thought "be the cause of this sadness?" then advancing into the room she made her presence known.

"My dear Eva," greeting her with an affectionate embrace, "I fear I have intruded on your meditations."

"Not at all," replied Eva, hastily wiping from her eyes the errant tear, "I am always glad to see you, Florence. I love so dearly to see your bright face, and hear your joyous laugh. It is refreshing to me, who, you know, am rather given to what my aunt calls 'the mopes.'"

"A most unsentimental name for a young lady's pensiveness," replied Florence ; "but be assured if you are troubled with the vapors, I shall do my best to drive them off." And she rattled gayly on, until, in the fascination of her lively and sparkling conversation, Eva's smiles and bright looks returned. "And now," she thought, "to touch on the all important topic, without alarming the delicacy of my sweet friend."

To do this, required all the address she was mistress of, for she feared to touch on the subject, lest she should thus recall painful reminiscences to the mind of Eva. She hesitated, and had almost resolved to seek no further information, when Eva was summoned by a servant from the room, for a moment.

Florence picked up the book she had been reading, and commenced carelessly turning over the leaves, when her attention was arrested by the words, "Presented to Eva by her affectionate cousin, and sincere admirer, Orville Woodward."

It was a volume of extracts from the standard poets, and there were many pieces marked, as if for the perusal of the fair owner. Some of these pieces were marked for their pure and classic beauty of thought and expression; others for their fine moral sentiment; but many breathed the language of deep feeling, pure and hallowed affection.

One unacquainted with the character of Judge Woodward's feelings towards Eva, might easily have been deceived with regard to the nature of his affection; and Florence thought it very probable that the young mind of Eva herself might have been the victim of such a delusion; yet she felt sure that the object of it never intended or foresaw that he would be thus misconstrued, and she marvelled at the strange blindness of which even the wisest of us are sometimes guilty.

A moment after, Eva returned. A slight blush tinged her cheek, as she saw the book in the hands of Florence. The latter noticed it, and calling all her resolution to her aid, she pronounced the "magic name," speaking in a casual way, of her cousin.

With her usual tact and address, and without once seeming to suspect any thing, she drew out, unconsciously to herself, the thoughts and feelings of the simple-minded girl, until she felt more than convinced that the suspicions of Claude were true.

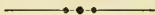
"Oh! Eva," she thought, "perhaps it may be mine yet to be the instrument of your happiness; if so, how much pleasure it will confer on me." And Florence, with rare generosity, commenced even then, in her own mind, her plans (women are great on plans) for restoring to Eva the affections she imagined had once been hers.

As the two girls sat there, the morning sunlight stealing in upon them, with their arms twined around each other, talking in sweet and kindly tones, an observer could not but have gazed on them with the deepest interest.

What destiny is reserved for these fair young creatures; the one so brilliant and fascinating, so gloriously beautiful, with such a wild, passionate, yet generous heart throbbing beneath the fair exterior, the other so spotless in her outward loveliness, and inner purity; the one born to make a brilliant sensation, to command admiration wherever she appears, and yet formed to be the light of home too; the other formed for the sphere of home only? Alas! for the magnificent Florence; a home of love, that most precious boon to woman, had been thus far denied her. Must it be ever thus?

Full of her benevolent intentions, Florence at length rose to go, and with a pure kiss of maidenly affection the two girls separated.

“Dear Florence,” thought Eva, “she is so kind, so affectionate, and so beautiful too; I cannot blame any one for loving her.”



CHAPTER XXXII.

JUDGE WOODWARD AND FLORENCE.—A DISMISSAL.—GOOD
ADVICE.—AN ACCIDENT.

I could have loved you, oh! so well;—
The dream that wishing boyhood knows,
Is but a sweet beguiling spell
Which only lives while passion glows:
But when this early flush declines,
When the heart's vivid morning fleets,
You know not then how close it twines
Round the first kindred soul it meets! ”

MOORE.

THE evening after the interview between Florence and Eva, the former was seated in her boudoir; Judge Woodward by her side. The conversation had lingered for some time on different subjects. There was a pause.

Florence was the first to break the silence; though, as she did so, she averted her face from her companion's gaze.

"Judge Woodward, I hope you will not think me taking an improper step, if I tell you that my request that you should visit me this evening, was to terminate the affair now existing between us. You can, perhaps, anticipate what the termination will be."

She now turned her dark eyes full on her companion's face; he was very pale, and the only words he gave utterance to were, "Go on, let me hear all."

Touched by emotion which mocked at words, Florence continued: "Believe me, no one can appreciate your love more highly than I do. Lonely and orphaned as I am, I feel that love would have proved an inestimable boon to me, could I have returned it. Would I were worthy to be your wife, but I am not; for oh! if I were, my heart would long since have yielded its all in return for your affection."

"You do not love me, then?" said he. His voice was low and husky with agitation, and his lip quivered, though he strove to control himself.

"Oh! do not, do not, I beseech you, grieve for me!" cried Florence, laying her hand timidly on his arm, in the fervor of her entreaty, while large tears swam in her eyes. "I am not worthy that you should waste such feelings on me;" and the proud Florence bowed her queenly head, and pressed back with her slender fingers the heavy tears which sprang to her eyes; feeling at the moment, as if she could have knelt at the feet of the noble being before her, and implored his forgiveness for being thus compelled to wound him. "I am not worthy," she repeated, "that you should waste such feelings on me. Forget me, believe me a base, heartless coquette—any thing you will, so you do not grieve for me. I would not for worlds cause you a moment's pain."

"No," was the reply; "your very words prove, Florence, that you are not a heartless woman, (I will not use the word coquette, I don't like it,) why then should I strive to believe you such? I have loved you as a warm-hearted, true, and lovely woman; let me still, as such, remember you. I can discover from your conduct, that you never, until now, knew the depth of my feelings for you. I have loved you with the feelings which, learning from bitter experience to distrust the world in general, centre all the affection, not be-

longing to God, upon one object; and alas! that lost, where can the heart, widowed of its one treasure, turn for solace? But I am growing sentimental," and he smiled faintly. "Forgive me; I ought not to have expected that a gay and brilliant girl like you, could love a man of my age, and of my sobered feelings, so little congenial with the warmth and gayety of youth."

"Oh! no," she replied, "speak not thus, it was not this. One younger, fairer, better than I has loved—still loves you;—Eva."

A moment after, she would have given worlds to recall her words. What right had she to betray her friend's secret. Judge Woodward started. "Impossible!" he said, "impossible! Eva does not love me."

"I spoke without thinking," faltered Florence, "I meant not to betray—that is—I may be mistaken."

"You are mistaken in all probability," replied her companion sadly. "If true, I need not say how deeply I regret that she should waste her young fresh feelings on me."

"Why?" demanded Florence, almost imploringly. "Do you not think you could love one so pure, so perfect, so in every way fitted to make you happy as Eva? I am wild, thoughtless, oh! I am a very faulty being, not worthy your love, but she is an angel! You would be so happy with her!"

"I know not what the future may bring forth, but I feel now as if my last dream of love was over." He covered his face with his hands, and paused a moment; then continued: "Circumstances in early life prevented my marrying. I was compelled to tread the iron path of destiny, and grapple with the difficulties which encompassed me, alone. Yes, *alone*; with no home of love to turn to, when, wearied and world-worn, my heart sought some resting-place. I buried the world of feelings, the yearning after sympathy and affection, which at times would rise within me, deep in my own soul, and I struggled on thus for years. As I mingled more and more with the world—as success became mine, and fame followed success, as it always does, I saw that my society was courted by many—I say it not with one particle of vanity, for I cared not for it then, care not for it now. I saw through designs but too thinly veiled; they disgusted me,

and I almost resolved never to marry. Of Eva, sweet little Eva, I thought only as a child—a loving and lovely child—who would one day make some one very, very happy, but I scarcely hoped that one could be me. I met you. I saw in you a woman of intellect, soul, feeling;—my God! what mines of wealth to be wasted on the light and heartless circle in which you moved. As I looked on a silent observer, I became interested in you, and—pardon me, Florence—I pitied you; I felt that for you there were perilous quicksands in the ocean of life, and you had, alas! no one to warn you of danger. I felt that it would indeed be to me a grateful task, could I win you from the scenes around you, and place you in a sphere which would call into action the higher and purer qualities of your nature. And thus sympathy grew into a deeper feeling—but 'tis vain to dwell on this; it is all over now.

“As a lover, I must bid you farewell; but always think of me as a friend. Rely on me, in any hour of need. Believe me, I would be too happy could I in the smallest degree be of service to you; and ere I leave you now, permit me Florence, dear Florence, to repeat, that your situation in life is a perilous one. The very pleasures which smile so alluringly upon you, are so many dangers environing your path. You have every qualification necessary for shining in the world; but I know you well, and I tell you, you will never find happiness in the gay and giddy scenes, in which you mingle;—though you may pursue the phantom until youth, and strength, and hope have fled, and life has no nobler aim within your reach. Then you may perhaps—wrecked in mind and body—live to mourn your folly; or else be one of those miserable beings who, to latest age, haunt the scenes of pleasure like ghosts of the past, wretched monuments of former folly, spending the last precious sands in the hour-glass of life on the shrine of vanity,—wasting the scanty modicum of heart which yet remains to them in wretched repinings over past triumphs, and present mortifications, and at last sinking into a sinful grave, whose eternal night, no ray of hope beyond the tomb can illumine. Oh! beware of this. Suffer yourself to forget the idle follies which beset you, and remember that God and heaven should always be uppermost in the mind of woman; thus only can she be, ‘lovely, gentle, and of good report.’ And now farewell!” he arose and extended his hand

with a look of such deep sympathy, such kindly, nay tender interest towards her, beaming in his noble countenance, that Florence, overcome by emotion, could only bow in silence, making a faint effort to smile through her tears. A moment after he had vanished from her sight.

Instead of feeling elevated in her own estimation by the love of the lofty being who had just left her, Florence felt as if she was unworthy that love; felt that she could not be all that he must have deemed her, when he bestowed his affections upon her, and the thought humbled her spirit in the dust; for there is nothing which brings to a proud, generous heart, so deep a sense of humiliation, as the thought of having received from another an undeserved boon. But she was wrong in thinking that Judge Woodward had estimated her character too highly. He was not so easily deceived. He knew exactly how much of earthly leaven was mingled with the heaven in her nature; and he knew that spite of the shadows on its brightness, her character was one of rare, strange beauty; that in the voluminous depths of her expansive soul, slumbered thoughts and feelings, which only waited to be called forth to create their own world of light and happiness, for all who came within their influence.

There is no being in existence perfectly unselfish; such a character would be in direct contradiction to human nature. Even our noblest aims and impulses are often deeply imbued with this feeling, which is not censurable, save when it acts to the detriment of others; for who can blame a man for pleasing himself, provided he injures no one else by the operation? Thus, though Judge Woodward himself believed that his feelings for Florence had their first source in the purest, most unselfish sympathy, he was mistaken. Had she been less beautiful, less fascinating, he might perhaps have felt for her a certain degree of sympathy; but he would never have loved, never have sought her as his wife. It was the indirect inference of the happiness such qualities as she possessed, would, in a wife, confer upon him, which roused his feelings to the extent which we have seen towards her.

We wish that we could portray, fully and justly, the character of the woman we have chosen as our heroine;—its fathomless depths, its lofty heights, the brilliance of its sunlight, the depth of its shadows; but volumes might be writ-

ten, yet scarcely the alpha beta told of that limitless world, her soul.

Yes, we do not portray her as faultless; there was gloom as well as brightness mirrored in the character of this strangely gifted being. It was like some rare, radiant painting, gloriously, yet darkly beautiful, where blooming vales and soaring heights, bathed in eternal sunshine, contrast with deep, dark ravines, and wildly foaming waters; and where, gaze as long as we will, we can still see, in dim and mysterious perspective, other and more beautiful scenes, making us believe that there is still a boundless world beyond, whose enchantments we have yet to reach; or like some proud temple, in whose shadowy aisles we can dimly trace the inspired forms of beauty, which the genius of the architect and the sculptor have wrought around us; extending far down, until the gaze loses itself in distance and darkness; and here and there lighted up by some stray gleam of sunlight, into the glorious hues of life-breathing loveliness; yet before the treasures of whose inner shrine, is hung a mysterious veil, which the hand of no common intruder may dare to raise.

Alas! that so gallant a vessel should ride life's stormy wave, without the guiding star of parental love, or the compass of Religion, to point her way over the troubled waters.

Though Florence had never loved Judge Woodward, she had always felt towards him that reverential, affectionate feeling, which we link with the idea of a protector; and now that the tie between them was broken, it is impossible to describe the strange desolation of feeling which came over her. She had broken an engagement for a gay and brilliant party, to remain at home for this interview. And now that Judge Woodward was gone, she extinguished the gas lights, so that any passing visitor might believe her out, and also because she had an odd fancy of being in the dark, whenever she indulged in sad thoughts. Then, throwing herself into a large chair before the grate, she gazed fixedly into the smouldering fire, which cast a dim, uncertain light through the room, many and sad thoughts rushing tumultuously upon her.

She thought of Judge Woodward, his noble disinterestedness; and then of Eva, her pure, quiet life, moving amid

scenes of fashion and folly—"among them, but not of them;" and she—she the brilliant, the worshipped—almost envied the meek, unobtrusive girl, a fate so different from her own. She thought of the festal scene from which she was now perhaps missed; of her companions, who were moving in the gay dance, with smiles and light tones, though their hearts might be aching all the while; then of Claude—and what wild and varied thoughts of mingled pleasure, passion, and regret, were these—and lastly of herself, solitary and alone. Never did she feel so desolate, so wretched. She wept long and bitterly, and her feelings thus relieved, she sunk into a sort of dreamy slumber.

In her dreams, it seemed to her that a cherub form, with robes of light, and bright angel wings, and a face like her own dim, though fondly-cherished remembrance of her mother's, appeared before her. The expression of the face, angelic though it was, was sad, as the vision said, in tones of unearthly, but mournful sweetness:

"My child, you have lost your best friend. 'Tis but an instant that I can stay to warn you, ere I must plume my wings for heaven again; but beware of——" Florence heard not the name; some noise in the street aroused her. She started; the noise continued; there was bustle, hurrying to and fro of feet, and the trampling and confusion of a crowd. Startled by the sound, she went to the window, and raised the sash. As she did so, she heard voices exclaiming, in disjointed sentences, "Judge Woodward!" "Shot!" "How! what is the matter?" "Killed?" "Some mistake!"

In a paroxysm of alarm, Florence rushed to the front door, opened it, and stood on the threshold. At the instant, a litter passed, borne by several men. It was covered, but she plainly heard suppressed groans issue from it.

"Good heavens!" she cried to one of the crowd who followed it; "what is the matter?"

"Judge Woodward is shot, miss!" replied the man, "but he is not dead. I believe they have taken up the man that did it. They are carrying him to Mr. Moreton's, where he requested to be taken, as they live near, and are relations, I believe."

After this very graphic detail of facts and occurrences, the man hurried on; and shocked, and uncertain what to

think, in a chaos of mingled alarm and agony, Florence sought her chamber. More fervently than she had prayed for years, she prayed that night; and it was long after retiring, ere her excited feelings permitted her to seek refuge in sleep.

Fears for Judge Woodward, mingled with thoughts of the strange vision of her slumbers. It was strange that, much as she pondered over it, it never once occurred to her of whom that warning angel would have bid her beware.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RANDOM SHAFT CLEAVES THE HEART OF THE DOVE.

“Oh! grief beyond all other griefs, when Fate
First leaves the young heart lone and desolate,
In the wide world without that only tie,
For which it loved to live, or feared to die.”

“Oh! many a shaft at random sent,
Finds mark the archer never meant.”

It was a bright, cold, December morning, and Lilian was seated before a cheery fire, at the cottage, netting a worsted sacque, cherry and white, for little Harry, who was playing noisily on the floor beside her. There was an air of sweet, quiet, home comfort in every thing around; and though, for some weeks past, she had been looking paler and sadder than usual, the fire just now had given a bright glow to her cheek, and she looked quite happy, as she sat there, busily plying her needles, and ever and anon casting a fond glance on the movements of her boy.

In this pleasant employment, she was interrupted by a tap at the door.

“Come in,” she said cheerfully.

It was Mrs. Vernon’s housekeeper, who had come down from the city to see how things were going on at “the place.” She was a very worthy, though, beyond the mysteries of her vocation, by no means a well informed woman; and not having been long in the employ of her present mistress, she knew little of the real situation of affairs.

Lilian, she supposed, was a young widow, residing as a tenant on the estate, and she had come down to make her a friendly visit, pitying, as she said, the "solitude of the poor thing—a widow, and so young, too."

Lilian was glad to see her, for through her she could hear of Harry, and she always listened with eager interest to the most commonplace conversation, if he was the subject. Seating herself in obedience to her request, the housekeeper commenced a trivial conversation.

It was Mrs. Burton's misfortune that she had been raised in a village; and having naturally a great propensity (in common with some other, otherwise very good people) for gossip, it had "grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength," in this congenial atmosphere. She had seen something of Lilian, since her arrival at "the place," and really felt quite interested in the "sweet little lady,"—felt at once that she could confide in her, and was delighted to find some receptacle for her budget of news.

She had not been long enough in the city to discover that, in order to keep your place in a great house, you must be half blind, three quarters deaf, and wholly dumb, about every thing which concerns your superiors.

"Well, I declare!" said the garrulous old woman, as she seated herself; "you are the youngest-looking creature to be a married woman, and what's more, a widow, I ever did see in my life. Why, you look just like a child, with those pretty brown curls, all a floatin' round your shoulders, so natural like."

"I was very young when I was married," replied Lilian faintly; "only fifteen."

"Mercies on me! for a poor little strip of a child like that to be drawn up before the parson. Well, this is a strange world; there's my daughter Susan, as has been on the look-out for a husband for these seven years past, and not a man has said 'peas' to her on that subject yet; and there is no finer girl than Susan, Mrs. Stanley, though I do say it, as ought not to. Well, somehow, some females don't get justice done them in this world."

Not wishing a discussion on the subject which is now the great leading principle of the "Woman's Rights" Convention—a society then happily unknown—Lilian changed the

subject, by asking if there was a probability of Miss Vernon marrying soon.

“Well, I don’t know, but I rather guess not, very soon. Miss Ella keeps her secrets mighty close. I think, however, that she likes Lieutenant Minton uncommon well—a mighty pretty and uncommon nice little gentleman, though, to be sure, not such a fine lordly-looking man as her father, or, as for that matter, Mr. Hal either, as visits her sometimes. But somehow, there is a Mrs. Moreton as is always pulling at him, and a flirtin’ and cavortin’ round him, and a calling him to her side, and a droppin’ her fan for him to pick up, and all sich things. I watched her one evenin’ at a party at our house, until I was completely disgusted at her ridiklous minervas. I was, indeed, Mrs. Stanley; and says I to Miss Ella afterwards, says I, ‘Miss Ella, I despise that little woman, with all her fine airs and graces. She arn’t the right sort, sure as you’re born, she arn’t. What is she always a twistin’, and a foolin’, and a layin’ herself out to ’tract the leftenant for? She is a married ’oman; what on this earth *can* she want with a beau?’ But Miss Ella blushed, and told me not to talk in that way; that it was very common for married women to receive attentions in fashionable siety. So I hushed up, and have never opened my mouth about it sense, and never intend to; but between you and me and the bed-post, I don’t like no such doins myself. There is some strange things done amongst the highflyers—at least, it seems so to me; some things that I can’t make neither head nor tail of; but I suppose, in course, they know what they are about, and, to be sure, it’s none of my business. I have been with the quality all my life, and thought I knowed a mazin’ deal about most things; but it seems to me, since I came to New York, I never knowed any thing before, or anyhow I’ve got to forgit every thing I *did* know, and commence learning every thing new. It’s like a different world altogether.”

Mrs. Burton folded her arms, and gazed abstractedly out of the window, probably absorbed in the most abstruse speculations with regard to the mysteries of fashionable life; then, suddenly aroused by a merry laugh from little Harry, she turned to the child, whom she had noticed but very lit-

tle before, and commenced fondling with him, using the tender words of endearment, common on such occasions. But Harry did not seem to fancy his new friend, for he broke from her, and ran shouting from the room. The housekeeper gazed after him. "Well, I declare," she exclaimed, "if there aren't the greatest likeness to the Vernon family in that child. Are you any relation, Mrs. Stanley?"

Lillian looked keenly into the woman's face, to see if her question was the result of suspicion; but seeing there only a look of blank unconsciousness, she was about to reply, when without waiting for an answer Mrs. B. rattled on, "Yes, the boy has a noble look, just like the governor—and like Mr. Hal, or Hel, or whatever they call him would have, if he was not so dissipated."

"Is he very dissipated?" asked Lillian faintly.

"Dissipated!" replied the housekeeper, raising her hands and eyes, "you never did see such a wild boy. Why, he keeps the governor and his mother always in hot water about him. I suppose he thinks it very great to be what he calls a 'fast boy,' but in my mind he is not much removed from a rowdy. But he's got in love now with a very beautiful lady, and what's more, one with a large fortune; and we all hope she'll marry him, and then he'll settle down, maybe—for matrimony is as good as any straight-jacket for a young man sometimes—but not always—but, good gracious me! Mrs. Stanley, what is the matter?"

Lillian's work had fallen from her lap; her hands were clasped, her cheek white as death, her eyes fixed on the housekeeper with a wild, almost maniac glare.

Stiffing her emotion as she saw that it was perceived, and determined to know the worst, she repressed with a convulsive effort the wild words that rose to her lips, and said in low, firm tones—firm with the concentrated strength of her whole system, summoned for the giant effort—laying her icy hand on the housekeeper's arm,

"Tell me, what is it. Hal—Mr. Vernon, I mean,—did you say he was going to be married? I thought—that is I have heard——"

"Oh! yes," replied the obtuse old woman, forgetting Lillian's apparent emotion a moment before, and not noticing now the bloodless cheek, and quivering lip—"yes, they did

say that Mr. Hal had had an affair at one time that might interfere with this one. I only heard it whispered in the house, and did not exactly understand it. I think, though, it was something about his having deceived some poor girl, that he once loved very much. I did hear it hinted that perhaps there might be a private marriage; but John, who has been Mr. Hal's man for some years, when I told him the hints I had picked up, told me 'twas nothing but a sham affair, but I could not get any thing more out of him about it. Indeed, I don't think he knew much, for he owned that he just happened to overhear Mr. Hal talking about it, one day, to that man he's so thick with—let me see, I forgot his name, a long-haired, rakish-lookin' thing, though, as I despises in my sight. Marriage or no marriage, he's courtin' Miss Fulton now, and the family are doin' all they can to make the match."

Lilian rose, and made an effort to leave the room ere the woman could discover the effect of her words; but the effort, after the prolonged suppression of her feelings, was too much for her slight frame.

A moan of utter intense agony escaped her—she clasped her hands suddenly to her chest, and the next moment was lying senseless at the feet of Mrs. Burton, a stream of blood gushing from her lips.

In the one moment of repressed suffering, all the dark deceptive past, all the bitter agonizing present, all her blind confidence, her foul wrong, had burst upon her. The truth flashed like lightning over the naturally obtuse mind of Mrs. Burton.

"Lord have mercy!" she ejaculated "I have killed her. What a fool I was, not to have guessed all about it—and the boy so like too. What shall I do? oh Lord! what shall I do?"

She attempted to raise her; the movement roused Lilian; she opened her eyes slightly; "Mary!" she gasped, "Mary!" a fresh mouthful of blood followed the effort, and her eyes again closed in exhaustion.

Mrs. Burton raised the small light form, as easily as she could, and laid it on the bed, then supposing her request alluded to a servant, rung the bell. A moment afterwards, the woman who had been the attached servant and faithful

companion of Lilian, ever since her retirement, entered the room.

“ Good heavens ! ” she exclaimed, as her eyes rested on her mistress, “ what is the matter with Miss Lilian ? ” Hurriedly and incoherently Mrs. Burton explained the cause of the catastrophe.

Anger at the woman’s ignorance, and want of foresight, overpowered, for the moment, every other feeling in the mind of Mary.

“ Was there ever such a fool ? ” she exclaimed with flashing eyes. “ My poor Lilian ! poor dear child ! ” and she raised her head as tenderly as if she had been an infant, brought restoratives, and bathed her brow, wiped the blood stains from her lips with a snowy cambric handkerchief, and removed as gently as possible her discolored dress, over which the blood had streamed. Lilian faintly opened her eyes.

“ Mary, dear Mary, ” she said, in her weak tones, as she saw the kind creature bending over her.

“ Dear Miss Lilian, do not speak now. I beseech you be quiet, ” replied Mary, respectfully but kindly taking the hands of her mistress, and pressing them sympathetically in her own, while tears rained down her cheeks ; and turning to Mrs. Burton, who stood a silent spectator of the scene, she said, in a wrathful whisper,

“ And now go—you have done all the mischief you can ; perhaps you will have the kindness to send for a physician—and then go home, and tell the Vernons they have killed her. They will be glad to hear it, no doubt, though heaven knows they are not worthy to have her among them. I believe it is all a lie about Mr. Harry ; but be that as it may, she is what no one else can be—his wife in the sight of heaven. I can’t leave her—go. ”

Mrs. Burton obeyed in silence.

“ Oh ! Mary, he has done this ! ” exclaimed Lilian with a fresh burst of agony, “ he whom I so worshipped, so trusted,—my child’s father. ”

“ Never mind, Miss Lilian, all will come right at last. Perhaps it is just a story they have raised on Mr. Hal. ”

“ No ! oh no ! Mary, I see it all now. I feel it in every pulse of my throbbing heart. I have been deceived. Oh !

Mary, *I* who trusted him so. Let me die, Mary; every effort you make to save me, is cruel and unjust."

At this moment little Harry ran in, shouting with glee; he paused suddenly as he saw his mother's pale form extended on the bed, and Mary's distressed face. With a child's awe he crept up to the latter, and pulling her by the skirt, exclaimed, pointing to Lilian, with imploring entreaty in his face,

"Mamma! Mary, mamma!"

Thinking that the sight of her boy would recall her from agonizing thoughts, Mary raised the child softly on the bed, whispering,

"Be quiet, Harry, don't say a word; mamma is sick."

Harry crawled gently to his mother's breast, and twined his arms softly around her neck, whispering "dear mamma."

His voice seemed to recall her from the trance of grief into which she had fallen, for she clasped him closely to her bosom, with a sort of convulsive, sobbing moan, though through this scene she had not shed a tear. The shock was too sudden, too crushing in its effect for tears, like the lightning stroke, which blasts in an instant to blackness and ruin the tree it found perchance rich with green leaves and sun-nursed blossoms.

She spoke not a word, and Harry lay quietly by her side till she sunk into slumber, or rather into that heavy state of unconsciousness which mocks sleep, and from which the awakening is to the wretched, oh! how bitter. Harry too, lulled by his position and the quiet of the room, fell asleep, and those two desolate ones—the mother and the child—slumbered in each other's arms while Mary watched beside them.

And yet were they more desolate than they had been ever?

No; but until now Lilian had been—oh blessed boon!—unconscious of her desolation.

It is a strange doctrine, but in this world it is not deception which makes us wretched; it is the awakening from our delusions—the cold and bitter curse of *truth*—that wrings our heart, and darkens our life.

As long as we are *deceived*, we are happy.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE "FAST BOY" ON A "BENDER."

"Ah me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee."

BYRON.

THE rooms of Harry Vernon were brilliantly illuminated, and the walls rung with merry voices, and ever and anon shouts of laughter. In those rooms, Harry had assembled some dozen of those whom he considered "choice spirits." Mr. Moreton, Claude St. Julian, Lieut. Minton, and Arthur Plumdale, were the only characters belonging to our story present, if we except Mr. Fitz Friske, who, by some strange freak of Harry—as he thought it—had been honored with an invitation.

Perhaps, had he known it, his presence was rather important to some of the guests, if not to the host; but could he have surmised why, we doubt whether he would have felt particularly complimented.

Cards were Fitz Friske's aversion, perhaps because he was rather unskilful in the use of them, and at first he was dubious about accepting the invitation; but on reflecting that his inviter was one of the "*tong*," as his mother phrased it, he returned an affirmative reply.

Besides the above mentioned, there were present some half dozen young bloods of the city, of the stamp generally designated as "fast men;" youths whose motto like that of Harry Vernon was "Health, wealth, women, and wine," and who, to the honor of their consistency at least, practised very faithfully the principles they preached; bating, in some instances, the first two requisites.

The reader may perhaps surmise at whose request Fitz Friske was invited, when we state that the gentleman was seated at a whist-table opposite Claude St. Julian, playing against Mr. Moreton and Arthur Plumdale. The other members of the party were seated at another table, with the exception of two or three, who lounged around the fire, smoking, laughing, and talking; and ever and anon, betting at hazard on the games.

"Boys, we've had enough of whist; let's have a game of bluff, and I'll join you," said Harry Vernon, dragging up a chair next Fitz Friske.

This proposal was received with marked approbation; with the exception of a slight murmur of dissent from Fitz Friske, overruled by the clamorous voices around him.

The others gave up their game, and gathered round this table. Claude St. Julian—of whose vices gaming was not one—gave up his seat, and contented himself with looking on; though, truth to say, he felt a strong inclination to help Fitz out of the scrape, by a few well-timed hints; but that, under present circumstances, was impossible. At first luck varied a good deal around the board;—once or twice, to his infinite surprise, Fitz Friske was the winner to a considerable amount; and he had just begun to plume himself, in his own mind, on his superior skill as a player; and had, moreover, proposed, in the pleasing excitement of the moment, a larger stake than any yet offered; when luck—as luck will do sometimes—turned, and he lost. But this only made him more eager; and with what he fancied was quite the air *d' un grand seigneur*, when Mr. Moreton—who was the winner—named a larger stake, he assented. A glance quick as lightning, but full of meaning, passed between Moreton and Plumdale.

Play became more exciting, as the bets were enlarged. Piles of gold and silver, intermixed with notes, gleamed on the board. Bets ran high with those standing round, on the probable issue of the games; and when, at half past twelve, supper was announced, Fitz Friske was a loser to the amount of several thousand dollars. He positively refused all offers of revenge, and with a forcible attempt at indifference, which illy concealed his real chagrin, wrote two checks, and handed one to Arthur Plumdale, the other to Mr. Moreton, each of whom pocketed his respective slip of paper, with perfect *sang-froid*.

Harry Vernon, too, had been a loser to some extent, but that, as he himself remarked, was a "mere matter of moonshine."

Presiding over a table groaning under every delicacy of the season, with the most "choice spirits" around and upon it, Hal was in his glory.

Attired in the flashiest of costumes, his green velvet smoking-cap set jauntily on the mass of brown curls which clustered in "much admired disorder" around his brow; pouring out bumper after bumper of champagne, and proposing toast after toast, which were greeted by shouts of uproarious merriment, he shone forth conspicuous in all the polished elegance (?) of a "fast young man."

"And now, St. Julian, for an original toast," said Harry, after a long pause, during which the guests had applied themselves with infinite gusto to the delicious viands before them, "Come, my dear fellow, you are always ready."

"A toast from St. Julian," echoed round the board, as they filled their glasses for another round.

"We came here for enjoyment solely," replied Claude languidly; "therefore this is no time to be puzzling one's brains for something original, when, in reality, there is nothing original in existence. You know very well what to expect from me; for,

"Wer't the last drop in the well,
And I standing on the brink;
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to *woman* I would drink."

"Why not say,

Wer't the last drop in the bottle,
And I just about to sink;
Ere my reeling body fell,
'Tis to *woman* I would drink.

There's an original parody for you. Well, here's to the bright eyes, and true heart, of a certain fair angel for me, and let every man drink to the shrine of his worship;" and Harry tossed off a bumper.

"All women are angels until they are married," said Mr. Moreton sententiously, as he raised his glass to his lips. "Another glass, Plumdale, and enough of this subject, which has worn out with me long since. By the way, have you ascertained what —— will take for those trotters of his? By G—! the most splendid specimen of horseflesh I ever saw. I know their price, but that is of no avail. Fitz Friske purchased them a day or two since."

“ Ah ! I understand ; wants them for his bridal turnout, I suppose,” said Moreton in a lower tone, glancing at Fitz Friske, who sat at the other extremity of the table. “ By the way, Plumdale, you sit down and win the money of your brother-in-law elect with a devilish cool face. How can you do it, man ? ”

“ Nothing more proper ; ” responded the other with perfect *sang-froid*. “ If I had not won it, somebody else would. Keep the money in the family always, if you can ; I am sure that is the motto of older and wiser heads than mine.”

The revel grew louder, faster, and more furious. Claude St. Julian, who had not much fancy for this species of excitement, and Fitz Friske, left early,—as did also Moreton and Plumdale ; for your real gambler seldom lingers long enough to lose self-possession over the bowl. It was four o'clock in the morning before the rest of the party separated. Some in a state of maudlin insensibility remained where they were ; and the last thing of which Harry Vernon was conscious, was standing on the table amid crashing plates and jingling glasses as he raised aloft a bumper, exclaiming. “ Here's to the—the—hic—bright heart, and—hic—true eyes of—of—yours very respectfully H. Vernon.”



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ARCHER IS WOUNDED WITH HIS OWN SHAFT.

Have I forgotten thee, whilst thou
 Didst bleed thy life away for me !
 Oh ! cursed for ever be the spells
 That first allured my heart from thee.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning, when Harry Vernon found himself, with parched lips and aching brain, on the sofa in the room which had been the scene of the revel of the preceding night.

His companions, whom he had left when his eyes closed in feverish slumbers, some with their heads on the table, some under it, had either been removed by the servants, or betaken

themselves to other quarters. The table still stood in the centre of the room, with its array of crushed plates, broken glasses, carcasses of fowls, wine spilled, etc. Packs of cards were strewn here and there over the floor, chairs upset, and in every position but the right one, a new hat crushed out of all shape in one corner, a splendid black Spanish mantle on the soiled and stained floor in another. Muttering a curse, Harry turned from the scene of ruin, and tried to compose himself to sleep again.

Of all processes the most annoying, and indeed excruciating, is the intense effort to get yourself to sleep, when the brain is aching, and every nerve in the frame throbbing with the wearing feverish pain, which succeeds intense excitement.

He was interrupted in this delightful occupation by a rap at the door, and his servant presented himself with a note.

"What do you mean by interrupting me in this way, you rascal?" demanded Harry in a rage.

"I am sorry, sir, but this note was left early this morning with a message that it should be delivered immediately. It came from Gov. Vernon too, sir, the man said."

"It makes no difference with me if it came from the devil; so be off."

The man laid the note on the table near him, and retreated, muttering, "If it came from the devil you would be sure to attend to it."

As Harry once more resettled himself on the sofa, his eyes fell on the note. Fancying it a missive from his father, he seized and tore it open carelessly. It ran thus:—

MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have just heard through Mrs. Burton, who came from "the place" this morning, that poor Lilian Stanley is dangerously ill,—has had a violent hemorrhage of the lungs, caused by hearing some idle gossip from Mrs. B. about a projected marriage between yourself and Florence F.

It is thought she cannot possibly recover; for heaven's sake if you can do her any good, go to her immediately. In her delirium she calls for you incessantly.

Ma would be exceedingly angry if she knew I was wri-

ting this note, but you know Harry I never was against Lilian. I only remember her as the bright happy playmate of my childhood, whom "none knew but to love; none named but to praise." Alas for her! she has lost all that was hers of happiness on this earth, and you, my brother—you are the cause of it. How my heart swells, and my eyes fill when I think of it. No one here knows of this sad accident but me, except Mrs. Burton, who goes back to "the place" this afternoon, and she can surely keep silence until then.

You have, of course, heard of the shocking accident to Judge Woodward. His physicians (I learn from pa, who watched by him last night) think he will recover, though his wound is a dangerous one.

ELLA.

The note dropped from Harry's hands; he started to his feet, thoroughly roused from his stupor by its sad contents.

"Great God! my poor Lilian ill, perhaps dying! That infernal housekeeper; if I had the old harridan here, I would tear her limb from limb. And what is this about Judge Woodward?—But I have no time to think of him. I must go to Lilian."

Old feelings rushed upon him like a flood. All the tender attachment, which, in spite of his passion for Florence, had lain dormant in his heart for his early love, came over him in full force. He thought but of her now; her deep love; her foul wrong, and betrayed trust; and as he thought thus, he groaned in agony of spirit. A few hours later found him with impatient footsteps approaching the familiar little wicket-gate of the cottage. His heart smote him as he saw the knocker of the door was muffled. Opening it softly, he entered. There was an air of hushed quiet, even of gloom, reigning through the deserted rooms, which smote him to the soul with a sense of desolation. No Lilian sprang, with light step and open arms, to greet him now. No joyous shout from his boy welcomed him. In one room he found a fire burnt down in the grate; and the remains of a cold repast, as if the partakers had been hurriedly summoned from, and had not returned to finish it. He was about to hasten to Lilian's chamber, when he was arrested by the entrance of the physician. He was a kind, venerable-looking man, with hair silver white; full of years and skill;

and there was a look of painful thought on his brow as he entered; but as his eyes fell on the occupant of the room, an expression of indignation, amounting almost to scorn, swept over his features—too quickly for the other to perceive it. In answer to the anxious inquiries put to him, he replied that Lilian was yet in very great danger, but, without some imprudence, he thought there was hope, every thing depended on perfect quiet, and a careful avoidance of excitement of any kind; and ended by positively prohibiting Harry from seeing her.

“Would you have her die, and never see me?” cried Hal, with his usual impetuosity.

“No; but I would not have her pay with her life for the pleasure of a visit from you. And after all, I doubt whether your presence would not cause her more pain than pleasure. I know all, sir!” he added. “Her servant, or housekeeper, a very respectable, worthy woman, by the way, thought it necessary to confide in me, and it *was* best to do so. You need fear nothing from me, however. I have heard worse secrets than this; and my profession, if not my honor, would compel me to be discreet. I have given her some lulling medicine, and she was sinking to sleep when I left. I never saw a patient,” continued the doctor with a contemplative air, “with such weak nerves, that required such powerful narcotics. I thought at one time it would be impossible to produce sleep without giving her a quantity of laudanum which would have been highly injurious to the system.”

At these words, which portrayed so forcibly the distracted state of poor Lilian, Hal hid his face in his hands, and uttered in a suppressed tone, “My God!”

“It is a pity,” said the candid physician, “that people, before they rush into the commission of wrong, do not pause to think of its consequences.” The tone was kind, but the words were severe.

“Oh, sir!” replied Harry, struck to the heart with a sense of bitter shame, “I never intended to wrong her thus. Reckless as I am, I am not a premeditated villain. I was drawn into what I did by another, older, and I thought wiser, than I. That would be no excuse for me now, but it was then, for I was a boy—a wild, thoughtless boy! *He* did

it through friendship for me ; thought it for the best, I believe," he added in a lower tone ; " but, by heavens, if Lilian dies, he shall atone for the wrong with his blood ! "

" And so add murder to the list of your pleasant reflections," replied the imperturbable physician. " A fine way, young man, to atone for a crime. Were I a believer in the old Mosaic doctrine of ' an eye for an eye,' etc., I should recommend you rather to kill yourself than your friend ; for it seems she has suffered, after all, more through your agency than his ; though I have no doubt that same *friend*, whoever he be, is as black-hearted a villain as ever lived."

After this candid declaration of his sentiments, the worthy physician replenished the fire, and left his companion to his own reflections. And bitter reflections were they, as he sat there, with his head drooping on his hands, his elbows resting on the table, mute and motionless. With all his wildness, there was real, genuine feeling, in Harry Vernon's nature. Passionate, and impulsive, he was easily, too easily influenced by those to whom he once extended his confidence. Arthur Plumdale, with his cold, demon-like craft, base cunning, and astute intellect, had long since discovered this trait in the character of his generous and unsuspecting friend ; and how he had worked on it, was shown by the whole tenor of Harry's life, from the first date of their intimacy. This mobility of character, this susceptibility to present impressions, even when opposed to other and existing feelings, accounts for his passionate admiration of Florence, even when his calmer, but deeper affection for Lilian, slumbered in his bosom. It was like the fleeting Aurora Borealis, whose brilliance dims the light of the pure, calm stars, though the existence of the one is a few fleeting hours, that of the other eternal.

Fears for Lilian's life thronged thickly and darkly on his soul ; and now, when her very existence hung on a thread ; when every moment he expected to hear the damning intelligence that she was lost to him for ever, all his early tenderness revived. How busily, in this hour of solitary musing, into which was compressed the thoughts, hopes, and feelings of years, did memory bring back pictures of the past : of Lilian, in her childlike loveliness, birdlike in her wild, joyous innocence ; then, too, those early days of love ;

their stolen interviews ; their plighted faith, when he called upon the calm, blue heaven, and pure, shining stars, to seal his truth. Then, the happy days afterwards, when she was by his side, and the cottage looked so gay ; and life seemed so warm, so bright, so happy, lighted by her presence. And now she was, oh God ! dying ! and his—*his*-victim. He rose, and paced the floor in uncontrollable grief ; then, fearing his step might be heard, and, he knew too well, recognized, he sat down again ; sat down in that lonely room, with sorrow in his heart, and gloom upon his brow. It seemed to him that the winter sunlight, as it streamed into the room, looked wan and deathlike. Unable to withstand the contending emotions which tortured his soul, he rose at length, and rushed from the house. As he approached the mansion-house, his dogs, familiar with his appearance, bounded forth to meet him ; but no caressing hand, no kindly voice, answered their impetuous greetings. As he wound his way through the shrubberies on the lawn, he almost stumbled on little Harry.

The boy was seated on the long grass, his arm thrown, as if seeking protection—for no one was near him—over the neck of a large Newfoundland dog, which was standing by his side, gazing into his face, with that peculiar canine sagacity, which seems to speak of sympathy. He was evidently weary. Tired of play, and yearning for the sight of his mother, from whom he had been for several days separated, his little heart was full ; and as his father came unperceived upon him, he was sitting in silence, but large tears coursing quietly down his cheeks.

“ My boy ! ” said Harry, in as cheerful a tone as he could assume.

At the sound of his voice, the child started, and bounded, shouting with joy, into his arms. He was now—so quick is the transition of feeling in childhood—all glee, while the dog gambolled around them, sympathizing in his joy as well as pain. Not caring, in the present state of his feelings, to meet any of the inmates of the mansion, notwithstanding the cold—for the child was hardy, and well wrapped up—Hal carried his boy to the bower at the foot of the lawn.

It was the same, where he had sat scarce two months since with Florence ; and now his spirit chafed, as he thought

of that scene. Then, every thing was rich with the glowing tints of autumn, and the soft sunlight looked on as fair a scene as ever smiled beneath its radiance; now, all was bleak, and desolate as his own soul.

He sat with little Harry in his arms, listening to the boy's lisping complaints, of how "Mary had sent him to Dame Burton, and Dame Burton wouldn't let him go back to mamma," but made little reply; until the child, wearied by his silence, laid his head on his bosom, and fell asleep. He then started with him to the house, but meeting the nurse, who had come in search of her charge, he left him in her care, and slowly and sadly returned to the cottage. There he stayed all that long, lone, miserable night, and morning found him sleepless and unrefreshed. At breakfast—from which he rose after swallowing a cup of coffee—Dr. Moffat strongly recommended him to return to the city, saying, if Lilian by any chance heard of his presence on the place, she would doubtless wish to see him, and the refusal, or granting of this request, would, doubtless, prove injurious to her. In vain he pleaded to stay, that he might at least be constantly apprised of her situation. The doctor was firm. "You must think only of her now, not of yourself," he said. "Sacrifice your feelings to her good. Had you always done so," he added under his breath, "you would have saved her and yourself all this."

Hal prepared to obey the inexorable mandate, after receiving the promise of a daily report of Lilian's situation, and at the same moment a note was handed him by Mary. It was from his father, desiring his immediate presence in the city.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ATTEMPTED MURDER.

" 'Tis him! 'tis him! could I mistake Lord Albert's hated form!"

OLD BALLAD.

OUR readers, doubtless, think it time they were informed of the particulars of Judge Woodward's sad accident, which

were briefly these. There was no man in New York, whose name was so great a terror to evil-doers; and perhaps no one experienced this fear, combined with the most intense hatred, in a greater degree than Mr. Augustus Smith, to whom the reader has before had the honor of an introduction. Smith was, in every sense of the word, a bold, bad man. For years he had pursued the path of crime, escaping almost miraculously in several instances, the vigilance of the law, until he almost defied its power. But in this defiance of the "dread powers that be" Judge Woodward was always excepted. His very name fell on Mr. Smith's ear coupled with visions of detection, and the most rigorous punishment. The result of feelings like these, in a mind like his, rendered daring by successful crime, may be readily imagined. He resolved to rid himself, and the whole community of Villaindom—for whom he doubtless felt the sympathy men usually feel for the association of characters to which they belong—of this dreaded and powerful foe. 'Twas a daring deed, 'twas true, but had he not committed other daring deeds undetected? Why not this? 'Tis useless to trace the dark and winding course of crime in a bad man's mind. Suffice it to say that the scheme once formed, naught remained but the accomplishment. For months Smith was not ignorant of one movement on the part of his intended victim, but no available opportunity presented itself for the execution of his design, until he began to wax desperate, as wiser men than he have done, when delayed in the execution of a favorite purpose.

After leaving Florence, notwithstanding the absorbing and painful nature of his thoughts, Judge Woodward recollected an appointment he had made for that very evening to call on an old friend, one whose fallen fortunes would not permit him to forget his claim upon his time. After having paid a visit of some length, he emerged from his friend's lodging, into the somewhat obscure street in which they were situated, and turned his steps homeward; walking slowly as if absorbed in thought.

"Ah! there he is at last;" murmured a figure muffled in a cloak, who, slowly and noiselessly tracked his footsteps, keeping as close in the shadow of the wall as possible, and who—judging from the snowy hair which peeped from be-

tween the folds of his worn cloak and hat, and his bent form and trembling movement, assisted by a large stick on which he leaned, might have answered the description of some poor beggar bending under the weight of years—"I thought my time would come sooner or later. Just wait till he gets opposite our alley, near my little underground sanctum, christened by boon companion Bill Brown the Rogue's Refuge; and if I don't do for him, there is no virtue in an ounce of cold lead. I hate this pistoling business too, the barkers make such a noise; but then if I were to attempt to fix him with a keener, he might grapple me, and there's no telling then who'd get the worst of it." Scarcely had these half murmured words escaped his lips, when the footsteps of his victim arrived at the fatal spot alluded to. The report of a pistol startled the still night air; Judge Woodward fell, and in another instant Mr. Smith found himself by some mysterious means, minus his disguise, two stories underground, groping through a room which was in utter darkness. He thought he heard a footstep. "I say, Bill, is that you? you must be d—d fond of darkness. Strike a light, and let me see where to hide. I have just finished that cursed piece of business above, and missed the bloodhounds* just about the slickest you ever saw."

The next moment a lantern glared in his face, revealing to his astonished and horrified gaze the forms of some half-dozen policemen. In an instant he was in their grasp, struggling hopelessly to escape. They had made a descent that very night upon the den in question (the existence of which had been hitherto supposed by the gang who frequented it, to be unknown), in search of some malefactor; and by the merest chance Mr. Smith was thus secured, even ere the nature of his crime was known, and merely from the testimony of his own hastily uttered words. The police were however not long in discovering the nature of the "cursed piece of business" he had just finished.

Many were the curses heaped by Smith on what he now chose to consider the rash desperation of the act he had just committed; but he wound up his disconsolate reflections by exclaiming, "Well, at least I shall not die without my revenge; and I have rid my companions, too of their greatest

* Police.

horror; and after all, there is glory in dying for the good of one's fellow men:" and having delivered himself of these just and patriotic sentiments, he submitted to be led to prison, there to await the penalty of the law.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DESERTED.

"These are words of deeper sorrow
Than the wail above the dead."

"Fare thee well, thus disunited,
Torn from every nearer tie,
Seared in heart, and lone, and blighted,
More than this I scarce can die."

BYRON.

It was midnight in the room where lay the wretched Lillian. After three days of wild, raving delirium, she awoke to consciousness in this lonely hour. A small taper shed its dim light through the room. Overcome by the anxiety and fatigue of the last few days, Mary slumbered in an arm chair near the bed. The physician had retired to rest; leaving directions with her, and an order to awake him if any thing was needed. The past rushed over the memory of the stricken girl, as she lay there in that midnight solitude. She uttered no groan, but wild thoughts of agony, too deep for utterance, swept through her soul. At length all these thoughts, wronged love, dark despair, and the bitter sense of an undeserved shame, which had fallen like a blight on her life, concentrated themselves into one passionate desire; she must write to *him*; tell him that she knew all; pour out the anguished thoughts which maddened her soul, and then, oh God! bid him farewell for ever.

She looked around her. Mary's heavy, slumberous breathing told that she still slept. On the table near was the pen, ink, and paper the doctor had used in writing his prescription; and by the taper was a candle and matches. With a strength which seemed unnatural, after the exhausting hemorrhage and violent suffering, with which, for the last few days, her slight frame had been racked—the strength of *will* and power of feeling triumphing over bodily weakness

—she rose from the bed, lit the candle, placed it so that the glare was shaded from Mary's eyes, and seating herself by the table, commenced her harrowing task. Rapidly as lightning, with flushed cheek, and eyes which burned with a wild, unnatural fire, she wrote; ever and anon glancing fearfully around to see if Mary still slept, but determined, even if she awoke, to fulfil her purpose.

HARRY,—I know all—yes, *all!*—and had this fair, smiling world, of lying lips and breaking hearts, suddenly passed from before my gaze, and the horrors of the eternal world of darkness arisen before me, the shock would have been as *nothing* compared to this! Did you never love me? Was it all dark, wicked, demon-like deception throughout? Then God permits *fiends* to borrow the likeness of angels, to deceive the true and trusting. But I—oh, Harry! what did *I* ever do to you, that you should single me out for this fell purpose? What but love you, cling to you, forsake father, home—the world—for you! And now (oh! the world of horrors in that word *now*), what am I—I, who have lain on your bosom in trusting love, who have cradled our child in my arms; who of all the world loved, trusted, looked to you for happiness, and protection? A stricken-hearted thing, bowing in dust and ashes,—in the agony of a shame of which I was as unconscious as the babe which rested on my bosom,—in sorrow from which there is no refuge but the grave. You have robbed me of all trust in human love, of all faith in truth, even Divine truth. There is no home, no hope, no *heaven* for me now. With my love of you—my trust in you—was 'linked every pure and religious feeling of my nature. Deceived in *that*, heaven seems but a fabled spot; religion a delusion, and the name of Divine Mercy a mockery. A fever is in my veins, perchance the fever of death; oh! that it may in mercy be so! What a blessed boon it would be to forget, in the quiet of the grave, this world of deception, crime and suffering. You will say that these are wild words for Lilian,—her whom you were wont to call your "gentle love." Know you not that wrong, and fraud, and cruelty, will transform an angel into a fiend? How can we believe in the existence of honor, truth, or generosity, when we see our every dream of loving hope, and clinging trust,

crushed into dust ; when we have lived to find all we most cherished, as holiest and best, but a fearful delusion ? And my child,—the nameless offspring of shame,—a thing which those who esteem themselves high, and holy, and virtuous, will pass as a blot on the earth's surface,—oh ! that his baby heart might be stilled, ere its pulsations have been quickened by the agony which tortures mine. A world of love—the mother's love—rises, and heaves, and surges in restless billows through my soul at the thought of my child ; adding new might to the weight of sorrow, which bows me to the earth. As soon as I can, I will leave this place ; and oh ! Harry, when another claims my place in your heart, when another's smile is the light of your home, and other faces than mine, and that of your baby boy, cluster around you, looking to you for protection, and happiness ; when with the anxious tenderness of a husband and a father, you would invoke with trembling lips a blessing on your darlings, praying God to shield their life from storm, and sorrow, and loneliness ;—then think of those who are desolate and homeless wanderers, on the face of the earth ; think how you have robbed another of the very blessings for which you sue ; and *that other*, one who loved you, trusted you, cared for you, as none other can,—but I cannot linger on this. If I could but believe you wronged ! But then your neglect for months past,—this tale coming from one who could have no motive in deceiving me, and who repeated it as the common gossip of the household ! And yet, oh ! that one glimpse of heaven-light that breaks through the midnight clouds—the hope that you *may* have been wronged. But no, it cannot be—it cannot be. My words may seem to you wild, even delirious ; but as I glance over them, they are to me cold, faint, and meaningless, so dimly do they shadow forth my feelings. I can write no more,—strength, heart, life, forsake me. Harry, farewell.

LILIAN.

She folded and directed the blotted scrawl, and rising with an effort, went to the window and raised the curtain. The blinds were unclosed, and she looked out on the midnight sky, covered with dark threatening clouds ; not a star relieving the intense gloom. The keen blast swept, now in fitful gusts, now in melancholy murmurs, through the

trees, like the alternate outbursts of grief, and low, faint moans of a breaking heart. As she gazed out on the drear scene, the bitter sense of the desolation without, and within, struck like an icebolt on her heart; and overpowered by the fatigue of her recent exertions, she uttered a groan, and sunk exhausted on the floor. Aroused by the sound from her slumbers, Mary started up, reproaching herself for having allowed sleep for a moment to interrupt her vigil; hurried to the bed, and perceiving it vacant, looked round in wild alarm for her mistress; then perceiving the recumbent and motionless form by the window, she approached and raised her tenderly.

"I am not insensible," said Lilian faintly. "The boon of unconsciousness is denied me;" and with Mary's assistance she reached the bed, and then her first inquiry was for her boy. Mary explained that he was well taken care of, but was not permitted to stay in the room for fear of disturbing her, as she had been very ill.

Lilian said no more, but lay in passive silence, her hands clasped, her tearless eyes fixed, but seeing many a troubled vision rise between her and the blank white ceiling, on which they seemed to gaze. There was a look of such marble pallor on the deathlike features, that the solitary watcher in that lonely chamber shrunk appalled from the sight. But this feeling soon vanished in one of pity.

"Her heart is breaking!" sobbed Mary passionately, "her poor young heart is breaking. Oh! God have mercy on her!" and throwing herself on her knees, she prayed aloud. Attracted by those fervent and impassioned tones stealing through the stillness of the room, Lilian listened. She heard Mary—her own good and faithful Mary—faithful as is devoted woman ever to those she loves—beseech that Power which had brought her out of the ways of darkness; subdued her rebellious heart by sorrows; and brought her out of the depths of despair, into the wonderful light and knowledge of His love; who had poured the oil of consoling love on the wild waves of her own soul; to have mercy on the young desolate being, stricken down by man's wrong and injustice before Him. So impressive was the prayer, in its simple eloquence and trusting faith, that Lilian felt her soul melt within her. The ice of despair, which had gathered coldly and darkly over her soul, melted beneath the influ-

ence of those God-inspired words. Fearing to interrupt the prayer, she lay without speech or motion, while large tears gathered and rolled down her cheeks. Every tear—wrung as they were from her bruised and wounded heart's core—was a gem, for they bore away in their briny drops, some portion of the grief that burdened her soul. And gently, and surely, as if inspired by the Divine Healer of wounded spirits, came upon her the conviction that there was a Fount of Consolation open for her still; that the God whom in her hour of utter darkness she had cast from her, nay, almost accused of being the author of her misery, waited with open arms for the hour when his stricken and wandering child should seek the Parent bosom, lay her weary head there in childlike trust, and have the protecting wings of Love and Mercy folded around her. She was naturally inclined to religion, as are all women who have her enthusiastic and boundless fund of love in their natures; if *they* err, 'tis because, unfortunately, their feelings have been warped or forced aside by extraneous circumstances. With Lilian it had been the religion of nature alone, the adoring worship which the young heart pours forth as the natural outgushings of love on the shrine of its Creator; the reverential tenderness of the child for the Father and Protector. She had never realized that she needed the precious boon of the Saviour's redeeming love; never realized the innate sin of her own heart and life; of this she had been heedless and thoughtless. Now as she lay there, and thought of her wild murmurings against Providence, a thousand other offences rose up in her mind's eye before her; and covering her face with her hands, as if to conceal it from the gaze of a justly offended Father, she exclaimed aloud in her agony:

“Oh God! canst thou ever forgive my transgressions against Thee?” Then as a seraph vision before her, arose the form of the Son of His love; the halo from the Mercy-seat encircling the Godlike head; love, pure, perfect, eternal, breathing in the Divine face; and stealing over her soul like far off sweet music, came the memory of the words, “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

And Lilian reached out her arms in wild entreaty, to—

wards the vision—which to her fevered brain seemed reality—as she murmured, “Blessed Saviour, intercede with the Father for me!”

O! Jesus of Nazareth! poor and lonely Pilgrim! Saviour of Divine love! bright in glorious mercy at the right hand of the Eternal! how potent a spell-word is Thy name, to the weary and stricken-hearted.”

Mary had ceased her prayer, and stood silently watching the emotions which spoke in the agitated countenance of Lilian. Joy filled the soul of the faithful creature as she heard the last exclamation burst from the lips of her mistress. “He will! He will indeed, Miss Lilian;” and she seized her small white hands and bathed them with her tears. “Like as He brought me out of miry pits and deep waters, and guided me into the way of perfect peace, so will He do by you, Miss Lilian. Trust Him! only trust Him!”

“Mary, did you ever have grief like mine?”

“Miss Lilian, am I not a widow, and has not the willow tree waved for many a year over the grass-grown graves of my two children?”

“Forgive me, that I was so selfish as to forget your bereavement. Poor Mary!” and she placed her hand with caressing fondness on the shoulder of her, who was more a friend than a servant. “Mary, how could you bear all that, and live?”

“I could not have borne it, Miss Lilian, but the strength of a Higher Power sustained me, and the love of God brought me through, as it will you, Miss Lily.”

“I hope so, Mary. Sing for me, one of those wild sweet hymns you used to be so fond of singing in the long summer days, when you sat with your work under the shade of the trees before the cottage door. Ah! those were happy days!” and she sighed a deep, passionate sigh, as she turned her head quickly away. Mary thought a moment, and then sung in her fine, clear voice, with deep feeling, Moore’s beautiful hymn, “Come ye disconsolate.” Lilian listened like a child lulled to rest by its mother’s lullaby, until she sank into a calm, sweet slumber—the first natural sleep she had known since her illness. Mary bent over her, as she lay in her childlike beauty, over which had passed in the last few days the fearful traces of the woman’s suffering. Sorrow was

written on the wan cheek; on the pale brow—from which the brown curls were thrown back in careless disorder; on the temples which were slightly indented from recent and severe pain; in the dark blue circles around the eyes; and in the shining moisture trembling on the long jetty lashes, which rested—in striking contrast—on the colorless cheek. Could Harry Vernon have seen her then, what must have been his feelings? Oh man! in the strength of thy proud spirit, in the power and immunity which the world gives thee in matters of right and wrong between the sexes; and oh, woman! in thy fond weakness; thy fidelity unto death; thy self-sacrificing devotion; thy fearful gift of bearing and suffering for him, who sometimes forgets the character of the protector, in that of the false-hearted betrayer—how unequal is thy lot.



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CHAT BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

“Just think of it, Moreton, isn’t it too much? Gussy Plumdale and Fitz Friske are to be married next week; a succession of brilliant parties will be given of course, and I shall not be able to attend one of them, just in consequence of Judge Woodward getting shot, and being brought here.” And she rocked to and fro, in the impetuosity of her feelings, for fashionable women have impetuous feelings behind the curtain, however great may seem their polished indifference in society.

“It is rather provoking;” was the languid reply of her *cara sposa*, as he cut the leaves of a new novel, and settled himself more comfortably on the sofa, “but can’t you attend any of them?”

“Nonsense, how you talk! How would it look for me to run here, there, and every where, to every festivity of the season, when Judge Woodward is lying at death’s door in my house?”

“He will be convalescent before long, I guess. His phy-

sicians think him in a fair way of recovery now. Where is Eva this morning?"

"With Judge Woodward. I left her there a few moments ago."

"Beg pardon, my dear; but do you think it exactly proper to leave a young lady in a gentleman's sick room?"

"Why, what harm can a man half dead do her? Besides the hired nurse is there."

"I am not apprehensive that he will do her any harm, dead or alive," answered Mr. Moreton, smiling, though with a slight expression of annoyance; "but regard for appearances you know——"

"Regard for appearances, indeed! nobody is going there now, but a physician, and they have no right to say any thing, no matter what they think. If you have so much regard for appearances, go and stay there yourself. I have sat there day after day, and hour after hour, until the confinement of the sick room has made me feel wretchedly, and robbed me of all my bloom." And she rose, and gazed into the large mirror which reflected her *petite* figure in its tasteful demi-toilet. Certainly her cheek looked a little pale, notwithstanding the rose-hued ribbons of her morning cap, which were so disposed as to shade her face slightly; but it seemed more the languid hue of dissipation, than the effect of confinement. Mr. Moreton smiled, knowing that his wife had not been in the sick room an hour at a time, any day, spending her mornings in visiting, and her evenings in promenading and shopping—from which Judge Woodward's illness, fortunately, did not exclude her.

After a pause, he said:

"Judge Woodward's accident may be fortunate in one way, my dear. It may give you an opportunity of bringing about your favorite project; a match between him and Eva."

"Oh! there is no danger of that. When Florence Fulton once gets a man entangled in her meshes, he never has eyes or ears for any other woman. She sends here every day to inquire after him, just to make their engagement conspicuous. I don't believe she cares a straw for him in reality."

"Do you think she cares for any one?" said Mr. Moreton, fixing his eyes with a peculiar expression on his wife's face.

“Yes, I do, Moreton;” and she lowered her voice, speaking with that peculiar expression people always use when hinting darkly at terrible truths, unknown to the many; but which they in their superior wisdom (oftener in their vindictive malice), have been enabled to discover. “I believe she loves *Claude St. Julian*. You’ll see; I wouldn’t say it publicly, but——”

“Pshaw!” interrupted her husband. “All you women adore St. Julian, and you think the darling wears Miss Fulton’s chains. That is the reason you are so unmerciful on her.”

His wife tossed her head. “I am sure I have never shown any particular fancy for him, further than always to have him at our receptions, but that is only because he is so gay and agreeable, and helps to make an evening pass off well. Besides, he is one of the ‘leaders of the ton,’ and it counts to have such persons at one’s house.”

“Precisely. You regard him as a sort of ace of trumps in the game of life. Well, *hearts* are always trumps in his game, I assure you.”

“I know nothing about your odious gambling expressions, but as I was about to say when you interrupted me—which you seem to take particular pleasure in doing on every occasion—I have taken every possible opportunity of throwing Florence in St. Julian’s way. I thought Judge Woodward could not be blind to her *penchant* for *le charmant* Benedick, and that would be enough for him of course.”

“Or for any other man, I imagine. It certainly showed good principle in you—that manoeuvre,” he continued sarcastically; “but after all, it was but an indifferent stroke of policy.”

“Why so?”

“If you don’t understand, I shall not condescend to enlighten you.”

Mrs. Moreton sat some moments, puzzling her little brain to solve the problem, with a look of bewilderment on her contracted *alias* delicate features, which amused her husband excessively; then giving it up for a troublesome operation, and knowing it was vain to apply for an explanation, she changed the subject.

“By the way, I have not heard you refer to your embarrassments lately. Pray, how did you get through them?”

"A mortgage on the Staten Island property, stopped the mouths of the clamorous wretches for the present, but how I am to get along after a while, without some windfall of fortune, d—— me if I know."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Moreton, glancing at her watch and rising hastily, "this conjugal *tête-à-tête* has been prolonged half an hour. I must really walk or drive for a color."

"Drive to Madame B——'s fancy store. I observe you always 'get a color' when you go there," replied her sarcastic husband.

"If there isn't Florence Fulton's carriage!" cried Mrs. Moreton, pausing at the window, as she was sweeping from the room, without condescending to notice her liege lord's last remark; "and as I live! Florence, Ella Vernon, and Lieut. Minton getting out of it; so there's an end to my drive."



CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE INVALID.

"There is something in sickness, which breaks down the pride of manhood, which softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of childhood."

IRVING.

RELIEVED for the first time for many days, of pain, Judge Woodward sunk into a calm, refreshing slumber, while the hired nurse, lulled by the drowsy atmosphere of the close and darkened room, dozed quietly by the bedside. Relieved by the closed eyes and open mouth of the worthy nurse, and the quiet, regular breathing of the invalid, from any fear of detection, Eva, the ever watchful, stole noiselessly to the bed, and drew aside the curtains, to gaze unchecked on the friend she loved so well; whose danger for the last few weeks had almost maddened her with anxiety. She stood there like a watching angel, bending over the couch of the sleeper; a silent prayer of gratitude for his preservation welling up from her full heart. True, he was spared, as she believed, to love and live for another; yet he shared

this world—broad though it was—with her, and the same blue heaven and shining stars looked down on both.

Suddenly, and without any premonitory movement, the invalid opened his eyes; opened them to encounter those soft, blue Madonna eyes, fixed upon him swimming in tenderness. Hastily, and with a deep blush, Eva dropped the curtains and shrunk from the bedside.

As Judge Woodward encountered that glance, the words of Florence rushed upon his memory, and as the conviction of their truth burst upon him, the brow of the ordinarily calm, self-assured man, crimsoned with a glow akin to that which flushed the cheek of the modest young girl.

He had lain so long in one position, that his wound pained him intensely. The pillow had twisted itself awry, too, so that his head rested so uncomfortably, it increased his agony. He could not suppress a groan. Eva heard it, and forgetting every thing else, was by his side in an instant.

“Let me arrange your pillow,” said she, averting her eyes, and blushing again, but not shrinking with any affected coyness from the task. He made an ineffectual effort to raise his head, and she was compelled to pass one arm around his neck, and assist him, while with the other she arranged the pillow; then rested his head softly upon it, and bringing cologne, bathed his brow.

“I feel much better now, thank you,” said the gentleman with a grateful look, but with a certain degree of reserve, for the ‘dear Eva how kind you are,’ which in other days he would have used, died on his lips. Eva said not a word, but tremblingly, and blushing, retired from the room, after arousing the nurse.

Judge Woodward saw her no more that day, nor the next, nor the next. He missed her sweet face, her gentle, soothing attentions, bestowed as no one else could bestow them, and the music of her low, kindly tones. Yet it was a sort of luxury, to lie and think of the kindness she had already bestowed on him. The image of Florence yet lingered painfully in his memory, but it was as the remembrance of one loved and lost.

Men of mature years, however deep their feelings, seldom linger, and reach after, and waste vain thoughts upon

that which is beyond their reach. Unlike the impetuosity of youth, which yearns even more fondly for the unattainable, they have learned by experience the philosophy of life; and instead of spending golden hours in vain lamentations over the loss of some favorite object of pursuit, they strive to forget it, or to fill the void by something which is procurable. Spendthrift youth squanders heedlessly its wealth of time, thought, and feeling; but mature years has no time to lose. Possession, not anticipation, is then the motto. Thus, though Judge Woodward had told Florence, and felt his words at the moment, that he believed his last dream of love was over; yet it is not strange, on the principle we have just named, that the consciousness that all thought of her was vain, should work a great change in his feelings towards her. Perhaps too, the new conviction which had burst upon him united in producing the effect,—for what man of his age could be insensible to the charm of being loved by such a sweet fair young creature as Eva,—more especially when wounded by a recent repulse from another. To think that the wealth of love, in that pure, true heart, was all his. It was certainly a consoling reflection. The more he strove to banish the memory of Florence, the more tenderly and fondly he thought of Eva, and the reaction soothed his feelings; it was calm, soft, delicious. It was as if, lured by some fair southern scene of sunlight and beauty, he had roved 'mid flowers, fruits, song and pleasure, until the flowers faded suddenly in his way, the bright fruit pressed to his yearning lips became ashes, and weary and disappointed, he had turned aside to seek some quiet spot for rest; where he had been lulled to sleep by the soft murmur of falling waters, and amid the sweet odor of violets. He did not ask for Eva again, after the little scene we have related; delicacy restrained him, though he yearned for her presence. And Eva,—somebody says “when love dares to creep from his hiding-place in the heart of a young maiden, and ventures to peep out at the ‘windows of the soul,’ and is caught in the very act, timid and shocked, he shrinks back; shutting himself more closely than ever from observation.” It seems to me the ancients ought to have created two distinct loves, and not have given Cupid the universal empire. Bright and beautiful, dreamy and poetic, though the boy

god may be, there is nothing—there can be nothing—in the masculine world, capable of representing the depth of devotion, the trembling, sensitive, and delicate nature of woman's love; that love whose depth can never be guessed by its outward manifestations; like a fountain underground, still, deep, pure, put unseen. Bright flowers may spring above it, whose fragrance charms the senses, and ravishes the soul; but while we inhale their perfume, we dream not of the depths and purity of the hidden stream which nursed those flowerets into life and gladness.

Though she did not suspect Judge Woodward of having discovered her secret, (how would she have felt had she known all?) still, when Eva thought of the little incident in the sick chamber—the stolen glance, the discovered watcher,—she blushed, and trembled, and could not prevail on herself to enter the room again. But at last, reflection, sympathy, and it may be some other secret feeling, coming to her aid, she reproached herself for allowing what she called her foolish fears, to interfere with what she chose to consider her duty. The result of these reflections was her return to the sick-room as usual, at stated intervals, to read for and watch by the invalid; greatly to the delight of that gentleman, whose beaming smile of welcome when she entered the apartment, told plainer than words could do, his appreciation of her visits. Day after day passed away, and Judge Woodward became convalescent, and able with some little assistance to reach the back parlor, and there reclining on a lounge, drawn near a cheery fire, with Eva by his side, beguiling the hours,—sometimes by reading the inspired pages of the Book of books, sometimes from some pleasant author—or singing his favorite songs, accompanying her sweet voice with the harp—he began to find his confinement a real luxury, and prolonged it—as Mrs. Moreton thought—to a most unnecessarily protracted period. Irving, our own gifted Irving—every line of whose productions is glowing with the genius and truth of heart inspiration—says that, “there is something in sickness which breaks down the pride of manhood; which softens the heart, and brings it back to the feelings of childhood,” and thus it was with Judge Woodward. As he lay in the languor of recent illness—the vigorous blood of health not yet returned to his cheek, shut out from the din

and bustle of the world without,—recent impressions were forgotten, and the feelings of past years came freshly back upon him. Once more he was the boy of eighteen, with the bright hopes of life's spring flinging their first fragrance o'er his path—the warm heart-life of youth bounding in his veins; the orphan boy, in the home of his kind guardians, Eva's parents—tossing the lovely babe in his arms, who now sat by his side in the bloom of maiden beauty. Then years had passed, and he was by her side cheering his "little wife," as he was oftentimes wont to call her, in her tasks; making her redouble her efforts in the endeavor to win one smile of approval from him; and as these long vanished memories came back upon him, he thought how unwittingly he had taught Eva to expect the love he had never given. Yes, he had taught her to love him, and his gaze lingered kindly and tenderly upon her. "If the future could atone—" Well, it was a strange situation for a grave and reverend judge, but who can say it had not its charm? However powerful and distinguished a man may be in his public character, he must be indeed unfortunate, if he has no loving heart, no sweet home scenes to turn to, which call forth the better and kindlier feelings of his nature, and assert their sway over the mere purposes of intellect and ambition. God has implanted in every human heart, whether lofty or lowly, in a greater or less degree, a yearning for love and sympathy; and sad indeed must be the destiny—however brilliant it seem—which is deprived of their gratification. Many persons associate the idea of a great intellect with want of feeling,—perhaps because they imagine the myriad tiny links which form the chain of social intercourse, sympathy, and affection, too trivial to engross the thoughts of those whose ideas are perchance to enlighten ages yet to come;—but this proves their own want of judgment, rather than the truth of their theory. 'Tis impossible for the minds of the many to conceive, in the remotest degree, of the limitless depth, and power of feeling imprisoned in the souls of the "Mighty Few." What would intellect be without feeling; but as a glorious shrine, unwarmed by the Promethean spark which can alone kindle its cold incense, and send it warmly and freshly forth upon the earth?

CHAPTER XL.

REFLECTION AND REPENTANCE.

“His cup of life was quaffed too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood.”

BYRON.

“And our house, our old and lordly house; sweet sister, must it fall from
Its haught pristine greatness?”

OLD PLAY.

UPON Harry Vernon's arrival at his father's house in town, he was informed that he desired a private interview with him, and that he would find him in the library. Anticipating a paternal lecture, but feeling indifferent in the present state of his feelings to any ordinary occurrence, he obeyed the summons. We will not detail at length the protracted interview between the father and son; suffice it to say, that at its close, Harry Vernon left the library a “sadder and a wiser man.” The events of the last few days, had done the work of years upon him. It was several days afterwards that he sat alone, in an apartment of his father's house. He seemed to be indisposed, for a dressing-gown was thrown carelessly around him, though it was evening, and the thick curls of his hair hung in tangled masses around his face, which was deathly pale. There was perceptible in every thing about him, that disregard or forgetfulness of appearances, which is always the accompaniment, in minds peculiarly constituted, of mental suffering. We have said his face was deathly pale; and his eyes—those large lustrous eyes of jetty darkness, which gave character to his whole face—burned with a fevered glare. Twilight had gathered in the room, the street lamps were already lighted, and on the passers to and fro the eyes of the young man were fixed, yet he saw nothing without. In his hand he clasped a letter—Lilian's letter,—and ever and anon, as his eyes fell upon it, the full curved lip quivered, the only outward sign of emotion, save that he grew, if it were possible, yet paler. His solitude, absorbing and painful as it seemed, was interrupted by a light step, and his sister stood by his side. “My dear brother,” she said, in the kindly tones of sisterly affection, passing her arm caressingly around his neck, and pressing

her cool soft hand to his fevered brow, "it is imprudent in you to be sitting up, when you are so much indisposed; had you not better lie down?"

"I cannot lie down!" replied her brother, turning his dark eyes upon her with that wild gaze from which she always shrunk; "I cannot lie down, and let my very soul be consumed by the burning thoughts within me. My spirit frets and chafes in this inaction like a thirsty tiger in its cage. I have been lying down until I am nearly wearied to death;" and he rose, and paced the room with disordered steps. Ella approached him, and laid her hand on his arm.

"Harry, sit down, and let me talk to you, and try to be calm, will you not?"

He turned, and looked at her in silence for a moment, and then, as if won by her look of sympathy, obeyed her request. She seated herself by his side.

"Try to bear our reverses better, brother. Remember that a Higher Power——"

"How can I bear them calmly," he broke in impetuously, "when I feel that my reckless course of conduct has contributed, in a great degree, towards bringing these misfortunes upon us?"

"Oh! no, Harry, not so bad as that. We have all been very extravagant; that fault has not rested solely with you. Besides, you know it is the failure of Smithson, for the large amount for which our father was security, which has involved him in these present difficulties. By a mortgage on Vernon, he can meet his present liabilities, and perhaps, before others become due, make some other arrangement——"

"You know," interrupted her brother, bitterly, "that in a few months, at farthest, this establishment, and every thing in it, will be sold, and—admitting that our affairs are kept secret until then—how will you feel when our misfortunes are bruited about from mouth to mouth,—when the world begins to sneer,—affect pity,—and call us 'broken down aristocracy?' And supposing my father makes arrangements which will enable us to keep Vernon, how will you feel, Ella, when compelled to leave all the gayeties, and luxuries of city life, and settle down in the country? 'Tis of you, I think, my sweet sister, as well as my dear, my noble father," and he took his sister's hands in his own, and looked earnestly and sorrowfully into her face.

“Do not fear for me, brother! You know I was always fond of country life; besides, I do not expect to be Miss Vernon always,” she added, with a smile and a blush.

“What do you mean, sis? Has Minton——”

“Hush, Bud!” replied his sister, placing her hand over his mouth with arch playfulness. “Imagine any thing you choose, but don’t ask me to explain.”

Hal gazed on her with a faint smile, and bending over, kissed her brow tenderly.

“I congratulate you, sis. Minton is a devilish good fellow,” he added, with a dash of his usual impetuosity, “and I don’t know any one I would give you to more willingly; but,” and his voice changed, “when he knows your altered prospects?”

“I would spurn him from my side, if I thought he could be influenced by such motives,” answered Ella proudly.

“There are few disinterested men in the world, my little sis; however, Fred. Minton seems to be, and I dare say is, an honorable fellow. I hope you may be happy, sister; but I, my God! I am miserable, and doomed to be the source of misery to all who love me.” Again the dark cloud which had momentarily passed from his brow, settled with increasing gloom upon it, and rising with folded arms, he paced silently to and fro the room.

“Read that!” he said at length, suddenly pausing before his sister, who was regarding him with silent anxiety, and drawing from his bosom Lilian’s letter, which he had hastily thrust there on her entrance,—“read that, and tell me if I have not cause for the hell within my soul! A man who could read, unmoved, the agony expressed in that letter—knowing himself to be the cause of it—must be nearly allied to a demon.”

Ella read the letter, and ere she finished, her tears were dropping fast and thickly upon it.

“How you have deceived her. Poor, poor Lilian!” she exclaimed, as she returned it to her brother. “And what will you say to her now, Harry?”

“Say to her? I will offer her all I have to give, if God do not curse me by inflicting her death on me, as the punishment of my crime. Yes, even if she dies, she shall know first that my hand, my heart, my home, are all hers, though I do not deserve that she should accept the offering.”

“My noble brother! your own true high soul spoke out then. You are worthy of any woman, spite of your faults. But—our mother, Harry—the world——?”

“Curse the world! Let it say what it will, I don’t care; and as for my mother, she helped to make me what I am; she crossed me in my love for Lilian; now let her take the consequences. As far as she is concerned, I wish they were worse; though I dare say they will hurt her confounded pride enough as it is.”

“Oh! brother, don’t talk so. Remember she is your mother. She thinks it so unkind that you never go in to see her—or at least very rarely—when you know she is not able to leave her room.”

“I don’t want to see her. I am not fond of hysterics, and scenes, and all those fine lady antics mother is so fond of getting up.”

He turned to leave the room; Ella stopped him.

“One word,” she said; “tell me, is there not something of an engagement existing between Florence and yourself?”

“There is,” he replied, coldly and briefly.

“Then how will you act towards her if——”

“I don’t know, I can’t think of her now. If Lilian will receive me, I belong of right to her alone. If not, it matters not much what becomes of me. But don’t fear for Florence, sis; I don’t think she cares much for me.” He turned again to leave the room, but paused on the threshold.

“I will make you a promise; sister. A great change has come over me, in the last few days, and for the future I shall try to be a better boy.” And with a smile so different from his former joyous gayety, that it almost made Ella weep, he left the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE WRONGER SEEKS TO ATONE TO THE WRONGED,—THE
EVIL GENIUS AGAIN.

“And thou!—thou!—so wildly worshipped, so guiltily betrayed,—all is not yet lost.”
BULWER.

HARRY VERNON had gained the solitude of his own room, drawn forth his writing materials, and was seated, his brow resting on his hand, lost in thought, when he was interrupted by a tap at the door, followed by Arthur Plumdale's appearance.

“How are you this evening, my dear fellow? Writing? Don't let me interrupt you. Make myself at home till you finish;” and he took up the “Spirit of the Times,” drew a lamp near him, and soon became apparently absorbed in its contents; though occasionally he looked up, and fixed a keen furtive glance on the agitated features of his companion; who after languidly acknowledging his salutation, commenced writing,—for he felt that the case was one which admitted of no delay, and he was in the habit of treating his friend (or—hanger on, which shall we phrase it?) *sans cérémonie*. Fearing he might observe his emotion—and men never like to betray their softer feelings to other men—Harry turned, and averted his face from Plumdale, as much as he could, without turning his back upon him. In the indisposition which for the last few days had confined him to his room—for even his robust frame could not withstand the varied and intense excitement, he had recently gone through—Arthur had called constantly, to know if he could do any thing for him, but Hal, though hitherto he had been confidence itself, felt an aversion, for which he could scarcely himself account, to making him the confidant of Lilian's situation. He knew that from him he would meet no sympathy, and he rather, perhaps, dreaded his ridicule. And who does not dread ridicule, that grinning demon, which works us into the belief, often, that our purest and loftiest impulses are ludicrous and absurd in the eyes of others? 'Tis a most potent instrument of evil, and unfortunately the most high-toned, sensi-

tive, and generous natures, are the most susceptible to its influence.

Harry Vernon had sufficient knowledge of the world not to communicate his pecuniary misfortunes to his friend. Tell a man any thing else with the expectation of meeting sympathy; even though it be some crime you have been led to commit; but never let him know you have been reduced from affluence to poverty, so long as that very inconvenient event can be concealed. If you do, as a reward for your pains, you will find him every day growing a little colder; losing every day by degrees the links of sociability (we hate to profane that word friendship), until almost unconsciously to yourself, the "my dear fellow, how are you?" slides into the touch of the hat and half murmured "good morning!" We know not why it is; perhaps when they look at you, they see the scarecrow visage of the Giant Poverty peeping over your shoulder, and it scares them; perhaps they are tormented by the idea that you will ask them to lend you money.

Thank heaven! all men are not alike. There are some who will turn out of their way to say a kindly word, or perform a friendly action for a fellow-being in distress; who delight to bid the drooping heart rejoice, and cause it to forget, for a while at least, that this is not a world of love and charity. 'Tis such examples as these—angel visits though they be, in every sense of the term—that reconcile one to a habitation on this "mundane sphere." Well, the world has spoiled many a noble heart; but strange to say, however much the truth is felt, we only strive to stifle the bitter consciousness, and bow, and smile, and say (in effect), "my dear world, your most obedient servant." But to return to Harry.

"My wronged, but still beloved Lillian! could you read my heart, which, much as it has erred, is still yours, and yours alone, you would not vent upon me such wild words of reproach. I know that I deserve them, Lillian; I do not seek to extenuate my error—the one error of the wild and reckless boy—nor the momentary inconstancy of the man, which has caused both such wretchedness; but I deny that I am your base and deliberate betrayer. It is useless now to detail circumstances, but I feel that you will trust me when I tell you, that I was the unfortunate victim of passion, led on by

the representations of another, to the commission of an act, which I have ever since regretted, and intended at the time to atone for, by making you my wife in name, whenever it was in my power to do so. I confess that the charms of another, to whose fascinating influence I was constantly exposed, did for a time lure my heart, or rather my senses, from you, my own sweet, gentle *wife*; but 'tis all over now, and would to heaven it had never been. The wanderer returns to you, Lilian, with a heart which bows in the dust at your feet, offering more than its former tenderness, more than the love of the 'olden time.' Let the future atone for the past. To you I offer myself, my name, all that I have to give; for you I would, were it necessary, brave the world, whose opinions I despise. I know that nothing I have to give is worthy your acceptance, but do not refuse me; be your own dear self, gentle, loving, as of old.

"The doctor forbids my seeing you. I was aghast with amaze when I received your letter, thinking you not able to write; but a note from Mary accompanied it, saying that the effort had caused you much pain, and you were still too ill to see me. And all this for me. Oh God! Lilian, you may forgive me, but I can never forgive myself. Under any circumstances I should have feared to face you, until I had implored your forgiveness, so much doth 'conscience make cowards of us all.'

"Write me but one line, to say I am pardoned, and I will come to you. Until then I await with fearful anxiety the answer which is to decide our future destiny. Lilian, for the last time I implore you, for my sake—for the sake of our boy, which must ever be, come what will, a link of love between our hearts—pardon and receive me; or if you will not, only believe me as of old,

"Yours only, HARRY."

He folded and sealed this missive, gulped down a goblet of water—swallowing at the same time the world of emotion which threatened to choke his utterance—and turned to Plumdale, saying with an effort at composure, "And now, Plum, I am ready for you, having finished my little billet-doux."

'Plum' started as if suddenly interrupted in an article in which he was most deeply absorbed, and replied:

"I merely looked in upon you, Hal, as I was passing, to ascertain the state of your health; and to ask you, if you felt able, to drive down to-morrow to see some horses Manton has for sale. They would suit you exactly, and the drive would do you good. What say you?"

"I will go perhaps, but as for buying horses, I am tired of it. I got damnably cheated in the last I purchased."

"These of Manton's are splendid fellows, I assure you, and they will go cheap too. Splendid establishment to go for almost nothing, as I expect it will. Great many failures now. You heard of Smithson's? By the way, the Governor was somewhat involved in that, was he not? Of course nothing serious to him, though?"

"I suppose not," replied Hal with a yawn, under which he endeavored to conceal the look of discomfiture which the mention of Smithson's failure had brought to his face; though for once—proving that the most cunning are sometimes at fault—Arthur Plumdale suspected nothing. He had too much confidence in the reputedly immense resources of Ex-Governor Vernon.

"Well, you look tired, so I'll relieve you of my company and look in at the opera. Give me your letter, I'll drop it in the office."

"It is of some importance, Plum; you might forget it."

"Oh! never fear," and he picked it up without looking at the direction, placed it in his pocket, and went off whistling an opera air.

"Strange," thought Harry, "that Plum should have waited all this time merely to know whether I would drive to-morrow, when he might have asked the question at first, and been off; but I suppose it was merely '*pour passer le temps.*'"

CHAPTER XLII.

FRIENDLY OFFICES OF MR. PLUMDALE.

“Oh hypocrite! most double damned hypocrite!
What punishment hath hell for such as thou?”

DID Arthur Plumdale, according to promise, drop his friend's letter in the office? No; he walked with hasty steps to his own house, locked himself in his room, started the fire, settled himself comfortably by it, took out the letter—which was merely sealed in Harry's careless way with a wafer—breathed on it, and breaking it open, proceeded deliberately to read the contents.

“Well!” was his comment, as he finished that heart-breathing confession of passion, error, and penitence; ‘I always thought Hal Vernon weak, but I never gave him credit for being the consummate fool that this proves him. Send this to her, and there's an end of all my hopes of him as a husband for Lettie, and a tool for myself. I have been bothered enough about that affair with Florence Fulton, in which, strange to say, he never would allow me to interfere. But she has not the most remote idea of taking Hal. I have always seen that ‘sticking out.’ When she rejects him, then will be the time for Lettie. ‘Full many a heart’ so forth and et cetera,—but to return to this delectable missive. I have helped the simpleton out of more than one scrape, and I think I'll try to get him out of this, and when his fever fit is over he will thank me for it—that is if I ever tell him my co-operation in the affair, which is not very likely. I can't see what makes the fellow hanker after that woman so. It really looks as if there was such a thing as true love in the world, though, as far as my personal experience goes, I ignore its existence entirely. And now for my plan of operation.”

He paused a moment, as if in thought, and then continued talking to himself. “Ah! I have it: if I mistake not, I have some of the lady-bird's handwriting. Let me see if I can't produce a fac-simile.” He went to a trunk, and after some rummaging, pulled out an old portfolio, and

commenced looking over its contents. "Ah! here it is; never lost any thing in my life."

He laid it on the table before him, and commenced making sundry efforts to imitate the fair, delicate tracery of Lilian. It was an old but popular song she had copied long ago for Harry, and it had been transferred by him to its present possessor. Little had she dreamed, while tracing those simple lines, they would ever be used as a means of the destruction of her happiness.

After several ineffectual efforts, and the trial of sundry pens, Arthur succeeded at last in producing a very good counterfeit of her handwriting. Fearing to trust himself to write much, he then drew forth a snowy sheet of paper, and traced thereon with great care the words:

"Your wrongs to me, have been too great for forgiveness. I desire never to look on your face again, or to hold any correspondence with you. It will be vain to address any communications whatever to me, as they will be returned unopened.

LILIAN."

He folded, enveloped, and directed this, with ladylike neatness—for he was too accomplished in the art of villany to neglect even the most trifling details—then paused, and deliberated a moment. Finally he placed Harry's letter before him, and succeeded to perfection in imitating the dashing off-hand chirography thereof, while he wrote:

"DEAR LILIAN,—I think it quite time to drop the little affair between us, and have no doubt upon mature reflection you will agree with me. I have always loved you, and shall continue to do so; and only regret that circumstances compel me to act thus. Any answer to this communication is unnecessary.

H. V."

He then enclosed the first note in one to a confidential friend, whose post-office was the same as that of Vernon Place, requesting him to mail it back to Harry, and giving some trifling but plausible excuse for the request. This done, he surveyed his own note to Lilian, with much satisfaction. "She would tear her heart out after getting that, before she would write him a line. I know women

well (I ought to, at least, for I have had sufficient training in that branch of the fine arts) with their 'sensitiveness,' their 'devotion,' their 'truth,' and all the other tomfoolery, which it would puzzle Webster to furnish fine words to express. I suppose now I shall have to scratch off a note to Georgina, to excuse my non-attendance to-night. Hang the girl! I am getting tired of the affair, and must find some way of getting rid of it."

Thus soliloquizing, he drew forth another sheet of soft, fair note-paper, filled it with the tenderest words of devotion, sealed it with perfumed wax, with the device of a heart pierced with an arrow, directed it to Miss Watts, No. — Waverley Place; and having thus completed his epistolary efforts for the night, rung the bell for the thin young man to whom the reader has before had the honor of being presented; and who served as *valet de chambre*, butler, footman, groom, and errand-boy, in this august household. He appeared, after some delay, looking, if possible, thinner than usual; with a strip of red velvet on his collar, more faded and dingy than ever (not that this last was any drawback to the effect of his appearance; we hate these distressingly *new* things). From the extremely audible tone of Mr. Plumdale's somewhat strongly emphasized interrogatory as to the cause of his delay, one might have imagined the thin one to be deaf, in addition to his other misfortunes.

Without condescending to wait for a reply, he delivered his letters into the care of this distinguished individual, with directions that they should be put into the office immediately. "It is rather a hazardous experiment," thought he, "but 'ventures make merchants.'"

Whether by some providential chance the whilome errand-boy lost the letter to Lilian, in his hurried run to the post-office through a driving snow-storm; or whether the mail miscarried, we know not; but certain it is, she never received it. As for Harry's letter, it was consigned to the flames, with many moral reflections as to the uncertain fate of earthly things.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MILLIONNAIRE'S BRIDE.

GUSSY PLUMDALE and Mr. Fitz Friske were married, and the splendor of the Fitz Friske equipage, the new liveries, and the diamonds and magnificent *trousseau* of the bride were the theme of universal admiration, and envy; mingled (of course) with many sneering comments upon "the ostentation so characteristic of a parvenu!" Gussy had achieved what is affirmed by slanderous people to be the grand end and aim of woman's life. She had at last 'brought down her man,' and he a millionaire, and an exquisite of the first water. What more could the heart of a fashionable woman desire? Poor Gussy; she was not naturally a weak, vain, or selfish woman; and she was yet young, that is, young in years; but not in the parlance of the fashionable world, where age is reckoned by the number of seasons you have been "out," and where—they say—every flirtation adds a year to the estimate. How old some of us must be!

Having no older sister, and being moreover a remarkably gay and attractive girl, and one who attained to both intellectual and physical development very early; her parents, proud of her attractions, and anxious—if the truth must be told—on account of their limited means, to "get her off hand" as soon as possible—pushed her forward in society; and Gussy sprang, as it were, from the *jolie enfant* who sat on the knees of the gentlemen, and teased them for *bouillons*, into the belle in the parlor, ready to receive their addresses. Few thought, as they passed at ball, and *fête*, the lively, self-assured, and elaborately-dressed girl, who was the centre of a knot of beaux, that she was really a child in heart and years. Her success in society left her scarcely any thing to wish for, and Gussy fell into the usual error of young women under such circumstances, and feeling that she had "the world before her where to choose," permitted opportunity after opportunity,—of what the old folks call "settling one's-self in life,"—to pass unheeded by. It may be that an early and fondly cherished attachment for one whose circumstances in life prevented his claiming her hand, had

something to do with this. Be that as it may, Gussy fluttered through season after season, apparently the same careless being, until now, at an age which older and wiser people consider scarcely old enough for the responsibilities of wedded life, she began to feel *blase*. She saw around her girls—some of them older than herself—just coming out on the arena of life, by their own and their parents' account (and who should know if they did not?) "scarcely eighteen," and possessing neither her beauty or fascination, attracting simply because they were new, and "that Miss Plumdale has been out so many seasons; must be at least twenty-five."

She did not lose her position as a belle, because, wherever you find attractive women, you find men to admire them, and any reputation once gained is not very easily lost; still she had her annoyances, and not the least of these existed at home.

It is useless to detail her grievances; suffice it to say, she had some reason to congratulate herself on the occurrence, when Mr. Fitz Friske laid himself and his fortune at her feet.

Yet, oh! strange mystery, which proves that even among the most determined votaries of fashion there may exist a heart; the night before her marriage—that marriage which was to give her wealth, and with wealth power, the mere prospect of which had already rendered her the envied of many, and which was to relieve her from the painful and life-wearing annoyances which surrounded her,—all that night, Gussy wept lonely and bitter tears.

There was one thing wanting, without which, all the world hath to give, availeth not for happiness. In these last hours of her maiden freedom she wept over the wrecked hopes of her girlhood. She knew that she had been always intended for a "brilliant match," but she had hoped—yes she had hoped to the last—that with the "brilliant match" there might be mingled *some* affection, some esteem, some respect at least; but now it was all over. In her inmost soul she spurned with contemptuous scorn, all thought of love, in connection with the man who, on the morrow, she was to call her husband. Why did her thoughts recur to earlier days, when a voice which was music to her ear, had whispered, "Be true Gussy, be true, love, and we may yet be happy;"

and why, as these thoughts came over her, did she sob yet more wildly as she exclaimed, "Oh! what are wealth and splendor, in a home where love is not!"

She had not been true. Ambition, folly, parental influence, had severed those early ties, and what right had she to cherish such thoughts? Poor young victims! chained to the glittering car of the Juggernaut Fashion, doomed to have your feelings trampled on, your freshness and purity of heart sullied in its heated and toilsome course, it is not for *you* to think of the fresh flowers that bloom by the wayside, and cool fountains that sparkle for the parched and weary lip, in the deep secluded spots which are far from the bustle and glare of the great world. The hour of trial passed, and no one dreamed—as on the morrow, in blonde, and satin, and jewels, Gussy smiled and bowed to the congratulations of troops of friends;—that the brilliant bride was not the happiest of the happy. In the excitement of her new position she forgot—for the present at least—all her sad thoughts; and was delighted when the time came to throw open her splendidly furnished mansion for the reception of her "dear five hundred friends." Then there was Florence, the former flame, the rival star, would she not envy her, when she saw her in all her magnificence? And Gussy smiled at the thought.



CHAPTER XLIV.

MRS. FITZ FRISKE'S FIRST "RECEPTION."

"Fortune brings me her golden cup full-brimmed at last."

"What words the ears have drank to-night."

THE vast rooms glittered with light and splendor, filled as they were with all that ostentatious luxury, that exuberance of ornament, which is so much the fashion nowadays, differing so widely from the chaste and classic elegance which should accompany the nobleness and simplicity of our republican principles. The massive portals opened wide to receive the throngs of the *élite* that poured into them.

Florence was there, but Florence, in lace and diamonds, rivalled even the bride in beauty and elegance.

"Good gracious me! just look at that old woman! I thought Gussy Plumdale would have managed to keep her out of sight, to-night at least," whispered some one behind Florence, as she stood in the throng surrounding the bride. She turned, and beheld Miss Virginia Smith. Following the direction indicated, her eyes fell on the ample form of old Mrs. O'Friske, arrayed in a robe of orange satin, jewels of every hue and description glittering about her person; a dress cap set aloft on her redundance of tow-locks, its multitudinous ribbons floating like pennons in the breeze, raised by an enormous Chinese fan, gay with painted nondescripts, which she was vigorously exerting in the effort to "keep cool," notwithstanding the importance of the occasion, which had spread a ruby glow over a countenance never remarkable for its statue-like paleness. Florence, whose sympathies were very quick, shrank almost with horror from the ridiculous figure which the old woman presented, amid the throng of elegance and fashion around her. She felt sorry for her, and Gussy too. Miss Smith laughed, and moved away to point out "the sight" to some one else. Ella Vernon stood beside Florence.

"What a pity," she said gently, "that people will remark on the poor old lady's appearance. Why not let her pass unnoticed, or uncensured at least?"

"Yes," replied Florence, "nothing certainly can be more ill-bred or unkind than ill-natured remarks on those whose hospitalities we are receiving. Where is your brother to-night?" she added with a slight blush.

"He has been quite indisposed for some days, and desired me to make his excuses. Pa came with me, though I never expect Harry to be *my* cavalier," smiling archly, "even when he is well."

The throng moved from around the bride, and the two girls were claimed by their respective followers. Florence looked, if possible, more bewitching than usual. Never had Claude St. Julian been more madly under the influence of his passion for her. Every look and action too, on her part, seemed to encourage him to go farther than he had ever yet dared. Delirious with the intoxication of excited feeling, he

sought her, when wearied with dancing, she desired refreshment and momentary repose. After supplying her with an ice, he cast a glance round the room. Here were groups gathered in gay converse,—there couples were interspersed at intervals, either on divans, or promenading, seemingly indulging in “sly flirtations by the light of a chandelier.” Knots of chaperones, resplendent in velvets and diamonds, watched with anxious eyes their respective charges, or discussed together topics upon which we do not care to intrude. Papas looked stupid and sleepy, as papas always do on such occasions. Every body seemed occupied with themselves, or those in whom they were immediately interested.

“Now, or never,” thought Claude. “Miss Fulton,” he added aloud, “would you not like to see the conservatory? It is all the rage just now,—this passion for flowers,—so of course Fitz has a rare collection.” Ere Florence could reply, he drew her hand through his arm, and they passed through the crowded rooms, into the conservatory. It was indeed a sweet spot; the atmosphere soft, and delicious with the perfume of the flowers, whose rare hues were faintly revealed by the light of the little colored lamps, which gleamed and flashed like spirit eyes among the green leaves. Through the glass they could gaze out on the calm bright stars, and clear blue sky of a winter’s night. There was something romantic and mysterious about the scene and hour, which had its effects upon the too sensitive temperament of Florence; yet as she stood there alone with Claude St. Julian, a tremor crept over her, and her whole frame trembled with nervous agitation. She looked up at Claude, and his passionate gaze flashed burningly into her inmost soul. Her eyes fell instantly, and the long lashes swept the vivid glow of her cheek.

“Florence,” said he at last, his voice tremulous with excitement,—“Florence, can you not guess why I have brought you here? ’Tis to breathe to you the maddening feelings I can no longer repress; which fill my whole soul, absorb my whole being for you, most divine of women.”

She started, withdrew her arm from his, and cast a terrified glance around.

“Hush! oh, for heaven’s sake, hush! Such words are not for you to speak, or me to hear.”

“Nay, fear not, dearest, no one is near. Listen to me; listen—my life! my soul! Do not frown, oh! do not turn away thus, you will kill me! Can you blame me for this, Florence? You, who are all soul, you must know that it is impossible to control the impulses of the heart. Impossible to fetter the fetterless soul by mere cold and legal ties. Blame me not. You know not what a fearful thing it is to be fettered in hand, when the soul maddens for freedom—what a fearful thing it is to meet your twin-soul too late. Have you not seen this? have you not read my feelings in a deeper language than the formality of words? and, Florence, you will not, you cannot deny it—has not your soul answered mine? Say yes! say you love me; only let me hear those words,—those blessed words, breathed by your lips, and I will leave you for ever, if you say so.”

Florence drew herself to her full height, as he closed his passionate appeal, while her crimson lip quivered with agitation. Her heart was torn by conflicting emotions, but indignation was the master feeling.

“Mr. St. Julian, I did not think you could have insulted me thus. I did not dream you could so far forget that your love belongs of right to another. Never again dare to allude to this subject, unless you wish that our acquaintance should then terminate.”

She swept past him—from the conservatory. He made no effort to detain her, but remained where he was, giving himself up to thoughts which were any thing but agreeable. The first room she entered was comparatively deserted. Wishing to collect herself before entering the other apartments, she went to a window, opened it to inhale the cool fresh air, and threw herself on a divan half hidden in the obscurity of the curtains. To her astonishment, she came in contact with a warm, soft mass—and an instant after a voice exclaimed, frightened out of all propriety of language or accent:

“Och, murther! and is it after killing me ye are? If these be the manners of the *tong*, may the devil fly away with the whole set—as, faith, he is mighty apt to do. The saints presarve us, to come and throw themselves on honest people asleep on their own divines—or whatever ye may be pleased to call them—in this fashion, without giving one time

to call on his patron saint before he wakes up in purgatory. Faith! an if ye meant it for a joke, it is more pleasant to you than to me."

Florence turning round, encountered the terrified countenance of Mrs. O'Friske, not yet fully aroused from her slumbers. At the same instant, a chorus of half-stifled laughter apprised her that a party who had entered the room just as the catastrophe occurred, were regaling themselves at the old lady's expense. Her resolution was taken in an instant.

"My dear lady," she said, in the softest, most polite tones, "perhaps you feel indisposed. Lean on my arm, and let me have the pleasure of accompanying you as far as your room,"—hoping she would adopt the last suggestion. Mrs. O'Friske obeyed in silence, for, obtuse as she was, she felt that she was the subject of laughter and remarks, suppressed though they were.

Little heeded the magnificent Florence, as she swept through the room with old Mrs. O'Friske leaning on her arm, the suppressed titter which followed them. There are those whose innate sense of superiority enables them to treat with contempt the sneers and jibes of the heartless and foolish, and she was one of these.

"Good heavens! Gussy," whispered Arthur Plumdale to his sister during the evening, "why on earth didn't you manage to hide that old woman somewhere; she spoils every thing."

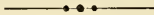
"Why, what could I do with her, brother? It is her own house."

"Get out an indictment of insanity against her, and have her confined in a mad-house," replied he with a heartless laugh.

Florence returned with a flushed cheek and palpitating heart, to the reception rooms; but Claude was seen there no more. She managed to regain her self-possession, but she felt infinitely relieved when the evening was over, and she could return home, to indulge in the fevered thoughts which thronged her brain. Her first thought, when left to herself was, "The Rubicon is past; where will he stop now?"

Notwithstanding the drawbacks imposed by the presence of Mrs. O. Friske, Gussy's first reception went off with great

éclat. It was only the rude and ill bred—but of these there are a sufficient number of specimens among the *beau monde*—that made remarks on the old woman, and even these were only prompted by malice and envy towards the polished and elegant woman, who moved so gracefully amid, and seemed so well fitted to adorn, the splendor of which she had suddenly become the possessor.



CHAPTER XLV.

THE CHARMING OF THE BIRD.

IT was about a week after the events detailed in the last chapter, that Claude St. Julian bent his steps in the direction of the astrologer's in W—— street. “So,” thought he, “it seems I have ruined myself with Florence, by my precipitate conduct the other evening. But pshaw! I understand women; they entrench themselves behind these ice barriers of pride and reserve, because they feel that these are their only safeguards. She loves me. Yes! I know, I feel it; and, by heaven! I adore her too madly to endure the reserve and distance with which she now treats me.”

His soliloquy was brought to a somewhat abrupt termination by his arrival at the “Consulting Office” of the far famed and learned Dr. ——

As Claude met the gaze of the large and intensely black eyes which the magician fixed upon him, and which pierced like fire-gleams through the obscure light of the room, he started. It seemed to him as if the glance of those eyes—looking yet deeper and darker from the contrast with the ashen hue of the features, and the snow-white beard and hair—was familiar to him, but he in vain tried to identify what he mistook for a mere resemblance.

“I do not know whether I can comply with your request,” was the reply of the astrologer, when his visitor had made known his object. “I never give my nostrums credit for qualities they do not possess. I have heard of potions to pro-

duce love, but I somewhat doubt the existence of such. 'Tis said that the celebrated Italian astrologer and perfumer to Catherine de Medicis, R——, had in his possession a potion, which would produce love so violent, so maddening in its effects, that suicide was sometimes the result. It was supposed to have been the heart's blood of a young virgin, who herself committed suicide for love, extracted while yet warm and fresh, and kept pure by a mixture of other chemic substances. I have here," and he raised the black curtain, and took from the shelf behind him a vial, containing a liquid of a light purple color, and slightly odorous;—"I have here a mixture, sufficiently powerful in its effects on the system to enable you to discover the predominant emotion of the person drinking it. Give them a sufficient quantity of this, and you may read their heart's dearest feelings, in spite of reason, prudence, or any other obstacle to prevent."

"Is it injurious in its effects on the system?"

"No, it passes off like the excitement of wine. Remember it does not create a feeling; it only excites to action a feeling already existing."

"This is what I want, give me the vial," replied Claude eagerly.

The astrologer and chemist folded the vial carefully with directions for use, and named of course a price proportioned in exorbitance to the value placed by the purchaser on the article.

Claude laid a broad piece of gold in his hand, and departed with the treasure which was to unlock that most sacred of earthly things—a woman's heart—to his gaze.

"I would not use artificial means, even if such existed, to create in her a feeling of love towards me," he said to himself apologetically; "but there can be no harm in the effort to discover what are her real feelings. At all events, if there is, I don't pretend to be such a stoic as to resist the temptation; and now, *ma chère* Florence, for a trial of the astrologer's skill as a chemist."

Glancing at his dress, and feeling assured that it was *au fait*, he proceeded straightway to Mr. Fulton's residence.

"I know she is at home," thought he, as he ran up the steps, for Mrs. Moreton told me she knew she would not go out this evening."

To his inquiry for Miss Fulton, the servant answered somewhat hesitatingly, that "he didn't know whether Miss Florence was in or not, he would see."

"I am certain she is," replied Claude impatiently. "Show me in, I will make all right," and he slipped a piece of gold in the man's hand. A short parley, and another piece of gold glistened in the palm of the servant. The last plea was irresistible apparently, for John showed him into the very sanctum of Florence, her boudoir, and closing the door after him, retired. She was lying on the sofa, and Claude, approaching, found that she slept. Never had she looked so beautiful, he thought, as he bent over her, fearing almost to breathe, lest he should arouse her from her slumber.

Her dress of black satin—fastened up to the throat, and finished there by a frill of the finest lace, clasped by a brooch of ruby—was relieved by the shawl of bright crimson, which she had thrown carelessly over her. The loose sleeve had fallen back from the rounded arm which supported her head, and her wealth of dark tresses unbound, floated in wavy curls around her. One small hand rested lightly on the crimson shawl, whose rich hue set off to advantage its soft creamy fairness. The long thick lashes were moist, as if with unshed tears, and there was an expression of sadness in her slumber not perceptible in her waking moments. 'Tis in slumber often that the deeper feelings of the heart may be read. There is no guard then on lip, or eye, and sadness stamps her mournful impress on the features.

An artist might have pronounced it a pretty tableau, as Claude St. Julian, in the splendor of his striking and manly beauty, bent with adoring gaze over the slumbering and unconscious maiden. There was a resemblance between them, more perceptible now, than usual. The same cloud of rich dark hair, half waving, half curling; the same starry midnight eyes, though hers now slept unconscious that his were burning near; the same heavy fringed lash, and distinctly defined brows of jet; nay, there was the same curved lip, though hers was riper and fuller, and his almost hidden by the mustache which shaded it. It had been long, too, since his habitually pale cheek had worn the rose of fresh and innocent youth which glowed on hers.

Florence moved restlessly in her fevered slumber, and murmured a name which he bent nearer, but in vain, to catch. A smile seducingly soft and sweet, played for an instant round her lip, and was succeeded by a look of such utter sadness, that it struck the mute gazer to the heart. Oh! why not leave her, tempter? Why not leave her in the glory of perfect and peerless womanhood? Why seek to deepen the shadow which has already marred the sunlight of her young life,—by *thy* presence, and *thy* power? Oh man! hast thou no pity for woman? No pity for the being who looks to thine arm for protection; thy heart for tenderness? Strong-hearted lordly tree, braving the fierce tempest, whose power cannot subdue thee; hast thou no pity for the tender vine which clings for life and support to thee? God help the woman who weds a base-hearted man! a man who is not the-high souled being that God intended him He created in His own image to be. God help the woman who gives her world of heart-life, to be tossed hither and yon, on the wild and fluctuating waves of a bad man's life. But we are digressing.

Again, as that shadow passed over her brow, Florence murmured passionately in her slumber, and Claude distinguished the words, "Leave, oh! leave me;" and starting from her troubled dreams, she awoke. "You here!" she exclaimed, as her startled gaze met the form before her. "I gave orders that I would be alone this evening."

She had risen to her feet, and stood erect before him, an expression of mournful pride and wounded reserve, rather than haughtiness or coldness, in her countenance. "I came, Miss Fulton," replied Claude, with an air at once of dignified courtesy, and respectful contrition,—“I admit, I almost forced myself into your presence, to implore your forgiveness for my forgetfulness of my own position, and the respect due you in our last interview. Believe the truth, that my feelings for the moment overpowered my reason. Believe, too, that never will I breathe such words to you again, unless with your permission, which I presume I shall never receive. Will you not forgive, and let us be friends again?"

Florence fixed on him a glance, in which mingling feelings seemed to contend for mastery, and turned away silently. He ventured to take her hand with a look of

silent entreaty. It lay passive and cold in his grasp. It seemed indeed as if she was unconscious of the action on his part. A wild joy thrilled through his soul. "She will yield; she will forgive;" he thought, "I shall not have to use means to make her surrender."

"Know you not, Mr. St. Julian," said Florence at last, in tones slightly tremulous, and coldly withdrawing her hand from his grasp, "that even were I to forgive you, there could never be between us again, the free and unreserved intercourse which once existed?"

"And why not, Miss Fulton? Are we not the same beings we were then? Can those few idle words, born of excitement and folly, change the current of our lives and feelings? Remember the world; what will it say to this sudden breach between us? Much as you may spurn its opinion as a woman, you are in its power. But if this plea will not avail, come, let me offer a higher, a holier one." And leading her to the window, he threw aside the curtains, and she looked out upon the earth, bathed in a flood of soft moonlight, and the calm, pure, winter sky, radiant and shining with its myriad stars.

"Look out," continued Claude, with the low, earnest tones with which he could at times give such force to his words. "How dark, cold, and cheerless would earth be, without its moonlight and stars. Do we deserve that God should make night radiant, and earth beautiful for our enjoyment? No; but smiling forgiveness on our weakness, and errors, he pours forth on all alike, the floating rays from his mercy seat. Will you refuse my proffer of friendship? Will you cast me in anger from you, and make my heart as dark and cold as this earth would be, without the smile of God's mercy to brighten it? No, I feel you will not. I may seem to you callous and worldly, but oh! believe me, I would die for you, sooner than I would intentionally wound you. The wild words which burst from my lips on that—by me never to be forgotten night—were uttered ere reason had time to overcome feeling; feeling too madly cherished, too bitterly repented—feelings which were pure as heaven, but for the bitter ban of destiny. Could you know how in my inmost soul I have cursed the hour in which I dared to breathe such words, you would forgive, aye—and pity too."

He paused ; Florence turned toward him ; the tears which she could not repress swimming in her eyes.

" I forgive you, Mr. St. Julian," she said with some hesitation of words and manner, " on your promise never to offend so again. "

" Never !—without your permission spoken or implied," he added *sotto voce*. He then thanked Florence warmly, but respectfully, and leading her to the sofa, seated himself by her side, and in his usual gay, off-hand manner, introduced other and interesting topics, conversing with ease and freedom. But Florence could not thus rally from the excitement of the scene she had just passed through. In spite of herself, she felt wounded and mortified at the gayety and apparent carelessness of her companion. She seemed cold and *distracte*, but this he heeded not. He had a purpose to accomplish, and he knew her present feelings were one step towards its fulfilment ; for, alas for woman's capricious nature, indifference, by awakening anxiety, sometimes provokes her to the betrayal of tenderness where the most assiduous devotion has failed.

While Claude was thus gayly rattling on, he was meditating secretly the means of administering the potent draught, for he could not prevail on himself to miss so glorious an opportunity. Luckily for him, the means presented themselves without an effort on his part. John presented himself, and inquired of Florence, in a low tone, if he should serve the chocolate she had ordered. Her reply was in the affirmative ; and a few moments afterwards they were seated at a little table, the steaming urn and two cups of Sevres china between them ; John having retired like an obedient flunky, who understood his business, and knew exactly when he was wanted.

" I am sorry to trouble you," said Claude suddenly, setting down the cup he was raising to his lips, and putting his hand on his brow, " but I feel somewhat indisposed, a giddiness of the head, to which I am at times subject. Will you have the goodness to order a glass of water—the only remedy I ever take."

Florence turned to ring the little silver bell, which generally stood on the stand beside her, but it was out of place (Claude had no idea where of course), and she was forced to

leave the room in order to comply with his request. Scarcely had the door closed on her, when drawing the little vial from his bosom, Claude, quick as lightning, emptied the contents into her cup of chocolate. When she reappeared, he was sitting in the same posture in which she left him, with his hand pressed to his brow. He swallowed the glass of water presented by John, and seemed relieved in a miraculously short time. The unsuspecting girl drank the chocolate, and John removed the waiter. Florence drew the sofa nearer the fire, and Claude took a seat opposite, and watched the effect of the potion. She gazed silently into the fire; a gentle languor commenced to spread itself over her features; she leaned back against the cushions of the sofa, and the long lashes closed over the dreamy eyes.—At length she unclosed her eyes, and fixed them upon him with that expression, which assures the lover for the first time that he is beloved, and penetrates like an electric thrill to his inmost soul. In those few moments a change had come over her. Instead of the cold, constrained expression which had before rested on her features, a bright glow flushed her cheek; her eyes swam in a soft and liquid light, and her bosom heaved. “Claude,” she said, in thrilling love-fraught accents, and without withdrawing the gaze, which lingered as if charmed in his, “Claude.”

In an instant he was by her side.

“Claude, do I dream? Where am I? It seems to me as if I had just awoke from a long, dark dream,—a dream which fixed a wide gulf between us—and found you near me. Is this heaven? It must be, for you are near me, and we love, and it is not wrong.”

Claude started! he saw that her brain wandered; he feared he had given her too large a potion, but at all events he must make the most of the present.

“Thou lovest me, Claude?”

“More than my own soul, Florence! Florence!” and he repeated the name as if life, love, joy, were expressed in it; “and thou, thou lovest Claude?”

“Look in my eyes and see,” she replied archly. And he did gaze far down into those dark gulfs of feeling, until his brain felt wild, and his very soul seemed lost in their ravishing depths. He drew nearer—he inhaled her warm

pure breath—his dark locks mingled with her wavy tresses—her soft cheek touched his, and their lips met in love's first timid, tremulous kiss. Then on lip, cheek, brow, and hair, he showered kisses; it seemed as if he would never tire. But Florence drew herself gently from his embrace.

"Why do you kiss me, Claude?" she asked naively, so naively that he could scarce repress a smile; but he replied in low wooing tones,

"Because I like to give expression to my love for you, dearest, loveliest!"

"It is not thus I would have you do," she said softly.

"What would you have me do, dearest? I will do any thing you wish."

"I would have you be perfectly quiet. I would have you look upon me, and fill my soul with the lovelight of your eyes. I would have you smile peace and joy into my heart, my lonely heart, for oh! Claude, Florence has been lonely and wretched; not lonely outwardly, for many were around her, but inwardly oh! how lone, and sorrowing, and isolated. But I am not so now, am I? Oh! would that I might sit always at your feet, and looking up, meet ever that smile of tenderness, and gazing into your eyes drink, drink *eternally*, of those fountains of love. Oh! Claude, could you be ever near me, and ever thus." Suddenly a shade of doubt and fear swept over her face, and her eyes fell as she murmured: "I dreamed Claude that you were another's; that we were separated for ever. But it is not so! You are here with me—mine—are you not?"

"Yours now, and eternally, come what will!" he answered passionately, completely beside himself in the excitement of the moment.

And now that the hour for which he had so longed had arrived; now that the woman he adored with so wild a passion was completely in his power, unconscious of any feeling, save her love for him; now that she sat there, radiant in her beauty—charming as even beauty cannot be, save when subdued by tenderness; the long lashes heavy with moisture slightly shading the soul-beaming eyes; the cheek and lip, that glorious lip, so curved, so ripe, so beautiful, scarlet with agitation; the dazzling, pearly treasures of which that lip was the portal, peeping through the half smile

of celestial joy and tenderness which illumined her face; the full bust heaving and throbbing, and the little hand, warm and soft as down, which was pressed in his own, trembling in his grasp; now he gazed on her with every feeling, save pitying, almost reverential tenderness, subdued by her artless confession of her love. He read at a glance how that love, that wild worship, had been struggled against; how principle had warred with feeling, yielding only when reason itself was blinded and overpowered; and conscience rose up and spoke loudly in his soul, as he thought of the means he had used to call forth the revelations of that hour. Yes, glorious Florence! glorious even in the gloom with which the first shadow of sin, the yearning after the forbidden, has darkened thy maiden soul, thou need'st not fear now. Even in thy helplessness thou hast triumphed.

And now her head rested on his bosom; her hands were clasped in his; her liquid eyes gazing up into his own with mute adoration; while Claude bent over her in such passionate ecstasy, that he was incapable of speech or motion.

Absorbed in this enrapturing trance, they forgot all earth beside, when the door opened suddenly, and in the aperture appeared the form of old Mr. Fulton. Had some hideous apparition suddenly risen before the appalled pair, it could not have shocked them more. With his usually cold and rigid features distorted by the fury of overmastering passion, his cheek and lips ashy, and his eyes gleaming with a tiger glare, the old man was indeed frightful to look upon.

Claude rose hurriedly to his feet, and with the self-possession of a man of the world, would have made his obeisance to Mr. Fulton; while Florence, suppressing the shriek which rose to her lip, endeavored to assume an appearance of composure (for she was alarmed, scarcely knowing why); but Mr. Fulton folded his arms, and gazed on both, as if he would have withered them with a glance; then advancing with two strides forward, he seized the arm of Florence in his furious grasp, while he muttered in tones hoarse with concentrated passion, "Ungrateful wretch! how dare you act thus in my house?"

All the fiery blood in St. Julian's system boiled up to his brow, as he exclaimed, "Unhand this lady, or by heavens! your gray hairs shall be no protection. I will fell you to the earth."

“And who are you?” sneered the old man, but releasing at the same time his niece’s arm, who, pale and terrified, sunk on the sofa, vainly endeavoring to recall her scattered senses, and the self-possession which, under other circumstances, had never deserted her. “Who are you, that you thus assume the right of protecting this girl, in the house of her adopted father? Methinks your protection, sir, belongs of right in a quarter where it is seldom bestowed, except in name.”

Claude bit his foaming lip till the blood started, and with a powerful effort at self-control, replied :

“Say what you please, sir, to me ; you presume on your age, else you would not dare to utter such words ; but spare this lady the insults and reproaches I see you are in the mood to heap upon her ; or, by heavens ! you shall repent using such language to one whose deepest disgrace is that one drop of *your* blood flows in her veins. What is there in an ordinary *tête-à-tête* between a lady and gentleman, to provoke a scene like this ? ”

Too much enraged to speak, Mr. Fulton pointed to the door.

“I go, sir,” said St. Julian, drawing up his haughty form to its full height. “My only regret is, that I leave this lady in the power of a man who has no regard for her sex or feelings.”

“Better take her with you, since you know so much better how to protect her than I. Perhaps she will need the protection you seem so willing to bestow, ere long.”

Without replying to this, St. Julian turned to go, fixing, as he did so, a glance on Florence which spoke volumes, and which was returned by her with one of such reproachful, passionate despair, that it smote him to the quick. Bu feeling convinced that any thing he could say in her defence would only make matters worse, he left the room in silence. The closing of the street door upon him, smote with agonizing sound to the soul of Florence. She felt as if that door had shut out all she could cling to, and left her, alone and unaided, to face the torturing scene she knew was in store for her.

“And now, miss, what have you to say in your own defence ? ” said her uncle, fixing his cold gaze upon her, and speaking in the sneering accents of concentrated venom.

At this instant, the door of the room opened slightly, and she could see the keen visage of the housekeeper—which now looked to her like that of a mocking fiend—peeping through the crack, and apparently listening with eagerness to every thing going on. Mr. Fulton stood with his back to the door, and did not perceive it; and pride and wounded feeling prevented Florence from noticing, or seeming to care for it.

Her senses recalled by the agitation of the scene she had gone through, she became herself once more, and rising with the air of an insulted queen, she replied to her uncle's sneering question, coldly, and calmly,

"Nothing, sir; I have done nothing which demands a defence of my conduct; and if I had, it is not to *you* that I would make it."

"Not to me! To whom, then, if not to me? Is this the love, the respect you owe your adopted father—unprincipled woman?"

"He," replied Florence bitterly, "who so forgets his character as a gentleman, and the proper feelings of a man, as to insult a woman, and that woman a helpless orphan in his house, by such words as you have uttered to me, certainly cannot expect love, and has no right to demand respect. My *adopted father!*" she added, with a touch of the bitter sarcasm which writhed on her uncle's lip. "I was not aware that you wished me to consider you in the light of a *father*. You never said so in words before; and it would have puzzled one more acute in discernment than myself, to have discovered any thing of the father in your actions."

There is no weapon so maddening in its effects on an enraged person, as sarcasm. At this last reply of Florence, her uncle actually trembled from head to foot. There was nothing of the man in his demeanor now; it was more like the furious, but impotent rage of a woman. His tones were weak with passion, as he exclaimed,

"Florence Fulton, beware how you utter such words to me, or my roof shall not shelter you much longer; and when you are turned loose on the world, you will soon be a beggar, as you deserve. I should not expect your love, 'tis true. I suppose you have none to spare from the fascinating lover I found by your side, when I interrupted your sweet

interview. I think, however, you might have found a better market for your precious store of affection; and setting aside the principle of the thing, one which would have returned you better interest, than in bestowing it on a *married man*."

At these words, which, bitter and venomous as they were, conveyed so much of the terrible truth, Florence could no longer conceal her emotion. She, too, trembled, and hid her face in her hands. Her uncle saw that the thrust had struck home, and he smiled scornfully, as he regarded her with complaisant satisfaction.

"Did you ever teach me to love you?" she said at length, raising her head, and speaking passionately and vehemently. "Do you suppose I have forgotten my lone and loveless childhood—my orphan years, uncheered by one word of kindness, one smile of affection? *You talk to me of love!* You, who chilled with your coldness, and repulsed with your harshness, the being who would fain have clung to the only tie fate had left her. *You*, who turned my heart adrift on the wide world, to find its own where it might; who starved my hungered soul, until it learned to feed on an image, to waste its life in dreams, whose bitter fruition I am even now tasting;—*you talk to me of love?* And as to gratitude, for what do I owe it? For the shelter of a roof which is a bitter mockery of home? and from which I fly as a man would fly from gloom and solitude, to forget, if possible, that for me earth holds *no home*. No, sir! You have no right to blame me, come what will. You have 'sown the wind;' you may 'reap the whirlwind.' Let me pass." She drew herself up, fixed upon him a defiant glance, and moved calmly and proudly past him, from the room.

As she swept on through the passage, she met the house-keeper, who had slunk back from the door as she opened it, and who now fixed on her a malicious and curious glance; which was returned with one of careless scorn, and a haughty curl of the lip. But when she gained the solitude of her own room, the mask fell off. In an instant, passionate agony was depicted in that face which was before proud, cold, and impassible as marble; and Florence, the haughty, defiant Florence, threw herself prostrate, in reckless aban-

donment, with one wild low cry, which seemed wrung from the depths of a wounded and insulted heart. Long she lay thus, sobbing, moaning, weeping with such vehemence, that she sometimes started and looked round, fearing she was overheard ; but if so, no one approached her.

The covert taunts, the cutting sneers, and open insults of her uncle, seemed to burn into her inmost soul. Of the scene with Claude, too, she had—strange to say—a distinct remembrance. She knew that in that scene she had suddenly lost self-possession, that she had felt strangely, but she knew not why ; she did not dream of the means used to produce the effect. She blamed only herself for all that had passed. He knew all her weakness,—nay, worse than weakness—now. Terrible thought ! Yet terrible as it was, she found a vague, dreamy, dangerous delight in lingering over the few short moments of bliss, in contrast with the fearful scene which followed.

Ah ! Florence, such memories are fatal to the peace and purity of thy soul, as are the “brilliant flowers containing subtle poisons” to the “unwary insect which drinks but to find death in delight.” Thou mayst rear thy haughty head, the noblest, the most beautiful amid many, and say, “I have sinned not ;” but is not even one thought of affection towards one bound by life-ties to another, a dark and fearful sin ?



CHAPTER XLVI.

CLAUDE TO FLORENCE.

“Such thoughts are guilt, such guilt is death.”

BYRON.

FLORENCE,—Never would I have presumed to address you as I do, but for the scene of last night. I saw you then in your true position—the victim—noble and gifted being as you are—of tyranny and injustice.

You are not happy, Florence. You have neither a home, or ties, or sympathy to render you so ; and to a being like you, what must a lot like this be ? Last night in a moment

of confidence, your whole soul was revealed to me. Intensely as I dared to love you before, need I tell you that since that hour, every other thought is absorbed in the one feeling? If this is wrong, blame me not, for oh! believe me, I have no power to crush the existence of such feelings: *you*, who are the divinity of their inspiration—ought rather to be blamed for them than I.

After the compact into which we entered last night, I should never again have breathed to you the name of love, had not your own angel lips sanctioned the breaking of that compact, by setting me the example. Do not forbid me to speak thus; or again to approach you. Oh! Florence—divinity of my deep heart, embodiment of all for which my passionate spirit yearned in its wild young dreams of the pure, the true, and the beautiful—cast me not from you; drive me not an outcast from the paradise into which, for a few fleeting moments, I have been permitted to enter. If you do, I swear by all we have been taught to worship as Divine, and True, that henceforth I shall be the most unhappy—yea more—the most reckless of human beings. You will not—I feel, best and dearest—that you will not thus doom me. Believe me, it was decreed by destiny, that we should meet and love.

Why struggle against the feelings which the Author of our being has implanted within us, to bow with cringing servility to the forms and opinions of a world whose creed is falsehood, and whose opinions are but the echoes of canting prejudices?

I know the world better than you, Florence; I have been one of its favored ones too. On me it has lavished its brightest smiles; for me worn its fairest mask; and I tell you, Florence, that the more I know it, the more I scorn its censure, and trample on its edicts.

Tell me, my worshipped, if fear of the world's censure induces you to spurn Claude from your side.

No, methinks you are above this—you who in person, mind, and feeling, are so far above the rest of your sex that you should be their model, rather than their imitator. Florence, you will not misunderstand me,—you will believe me, when I swear I would lay down my life at your feet, rather than do aught which would render you unhappy.

I see you are lonely, desolate, and I believe wretched, and my very soul yearns within me in sympathy for you. I have watched you in your gayest moods, when crowds lavished their fulsome adulation on the shrine of the *beauty* and the *heiress*, and I know that these things satisfy you not,—I know that in your inmost soul you despise them.

Oh! that I could be ever near, in your moments of unhappiness, to love, to soothe, to ward off every blow which the unkindness of others could inflict on you.

And why may it not be thus ?

Be mine, and I will teach you the true philosophy of life; the elixir of happiness which I will offer, shall have no bitter mingled in the cup. Fly with him who loves you—whom you love—who will forsake home, friends, country for you—to the land of love and liberty,—your own mother land—Italy.

There, forgetful of the cruel chains which have fettered us here, remembering only the bitter moments we might have spent had we lingered, we will live and love.

Think of it, Florence! A home in Italy, fair, glorious Italy—a home with Claude, whose every thought shall be devoted to you—whose daily care it shall be to throw round you every enchantment which fancy can devise, or love execute.

One word, dearest, in answer to this; let that word be “yes,” and you will have no more to do, I will arrange every thing. Au revoir, Florence; au revoir, my life!

CLAUDE.

CHAPTER XLVII.

FLORENCE TO CLAUDE.

“Nor know’st how dearly I have dwelt
On one unbroken dream of thee,
But love like ours can never be.”

BYRON.

WRITE to me no more, and cease, I implore—nay I command—you, your pursuit of me. Look not upon me as the gay heartless belle, with whom a “passing affair”—even sit-

uated as you are, would be—concealed from the world—a mere thing of nothing. See me as I am, an orphan girl—alone and desolate—whom to love *you*, would be to doom herself to a lifetime of wretchedness. Remember, too, the deep wrong in the sight of God, of such a thing as this. Think when you avow your love for me, how you wrong the trusting faith of years, how you trample on the laws alike of God and man; and do not, even in thought, cherish such feelings.

I check the indignant words which rise to my lips, when I think of the proposal contained in your letter, for I feel,—and I blush to feel it—that the scene of last night emboldened you to make it. But you must even now anticipate the refusal it will meet with, and the horror with which even the thought of such a thing fills me. You have discovered a secret—the secret which I had hoped would have gone to the grave unknown save to the heart that ached with the consciousness of it.

Yes! I have loved you; but that love was the bright vision of my girlish years, born of gratitude, and nursed by the dreams of a young foolish heart, which longed for some vent for its world of unsatisfied feeling. I did not dream then of—of all I know now. No—oh! no—do not believe me so base a thing as *that*. It may seem to you strange that the impressions of a few moments could have given birth to the feelings of years; but associate those feelings with my solitary life—my dreamy and romantic heart-creations—ungoverned by the tests of worldly experience,—your coming to me in the character of a preserver—the sweet, and gentle words you gave me—the kind, loving glances which found their way like beams of heaven-light to my lonely and isolated soul. Think of all this, and the strangeness vanishes which, under ordinary circumstances, would have attached to it. When I met you—ignorant as I was of your real situation—I thought (pardon my vanity) that my long cherished dream might be realized. When it seemed as if that realization was in my very grasp, I learned for the first time that you were—the husband of another!

Since that hour, God only knows how hardly I have striven to efface the feelings of years from my soul. If I have not succeeded, it is not my fault. And now I have confessed all.

Do not strive to deepen the shadow which destiny has already thrown around me. Leave me at least unmolested, to follow my usual gay round of life, heartless though it be. Do not seek to embitter the cup which is all that remains for my weary and thirsting lip. Destitute of a home, destitute of friends, destitute of loving hearts, the world is my only resource. Would you rob me of this? And yet, you say you love me. Strange inconsistency! Can love seek to injure its object? Never, in all my life, did I feel as I do now, my utter loneliness, my hopelessly desolate position; but now, when one word of pitying love, one friend to turn to, would be heaven to my tortured soul; even now, looking upon you over the dark gulf which separates you and I, and which can only be crossed over the bridge of sin, I pronounce, Claude St. Julian, my last farewell. I implore you to forget the past. For the future, I feel that 'tis best for both that we should meet, save in the guise of mere formal politeness, as strangers.

FLORENCE.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE SHADOWS DEEPEN.

A MONTH has passed since the events last recorded in our history. To the mere outward observer, such a revolution of time in the fashionable world, presents nothing but the same routine of frivolity, the same smiling faces, unchanged in outward appearance; but this is only on the surface; beneath, the waters roll darkly and restlessly onward, towards the great ocean of Eternity. On the stage of the world's great theatre, the gilded pageant moves on in gaudy pomp; behind the scenes, the mysteries of life work out their way, and the decrees of Destiny are sealed, and executed.

To three characters of our story,—the three who, perhaps, were oftenest seen, and most conspicuous with light tones, and bright smiles at *fête*, opera, and promenade,—the month had dragged slowly and wearily away. To Florence, that month was the most wretched period of her life. Home, which to her had never been a pleasant place, became now almost unendurable. Her uncle she seldom saw,

for she rarely, when at home, left her own rooms; but when she did, his manner was marked by the most frigid coldness, hers by silent haughtiness. If he spoke at all, his words were sharp, cutting, and severe. She soon found that, with that base suspicion peculiar to common and sordid minds, and which is always the fruit of low and depraved associations in early life, he believed her worse than imprudent in permitting the visits of St. Julian.

But her uncle's demeanor was not all she had to contend with. Whispers ran through the household. Mary and Bridget stared as she swept by. John looked curiously at her; but Mrs. Sharp, the housekeeper, was her chief tormentor. She had always disliked Florence. She hated her because she was beautiful, gifted, and admired; because, though coming in constant contact in the sphere of everyday life, she was ever the same lone star, moving in its proud orbit, unapproached, and unapproachable by such as her. Now, however, she fancied she had the high and haughty one in her power, and she employed all the tact and ingenuity which her sex display in every thing to which they turn their powers, to torture her.

Man may crush, with his mighty strength, the weak spirit to the dust at one blow; he may bruise with rude hands the petals of the flower, until it can never bloom again; but if you wish to make your victim suffer from that torture, which slowly but surely wears out the finer feelings of our nature, maddens by degrees the fretted and harassed spirit, and finally breaks the heart by its excruciating process—the more excruciating because the means employed are so petty and contemptible—always employ a woman to inflict it. It is comparable to nothing in physical suffering, save the being continually pierced to the quick by sharp and minute instruments; and women are adepts in the use of subtle and minute weapons.

Start not, gentle reader, nor grow indignant at the slander perpetrated on the sex. All women are not alike, but the sex generally are upon extremes. As there are some who approach the order of angels, so there are others almost as near fiends; and we have seen those who could, to all appearance, assume the angelic to perfection, who could also wear the darkest and fiercest forms of evil. When we speak

of evil, we do not mean crime, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. With the utterly depraved of our race, those whose dark crimes chill the blood, and revolt the heart, we have nothing to do farther than to say, that in proportion to their magnitude, these crimes inflict far less unhappiness in the social world than the foibles, passions, and weaknesses of the many around us, some of whom are termed, in ordinary phraseology, "very good people."

It is to the evil passions that are at work in every-day life, and brought to bear with all their baneful influences upon the narrow circles of society, that we owe the darkened life, the crushed hopes, and blighted name of so many in this world—as Lilian says,—of *lying lips*, and *breaking hearts*.

For this evil there can be but one remedy, and that remedy is expressed in the one word which is a world within itself—Religion. The laws of man cannot reach it; it comes within the compass of the laws of God only.

Mrs. Sharp proved herself as great an adept as the most accomplished of her sex, in the art of tormenting. The covert sneer, the oblique glance, the sly gesture, the words conveying a deep but hidden meaning, stinging as the bite of the adder; all these were brought to bear upon poor Florence, until, wounded, mortified, maddened to desperation, any refuge seemed preferable to the place she called her home. She almost regretted the contents of her letter; but, no! oh, no! pride *at least must save her from that*. During this long, weary month, she had only met *him* casually in society, and the past had not been once alluded to. Had he forgotten it?—and her heart throbbed wildly and painfully;—No, that could not be; for her sake, and in obedience to her command, he was silent.

She rushed from the home which was her place of torture, into the world. She laughed, she sung, she danced more gayly than ever, but there was mockery in the laugh, bitter mockery, and the echoes of music and song fell wild and dirgelike on her ear. Between herself and Harry, the tacit understanding, which he had learned to look on as an engagement, still existed. Until now, the idea of marrying him had never entered her head. She had only looked on the affair as one of those mockeries of truth and feeling,

which give the lie to the better impulses of our nature—denominated “a passing flirtation.” But now she bowed her haughty soul to look on a marriage with him as a refuge from the unfortunate circumstances which surrounded her; yet, in spite of her foibles, regard for the feelings of others was the predominant trait in her character; and she could not bear the thought of imposing on her frank, free, generous lover, by giving him her hand, when the heart he coveted felt not one emotion of love towards him. Yet what other alternative now presented itself? None: nay, perhaps even that was not in her power, for a strange change had come over Harry. He no longer sought her society with the eagerness of old; and when by her side, it seemed as if his attentions were given more because they were expected, than with the ardent assiduity of a lover. Florence was in despair. Had she possessed the haughty independence of spirit which once characterized her, she would at once have rejected him; but she was subdued, unhappy, vacillating between the strong power which drew her onward to the precipice, over whose brink passion lingers, to gaze on the bright but forbidden fruit below; and the cold warnings of reason and prudence which bade her pause ere too late.

Disappointed in his pursuit of Florence, never had the guilty love of Claude absorbed his every thought and feeling as now; for 'tis a trite, and therefore true remark, that to a spoiled and wayward heart, no treasure seems so desirable as that which is beyond its reach. The society of his wife became more distasteful to him than ever, and he avoided it in proportion; rarely, in fact, seeing her save at meals, and sometimes not even then. This she bore with her usual shrinking coldness; silently but deeply cherishing in her own bosom the sense of her wrong.

True, as we have said, he did not approach Florence, but he waited only for the first betrayal of weakness or emotion on her part. Prudence is as essential to the character of a great general as valor, and Claude was far too good a tactician, not to know when an attack might be made with safety.

CHAPTER XLIX.

HARRY AND LILIAN.

“They have met, and they have parted,
 Time has closed o'er each again,
 Leaving lone the weary-hearted
 Mournfully to wear his chain.”

THE month which passed so wearily with Florence, lingered no less heavily over the path of Harry Vernon. Lilian's pseudo answer to his offer of righting her—which in due time he received—while it cut off at once all hope of again possessing her, awoke him to a yet deeper sense of all that she had been to him. When too late, she was remembered with that intense passionate yearning we sometimes feel for that which, while possessed, we value not, but which, when lost, leaves a blank in life nothing else can fill. A feeling almost of aversion towards Florence had taken the place of his former enthusiastic passion. Yet he dreaded an explanation. Each day he thought of making it, and each day procrastinated the evil moment. He did not conceal from Arthur Plumdale that he no longer loved her—though he did not confide to him the reason—and that worthy rejoiced in due proportion. His father's losses, impending poverty, or what seemed to him poverty, though by many it would have been regarded as affluence—his estrangement from Lilian and his child, weighed heavily upon the spirits of the young man. He had resolved, in the first wild moments of agony, to reform; but, alas! it now seemed that his only refuge from the incubus that burdened his soul, was in the crowd, the revel, and the wine-cup; and though even as he raised the cup to his lips, he cursed the draught it contained; though as he dealt with careless hand the gambler's light but fatal weapons—apparently the gayest and most reckless in the crowd—a warning angel seemed ever to hover near him, and it came in the likeness of her he had loved and betrayed; still he rushed madly onward in his reckless course.

Misfortunes have different effects on different temperaments. Some may thus be humbled, and taught to look to that God who in the dark hour seems to be our only refuge; but others there are, who are only made more reckless, driven by the hand of chastening farther into the fatal path of sin; and of these Harry Vernon was one.

Yet perhaps there was but one thing wanting to awaken again in his heart that remorse for past errors, those resolves of reformation, which now he strove to drown in dissipation and excitement.

And Lilian—dearest and purest—have we come back to thee at last? From the time when the blessed light of God's love and mercy dawned in her soul—the awakening beams of a new born and regenerated spirit—our Lilian, our sweet Lilian, meet to be a child of heaven, felt it her duty to bow submissively to the will of the Father, and seek from him strength to bear life's burden;—and strength was given her; such deep spiritual strength and solace, as only they can know, who passing through the valley of shadows, feel that an unseen Hand guides their wandering footsteps, that unerring Wisdom and Love is over and around them always. She rallied in health, day by day; and if she did not smile as of old, she was calm, and to all outward appearance serene.

But human nature is weak, and spite of our efforts, it is impossible so far to wean our hearts from earthly things, as to find all the consolation we desire in mere spiritual comfort. Let the bereaved heart seek what source of forgetfulness it will—whether it turn to another and purer shrine for its worship, or seek distraction amid scenes of excitement, and folly—there will be hours when the slumbering depths of sorrow awake to life with the vigor and freshness of the first overpowering grief. Memory will bring back “the olden time,” with the wealth of smiles and tears, hopes and joys, which once brightened life with heaven-borrowed hues, only to fade, and leave our onward path more bleak and desolate than ever.

Yes, there were times when memory, sorrow, and passion struck such wild, mournful chords in her soul, as could never afterwards be forgotten. In dreams came back all the past, in dreams she saw his face, heard his voice, and waked to weep, as only those can weep, who have found neglect where they looked but for affection; falsehood where they dreamed only of truth. Is it not worse than death to feel that those around whom the very life-tendrils of our heart have twined themselves, whether sister, brother, friend or lover, live, and breathe, and move, on this same earth with us, unmoved by our hopes and fears, unmindful even of our existence?

Yes, this is worse than death, for death is God's own decree, and we feel it our duty to submit. There is no dark falsehood, no chilling indifference in the cold, still chamber of death, to plant a poisoned dagger in our heart of hearts, and bid it rankle there, till life, and hope, and feeling sink beneath the agony. Yet Lilian kept hoping that Harry would come back to her at last; an angel voice seemed to whisper to her soul, that in spite of all he was not so false as she deemed him; that he loved her still.

She endeavored to form some plan for the future; but her mind—weak from suffering—shrank from the task; and she was compelled, for the present at least, to postpone it.

Thus passed away day after day, until a long weary month was gone; when one night, as she was lying in sad and sleepless thought, she was startled by the sound of some one singing beneath her window. That voice!—every note of it sent a thrill to her heart of hearts. She rose, she crept noiselessly to the window—fearful lest the slightest sound should interrupt the singer—she peeped through the blinds, and there, in the cold moonlight, stood Harry—*her* Harry. His face was turned towards the window, and the deep sadness of its expression, revealed by the pale moonbeams, struck with a painful thrill to the soul of the gazer. The song, too, was a farewell. It told of one who had erred, and repented, but been denied forgiveness; and who came to breathe his last farewell to one he might never see more on earth.

As the fine manly voice of Harry Vernon lingered and died on the last notes, Lilian stretched out her arms with a faint cry, "Harry! my Harry!" She tried to raise the casement; it was in vain, he heard her not. The instant the song was concluded, he turned from the spot, and disappeared in the winding path through the shrubbery. It was not thus they were to meet. Little thought she how soon again she would see that face, and under what circumstances.

CHAPTER L.

MRS. DE VERE MORETON'S FANCY BALL.—A CATASTROPHE.

Gay was the revel; eyes were beaming
 Soft with love and pleasure's dream,
 Music swelling, bright gems gleaming,—
 Lo! there sounds a thrilling scream.

ALL the world was gay in anticipation of Mrs. De Vere Moreton's long talked of fancy ball. Invitations were out, and expectation was on tiptoe. The fashionable coteries were mad on the all important subject of costumes. No one could be in finer spirits than the queen of the *fête* herself. "Moreton" had retracted his former limitation as to amount, and given her, in a generous fit—the result no doubt of "an unusual run of luck,"—a *carte blanche* as to expense; which she in her turn extended to the confectioners and the rest of the tribe, who usually have the run of a fashionable house on such occasions.

She had secured the invaluable services of De Vrée, who had had the management of balls at the Tuileries in his time (according to his own account), but who having taken a disgust to "la belle France" after the downfall of Napoleon, had fled to our own happy shore, and condescended to practise his art in the "Empire city" of the New World. "Yes, he had managed these things for Josephine herself. Delightful, the very thought."

Mrs. Moreton denied herself to visitors for a week beforehand; giving up her parlors, and even her boudoir, into the hands of the enchanter, to fashion as he would.

Nor had she reason to regret her confidence when, on the afternoon preceding the grand event, she was summoned down to pronounce her verdict on the completion of the preparations. De Vrée had the curtains down, and the rooms lighted, to show the effect. Exclamations of delight burst from Mrs. Moreton's lips.

The principal reception rooms were fitted up in the Louis Quatorze style, draped and festooned with gorgeous hangings of silk and gold; magnificent mirrors reflecting the splendors of, and extending in appearance to an almost inter-

minuable length, the spacious apartments; while superb chandeliers shed their soft, mellowed moonlight over all. Every adornment of luxury and art was there; nor did it detract in the least from Mrs. Moreton's estimate of the elegance of her arrangements, that many articles among them were hired for the occasion. "Such things were common; every body did it, and of course nothing could be more proper." Eva, Judge Woodward (now quite convalescent), and Mr. Moreton were called in to see, criticise, and admire. Even the judge, much as he disapproved of such things, could not withhold his admiration. Every thing was pronounced *comme il faut*, and in high spirits the ladies retired to dress for the evening.

Just as Mrs. Moreton was completing that important operation, her husband's knock at the door requested admittance. He entered attired as a nobleman of the court of Charles II., so completely metamorphosed by his powdered wig, lace ruffles, cherry velvet coat, white satin knee-breeches, and diamond (paste) buckles, that his wife started as he walked in, as if he had been a stranger.

He surveyed her with unusual admiration for his connubial eyes. She personated Josephine, and the regal circlet which clasped her brow, and splendid costume of lace, satin, and diamonds, with its sweeping train, corresponded well with her finished elegance, and grace of manner; and Mad'lle Felice exclaimed in enraptured tones, as she stood off and surveyed her mistress, "Ah! madame, Josephine never look so well as dat herself! Ah! *miladi tres belle!* very pretty. The *toute ensemble est grande.*" Mrs. Moreton turned and curtsied to her husband, dismissing Felice to put the finishing touches on Miss Moreton's costume.

"How do you like my dress, *mon cher?*"

"Perfect, of course. I never dispute your taste; it was proven in your selection of a husband."

"I never was in better spirits," continued Mrs. Moreton. "Every thing going on so well, and then my grand aim achieved at last—Eva engaged to Judge Woodward. I shall take good care that the report is circulated—quite accidentally of course—through the crowd to-night. I shall tell Virginia Smith in confidence—an indirect way of telling every body. Just think, *mon cher*, what credit it will re-

fect on me to marry my protégé to so distinguished a man,—and then the connection will add to our position,—our respectability,—you know. That ‘respectability’ is a horribly prosaic sort of thing, but still one finds it hard to do without it—just as one finds coarse plain garments indispensable on some occasions—useful if not ornamental.”

“Just so,” replied her spouse, who seemed in a remarkably complaisant mood. “By the way, I have some news for you. I have just received a letter from John Moreton (through his lawyer), informing me that he is very ill, and thought proper to inform me,—his ‘attached and beloved relative,’ etc. He seems to think he cannot live much longer. There is no train for B—to-morrow; so I shall have to postpone my visit to him until the day after; but I shall start then post-haste, and hope to be there in time to receive his dying blessing, and—any thing else he may choose to give me. It doesn’t look very well—our having this ball—but then we needn’t be supposed to have known the bad news, until it is all over. At all events, it is too late now to stop it.”

“Of course it is!” replied his wife. “Isn’t it fortunate he is a bachelor? How near of kin?” a question she had never cared to ask before.

“First cousin only, but then he has no nearer relatives.”

“How much is he worth? Full three hundred thousand is he not?—but perhaps he will leave his fortune to Eva’s mother and her children?”

“Not he! I am surprised at your ignorance. That is not the way of the world. He thinks—a most damnable mistake by the way, but all the better for me—that we have plenty of money, ten to one, therefore, he will give us every thing. There is some *éclat* in leaving us a fortune; we will do him credit in the disposal of it. What distinction is there in giving it to a poor widow in the country? Oh! no, John always had a hankering after the *beau monde*, though having unfortunately rather too strong an atmosphere of the grocery, where he made his little pile, lingering about him, he never could succeed in entering our ‘charmed circle.’”

“I am sure,” exclaimed the lady, “I deserve every thing he can give us, for tolerating the vulgar wretch in my house, whenever he chose to run up to town. I never could look

at him, without having my nasal organs assailed by imaginary odors of brown sugar, cheap whiskey, and old fish! Horrible!" and she seized a bottle of Parisian extract, and sprinkled it over her delicate lace *monchoir*, as if thus to dissipate the unsavory ideas conjured up by these reminiscences of the retired green-grocer.

The rooms were filling fast. Costumes, and characters of every land, mingled in motley confusion. Here the Italian peasant girl rubbed her scarlet petticoat against the silken train of some august lady of a royal court. There monks and brigands walked arm in arm, Turks and Christians chatted lovingly together. Judge Woodward, in compliance with the urgent entreaties of Mrs. Moreton, had been prevailed on to appear, and in the grave costume of a Roman senator, presented a striking contrast to the fairylike vision of loveliness beside him, enveloped in the softest of lace and muslin, stealing on the senses like the first breath of early spring, and needing but the light gauze wings which floated from her shoulders, to complete her resemblance to an angel. She personated Hebe, carrying a crystal vase in her hand.

"We are very late in arriving, are we not?" said Florence to Lettie Plumdale (who, her older sister being "off," was now permitted to make her *début*), as releasing the arms of their respective cavaliers, they followed their chaperone, Mrs. Fitz Friske, into the dressing-room, to throw aside their wrapping, and steal a glance at the mirror, that shrine of woman's worship. (I know several that like nothing better, especially when they have on their "killing look," and are estimating how many conquests they will be likely to make during the evening.)

"I believe we are," replied Lettie, adding with a smile, "but our arrival will only cause the greater sensation. Oh! sister, isn't Florence beautiful?"

They gazed on her with irrepressible admiration. She had chosen to personate the character of Corinne. A robe of rich white silk, fitted closely to her superb form, and swept the floor in graceful and voluminous folds; her wealth of dark curls, floating in wavy masses over her shoulders, unadorned save by the wreath of laurels which bound them. A necklace of diamonds and ruby, clasped her swanlike throat, and save this she wore no jewelry. Her

glorious dark eyes seemed to burn with the impassioned light of inspiration; and the crimson lip, with its haughty curve, was meet to breathe the soul-speaking strains of the improvisatrice. Never had she looked more queenly, more nobly beautiful. (And was she not a queen? Yes! empress of the proudest realm on earth—empress of hearts!)

Mrs. Fitz Friske cast a glance at the mirror, and then at her sister, but her own *distingué* appearance satisfied her, and Lettie looked lovely, in her sparkling and becoming costume. They descended. A murmur of admiration followed them as they swept through the crowd.

Music from an invisible band filled the rooms with melody. An Italian brigand—his black velvet jacket gay with scarlet ribbons, and his closely drawn belt glittering with jewelled dagger and carbine—claimed the hand of the haughty Corinne. It was given most graciously. The brigand was Harry Vernon.

A gentleman in the dress of a Spanish cavalier stood apart, with his plumed cap held up before his face, so that only a pair of dark resplendent eyes, and a mass of raven curls were revealed; but his splendid figure, and *distingué* appearance, betrayed him, even if one could have mistaken the eyes and hair. He gazed on the pair as they swam round in the voluptuous waltz, until his eyes flashed, and he bit his lip impatiently. Florence caught one glance of those eyes. She looked down; a fever spot sprung to her cheek, and her head drooped until it almost touched her partner's shoulder. In another instant she had ceased to waltz, and stood alone in the recess, half hidden by a curtain.

But the cavalier did not approach her. He stood off, and gazed mournfully, and half reproachfully upon her. Her heart died within her.

In another moment her attention was attracted by a conversation carried on between two ladies near her, by whom she was evidently unperceived.

One was Miss V. Smith, in the (considering her age) ludicrous costume of a flower girl, and so bepatched, bepowdered, and bepainted, that Florence could scarce repress a sigh of mingled contempt and pity, as she gazed upon her. They spoke of Judge Woodward's approaching marriage with Miss Moreton as a settled thing.

“ I am very glad she is going to do so well, I am sure,” said Miss Smith in her spiteful accents. “ Though it’s nothing but Angela Moreton’s manœuvring that has brought it about. I have no doubt she had him brought here on purpose when he was shot. You know it is very easy to work on the feelings of a sick person.”

“ Nothing easier, my dear,” responded her companion—a withered old scarecrow of fashion, who had trodden the beaten track until mind, soul, and heart, were gone; some fifteen years of that time having been vainly spent in parading her silly, graceless daughters, to ball, opera, and fête, in search of that grand desideratum “ a rich husband,” (Pshaw!) “ In fact I shouldn’t be surprised,”—with a ghastly grin, which was intended to pass for a sportive smile,—“ I shouldn’t be surprised if she hired the man to shoot him. There’s no telling what people will do sometimes.”

The fair maiden at her side assented to this laudable suggestion with delight, adding :

“ But that is better than for him to marry Florence Fulton. They say he courted her, but I don’t believe it, for depend upon it, she never would have missed such a chance. However, I suppose a heartless flirt like her don’t care for the admiration of any one man.”

“ Well!” thought Florence; “ if this isn’t a specimen of man’s love and man’s faith, I don’t know what proof one could require. There is Mr. Fitz Friske—who three months ago was my ‘devoted slave,’—the happy husband of the honeymoon; Judge Woodward—that man of men, that mirror of truth—who said, scarce two months since, that his ‘last dream of love was over,’ betrothed to another; and Harry Vernon,” she glanced around the room; he was flirting in a corner with Lettie Plumdale—“ Harry Vernon, the very essence of indifference.” She smiled—but it was a smile of scornful mockery—and moved from her hiding-place, as a group of exquisites approached her. She passed Miss Smith and her sister in scandal, but turned no glance towards them to let them know she had overheard their remarks. Why should she? In her heart of hearts she despised them too much to care for their opinions.

Gayly the fleeting hours fled onward. Never had Florence seemed gayer or shone more resplendent in loveliness; never

had the witty remark, the sparkling repartee, the gay *badi-nage* or pretty sentiment flown more freely from her lip than on this memorable evening.

“She excels herself!” whispered the eager and admiring crowd, who followed in the footsteps of the beauty and the heiress. (And why should *they* have followed her? What fellowship or feeling had *she* in common with *them*?)

But all this gayety was assumed. Her heart ached and throbbed wildly through it all.

All this time Claude St. Julian never once approached her—though she did not speak or move unseen by him. He gazed upon her with a melancholy, silent tenderness, which penetrated into her inmost soul. He read the feelings that burned feverishly under that sparkling surface; that gave to her eyes the witching brightness, and to her cheek the glow, which rendered her so wildly beautiful. Well did that man know the heart of the woman he sought to mould to his wishes. Every line and letter of her nature had been read and studied by him; until, like the master musician who brings forth the finest music of his instrument at will, he knew exactly what chords to play upon to touch the deepest feelings of her soul.

In compliance with the entreaties of her attendants, that “the divine improvisatrice would deign to breathe one of her inspired strains,” Florence moved into the harp-room.

Never had she felt more in the mood to pour forth her pent-up tide of feeling in song. She felt *who* would follow her;—who would be her most rapt listener. She had herself composed and set to music an air for the occasion. The air was for all; the words for *him* only,—those wild, passionate words, breathing in every note her struggles, her grief, her tenderness, but still imploring him to leave her lone and free, as she was. As she sung, she felt as if inspired, and strain after strain—each more beautiful than the last—burst from her lip. Now she was indeed the inspired improvisatrice,—her raven curls thrown back from the intellectual brow,—her dark eyes blazing with the light of passionate genius,—and the sweet strains born beneath those small white fingers—magical in their touch,—mingling with notes which seemed to breathe of heaven, so wildly sweet, “the listeners held their breath to hear.” Who of the many who

saw and heard her then, as she sat there in her loveliness, her divine power of fascination, the worshipped star of the crowd, did not recall her as she was in this, her last hour of triumph, long years afterwards.

The song was over, the room deserted, save by one who sat there solitary and alone, unwilling to break the spell which bound him ; bright glances burning into his inmost soul, witching music and love-fraught words yet echoing in his ear.

“Leave, oh ! leave me, I implore thee,
Love, hope, bliss, are not for me.”

“Never, Florence, never ! More than ever now I say, ‘Thou shalt be mine.’”

It was towards the close of the evening that Harry Vernon again claimed the hand of Florence for a waltz. She assented, but begged him to wait awhile, and ere he could say more, relinquished his arm, and left the room with Eva Moreton.

Harry looked after her for a moment, with a peculiar expression, and turned away to amuse himself again with the lively prattle of Lettie Plumdale. Eva went to the dressing-room ; Florence left her to seek for her handkerchief, which she had left in the now deserted harp-room. She found it, and then instead of leaving the room, paused and looked around. No living soul save herself was there. The low French windows opened out on a little balcony, leading to the conservatory. One of them was now half open. Moved by an irresistible impulse, Florence stepped out,—perhaps she wished to inhale the pure cool air ;—as she did so, she observed some one in the dim uncertain light, standing at the farther end of the balcony, leaning against a pillar, his head drooping, his arms folded in an attitude of the deepest dejection. Could she mistake the outlines of that form ? A low, but deep sigh thrilled upon her ear. Their estrangement of weeks,—her own wretched situation—his melancholy—all the fond, weak tenderness, which is too often the curse of woman—rushed upon her.

She approached him,—she laid her hand timidly on his shoulder,—she pronounced his name. He started and raised his head—“Florence ! what angel of mercy called thee to my side ?”

"You seem very unhappy," she replied in timid, tremulous accents. "Why indulge such feelings? Oh! do not strive to deepen my wretchedness thus. Be happy, I beseech you for my sake, yes, even for the sake of Florence."

He drank in those low, half-breathed words, with the tremulous eagerness, with which the parched lip tastes the first cool drops; he turned—he clasped her in his arms—he rained kisses on lip, cheek, and brow, and Florence resisted not; all earth, all wretchedness, all else forgotten in the blind ecstasy of feeling, that it was *his* heart which was beating so wildly against her own.

"Love me, Florence! only love me, and I will be happy. Without that, I shall die. Fly with me, dearest; live for Claude; will you not? There now, do not kill me by a refusal. You must, you shall be mine." And again his burning lips met hers; but this time Florence struggled, though vainly, for release. A slight noise startled them—they looked up. Harry Vernon stood beside them, his brow crimson with rage, and a cold scorn curling his lip. Claude released Florence, and unable to repress the scream which burst from her lip at the sight of Harry, she leaned, half fainting, against a pillar for support.

It is useless to detail the words which passed between the injured lover—for such was Harry in name at least—and the discovered offender. Insults, bitter and burning, were offered and retaliated, and the result was a challenge. All the while, Florence stood pale and moveless, as the marble against which she leaned. Forms began to appear, moving in haste in the next rooms; they approached the door.

"One word," said St. Julian hastily, touching Harry on the shoulder; "for this lady's sake, conceal the cause of his scene if you can, and take her from this accursed spot."

He bowed haughtily. "Fear me not," he said coldly and briefly.

St. Julian leaped over the balcony, and the next moment had gained the street, while Harry turned to Florence, and with an air half of haughtiness (for his pride, if not his love, was deeply wounded), half of pity, offered her his arm. She had no resource but to accept it. Her head swam, and her brain felt wild, as with his assistance she made her way

through the now thronged rooms, and met the gaze of surprise and curiosity fixed on her on all sides, and heard the whispers running through the crowd. She had a dim and confused recollection of hurrying to the dressing-room, from thence to her carriage, and from thence home; and that Harry moved like an automaton at her side, not once breaking the cold silence, save to assure her as they parted, that he would endeavor to explain the scene by alleging sudden indisposition on her part, which would serve as an excuse for her hasty departure. She was scarcely conscious of what was passing around her, until she reached the solitude of her own room, and had time to collect her thoughts.

Arthur Plumdale had watched the attentions of Harry Vernon to his sister—attentions bestowed to get rid of other and unpleasant thoughts—with a satisfaction he would have been far from feeling, had he known the real state of that young gentleman's affairs in a pecuniary point of view. With jealous vigilance he had an eye for Florence, and one for them. With that insidious spirit of evil, which prompted him ever to suspect the actions of others, when he saw Florence go to the harp-room, he followed her at a convenient distance. Concealing himself in a recess, he looked out upon the balcony. One glance sufficed, and hastening to the ball-room, he whispered a word into the ear of Harry Vernon. The result is shown. The scream which burst from the lips of Florence, reached the ears of some of the crowd in the reception rooms. In an instant all was excitement and confusion. No one knew from whence it proceeded, until directed by the arch fiend, Plumdale.

“What is the matter, Mr. Plumdale?” cried Mrs. Moreton. “What is the meaning of this confusion?”

“Nothing, madam,” was the sneering reply, “but a little tableau rehearsing on the balcony—the divine Improvisatrice in the arms of a Spanish cavalier—a surprise from a jealous lover, &c. Nothing, I am sure, to cause such a fuss.”

Mrs. Moreton saw all at a glance. “Impossible!” she cried, with a well-feigned expression of horror. The woman-feeling of Eva triumphed over every other. “Poor Florence!” she could not help exclaiming.

Mrs. Fitz Friske was searching in vain for her charge.

Mr. Plumdale explained all. And now the name of Florence was on every lip; the scene on the balcony rehearsed in every shape and form; new and exaggerated versions of it were at a premium, Mr. P. acting as stage prompter on the occasion.

We will not pause to descant upon the virtuous horror of the ladies, or the smiles and whispers of the gentlemen. Some there were, who had been steeped to the brow in vice for years, and who wore the mask of hypocrisy, like the paint which covered their withered faces, scarcely concealing the hideousness beneath, and *these* were loudest in their denunciations. So goes the world.

"Is it not as I said? The sequel of the love tale is approaching," murmured the Count di Basquina, as he turned his footsteps homeward that night.

CHAPTER LI.

THE DUEL.

A thousand thoughts, hopes, feelings, fears, and startling events, were born in those few swift-winged hours. Anguish to more than one heart. Joy to none.

JOURNAL OF THOUGHTS.

"Dead? Oh, God! it cannot be."

ST. JULIAN hastened home. The house was silent and dark, as though all its inmates had long since retired. He went to his dressing-room, where the fire, kindled for his return, had not yet burned down. Writing a note in haste, he knocked up his sleepy and wondering valet, and despatched it to Mr. Moreton; then paced up and down the room, thinking not of sleep.

He thought of Florence, her shock, her mortification; and the probable consequences if the thing were made public, as it almost inevitably must be; the thousand and one versions which would be current, each new one worse than the last. And the duel—that would make things worse still. Could he decline it? Impossible! His honor, his courage, were at stake.

To-morrow his life would be at the mercy of Harry Ver-

non, an unerring marksman. He might be killed—it was probable—but such thoughts were vain now. It was too late for repentance; and even if held out to him, he would not have sought it. Seating himself at his *escritoire*, he wrote a passionate farewell to Florence, imploring her forgiveness for the past, for the wrong he might innocently ('twas thus he chose to phrase it) have done her, and beseeching her to believe that every thought and feeling of his soul was hers, beyond his power of control; that even the thought of death for her, was fraught with mournful sweetness. Yes, for her sake he gloried in this last sacrifice on the shrine of his love. Thus and much more he said.

While engaged in this occupation, he thought he heard a low, stifled moan, as of some one breathing with difficulty, in his wife's room. He paused, but not hearing it repeated, went on with his occupation. After finishing the letter, he laid it on the mantel, with singular carelessness, which could only be accounted for by the absorption of his mind—intending to give it in charge to his valet the next morning. With that species of fatality, which often makes our own acts of negligence seem the interposition of a retributive Providence, he never thought of it afterwards.

Day was dawning, and Claude was interrupted from the feverish slumber he was endeavoring to snatch, by the announcement of Lieut. Minton and Mr. Moreton, who had met to arrange the preliminaries. Lieut. Minton was the bearer of a message from Vernon, stating that if Claude had no objection, he wished particularly that Vernon Place should be the scene of the duel. He had none; and it being nearly time for the morning boat to start, all three departed in haste, Claude leaving directions with his valet not to arouse the household, or say any thing about his movements, together with a little note for Marion, giving some plausible excuse for his absence.

The morning was dark, threatening, and gloomy. Not a word was exchanged between the two principals in the short passage to Vernon. Harry Vernon paced the deck, arm in arm with Lieut. Minton. He looked feverish and excited, and it was evident that he, too, had passed a sleepless night. With an assumption of his habitual recklessness, he now and then laughed and talked with careless *noncha-*

lance; but these efforts were mocked by the gloom on his brow, and meeting with no response from his friend, he after a while relapsed into silence. Lieut. Minton looked very serious, and, in truth, his situation was not an enviable one. He knew what the feelings of his betrothed would be, could she know the danger to which her only and beloved brother was exposed; and if he was killed, it would fall to his lot to break the unwelcome tidings; he would have declined acting as his second, could he have avoided it, but that was impossible without giving offence.

Claude looked pale and melancholy, but perfectly composed, as he sat by the state-room window, looking out on the wild, dark waves of the Hudson, as they dashed threateningly onward, with that low boding murmur which is said to portend a storm; and at the dim, far off mountain heights, looming faintly through the mist, which covered them with a cold, pale, shroudlike curtain. Mr. Moreton was the only one of the party who looked perfectly serene, and as if, instead of a mission of life and death, he was merely on a little pleasure excursion. The spot selected for the duel was scarcely out of sight of Lilian's cottage.

(A presentiment that he would be killed, haunted the mind of Harry Vernon from the first; but with that abandonment which, in minds like his, is always the companion of unhappiness, he rather coveted than shunned his fate. But dead or alive, it was to Lilian he must be carried.)

The ground was marked off, and they took their places. St. Julian had made up his mind so to direct his aim, as to strike Vernon on the arm, or where the injury would be as slight as possible. He could not be so magnanimous as to fire in the air, and take no revenge for the insulting words he had lavished so freely on him. No; his blood boiled as he thought of them; but still his desire was not to kill, but merely to "teach him a slight lesson."

Harry Vernon covered Claude with a deadly aim, and he perceiving it, in an instant changed his mind, and threw his own more directly upon his antagonist. He was calm; the hand of the other trembled visibly, not from fear, but excitement.

And they, who had sat at the same board, drank of the same cup, clasped hand to hand in friendship, and who, a

few hours before, had mingled together in the gay crowd, where the dark and fearful thoughts of death could find no place; stood face to face, each with hand upraised—not in the fury of mad passion, but calmly and deliberately, to take the other's life.

Mr. Moreton was to give the signal to fire, by dropping a handkerchief.

A moment of suspense, and the white messenger of death fluttered slowly to the ground. The next moment the report of the pistols, as they fired simultancously, rung through the air, and Harry fell prostrate and lifeless on the ground.

Claude, too, was slightly wounded, though, owing to the unsteadiness of his opponent's hand, the ball missed aim, and merely grazed his left arm; but forgetting himself, he rushed to the side of his victim. Lieut. Minton bent over the wounded man in agony. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "shot right through the heart, I do believe."

There he lay in his young, proud beauty; the wild black eyes set with a cold glare; the full, curved lip, scarcely yet ceasing to quiver. They had torn open his vest, and the life-blood was oozing, drop by drop, from a wound in his breast, staining his shirt with the dark brand of crime and death. Mr. Moreton had flown for a physician, though with but little hope of procuring one in time to save, even if any spark of life yet remained. By the merest chance he met Dr. Moffatt, who was just returning from a call on Lilian,—not having entirely discontinued his visits as yet, notwithstanding her convalescence. A few words explained all.

"For God's sake!" exclaimed St. Julian and Minton in a breath, as the physician approached,—“for God's sake, do something, doctor.”

Dr. Moffatt bent over the motionless form, placed his hand on his heart, and looking him intently in the face for a moment, shook his head silently. A moment afterwards—though to the lookers on it seemed an interminable age—he said briefly, "We'll see what can be done."

"We must carry him to the cottage; it is the nearest place," said Lieut. Minton. "Besides," he added, "he requested, dead or alive, to be taken there."

The physician would have demurred, but he thought that,

under such circumstances, things must take their course; and there was not a moment's time to lose.

"You are wounded too," said Mr. Moreton, noticing the blood which trickled from Claude's arm, which he had hastily bound with a handkerchief.

"Only a scratch; for heaven's sake! don't think of me now."

They placed the moveless form on a litter,—they bore him to the cottage: the door was opened,—Lilian sprang forward, gave one wild cry, "My husband!" and fainted, cold and lifeless as the form they bore.

Claude, who had followed them, in his anxiety, to the house, felt a fearful thrill of horror, as he heard that cry. Was it the thought of the agony his own act had caused; or was it a presentiment which froze the life-blood in his veins?

At any other time, the exclamation which burst from poor Lilian's lips would have excited wonder and comment; now there was no time to think of such things. She was taken from the room, and given in charge of the terrified Mary.

Harry was removed from the litter to a bed. Restoratives were brought, his limbs chafed, and warm applications used to restore life, if any yet remained. At last a slight sensation agitated the frame, a faint hue of life stole over the cheek, and a low moan escaped the lips of the sufferer.

"Thank God, he lives!" echoed around.

The surgeon proceeded to extract the ball. It was a delicate operation, and required skill; but at length it was accomplished. "There is hope now, I think," he said, as he finished, though Harry had swooned again from excess of pain—"but, by heaven! it was a tight job. If the ball had gone that much further," describing an extremely minute distance with his finger, "either side, he would have been a gone case."

Claude, who had been watching the operation with intense anxiety, heard with much satisfaction the verdict of the surgeon, receiving at the same time some directions as to the treatment of the trifling wound he had himself received. Harry was left in charge of the surgeon and Lieut. Minton; and Claude and Mr. Moreton returned to town by the evening boat, the latter promising to send a nurse down,

and to break the news himself to the Vernon family, as gently as possible.

The tempest which had been slowly gathering all day, now burst forth in torrents. Fast and furiously it beat round the fragile walls of the cottage, interrupted in its dreary wailing only by the low moans of the sufferer within.

Dark and threatening it gloomed over the pathway of Claude, as he slowly and sadly paced the deck of the steamer on his return to the city.

And thus moves on the great Drama of Life ; thus Fate reveals her untold mysteries. Life, love, hope, feeling, what are ye all, but as frail flowers that bloom in the bright summer time, and wither and die in the autumn blast, leaving but the wintry desolation of despair ?



CHAPTER LII.

THE CRISIS OF FATE APPROACHES.

And has it come to this at last ?
 Thou high and haughty one !
 Is there no glory in the past,
 To bid thy proud heart shun
 The Demon which allures thee on
 In the dark track of Fate ?
 Oh ! heed thy warning angel's voice,
 And pause ere 'tis too late.

MS.

FLORENCE sat by the window of her boudoir, the evening of the second day after Mrs. De Vere Moreton's fatal ball, apparently watching the dreary tempest, which for two days had howled unceasingly without, and now rattled slowly and monotonously against the window panes. Her heart mirrored the gloom of the storm, as she sat in that listless apathy—more terrible than grief itself,—which succeeds great mental suffering. No sleep had visited her eyes during the two preceding nights. On the morning previous, a note had been handed her from Harry Vernon, dated four o'clock the night of the ball. It enclosed a ring she had permitted him to wear, and contained but a line.

“Miss Fulton will receive this, as the termination of the engagement between us. H. V.”

And now her last refuge was gone, none left—unless indeed it was the one which Claude offered.

Her name perhaps on every lip, nay she fancied she could already hear the gibes and mocking taunts of the malicious and cruel. By turns she wept and raved, through those two long dark days, until, overcome by the fierce excitement of mind and body, she sunk into the state of listless apathy we have just described.

A beggar girl passing by the window paused, and held out her hand for charity. She stood in the pitiless storm, wan, pale and delicate, shivering in the blast. Moved by the ready impulses of her quick and generous nature, Florence raised the window, and threw her a handful of silver. The girl picked it up eagerly, murmuring blessings on her as she did so, and then paused, and looked at her wistfully for a moment.

“My poor girl,” said Florence, “you need not thank me. If I mistake not, we are sisters in misfortune and misery. Are you not an orphan, and homeless?”

“No, madam; I have a home, and a kind good mother in it. 'Tis but a poor home, 'tis true, but when my mother is well, and we can get work, we are quite happy; but she is sick now, and we are out of money, and I know not what to do. I would not beg for my own sake, but for hers I can stoop even to this. Your charity comes in good time, lady. May heaven bless you—as it has I am sure. Young, rich, beautiful, ah! lady you must be very happy.”

“Happy!” murmured Florence, as the girl passed on, pursued by the driving tempest,—“Happy!” an expression of bitter mockery swept over her features, and her tone was one of intense scorn; it was but the echo from the heart, which even then was murmuring against God and man, in the wretchedness of its lot. She looked around on the comfort, nay the splendor within, and her lip curled disdainfully.

She turned again to the open window. There she stood, unheeding the war of elements without, with folded arms, and the same cold, proud, stern expression resting on her face. The chill damp air thrilled through her frame, and

the driving rain swept over her hair and cheek, but she heeded it not. If it had been God's lightnings, sent in vengeful wrath to hurl destruction on her head, she would have stood there calm, daring, and unmoved still.

"A home and a mother for whose sake she would beg," repeated Florence, with a strange mixture of sorrow and bitterness in her tone, which told more than words could do the utter desolation of her soul—that soul which, haughty and regal still, reared itself proudly and defiantly, even in this its hour of darkness, against the Power by whose decree she was now suffering the consequences of one fatal error ;—one error born of the thousand misguiding influences which had been thrown around her life from her very birth, warping to wrong her passionate—though naturally pure and lofty—soul. "The beggar-girl is happier than I, for I have no home, no ties. Friendless and disgraced! Oh God! what have I done that thou shouldst thus curse me?"

At this juncture the door was opened unceremoniously, by Mrs. Sharp, who closed it as suddenly, after thrusting a paper through the aperture. It was one of the daily papers of the city—and one notorious for its personalities—fresh from the press. She picked it up mechanically, and as she did so, a note from her uncle dropped from between its folds. She opened it and read :

"When you read the marked paragraph, you will understand why you are no longer a welcome inmate of my house. I cannot refuse you the shelter of my roof, but presume you can easily find a home more suited to your taste, and society more congenial, than that of him, upon whose old age your ingratitude and shameless conduct have brought reproach and mortification.
C. F."

Her appalled eyes rested on the marked paragraph.

"An incident which caused a great sensation in the fashionable circles, and which has led to the most serious results, occurred on Tuesday night, at the residence of one of the leaders of the *ton*, on Fifth Avenue. They were celebrating a grand Fancy Ball with great *éclat*, when the hilarity of the company was suddenly interrupted by a fearful scream, coming from some mysterious part of the building—some say a dark balcony, others, Mrs. M.'s boudoir.

“The brilliant, admired, and beautiful Miss F—— (for the sake of the feelings of the parties concerned, we suppress the names), one of the brightest stars in the world of fashion, was discovered by a jealous lover in the arms of that ‘gallant gay Lothario,’ C. St. J——. A scene ensued of course, and the result, we regret to add, was a duel between St. J—— and V——. It came off yesterday (Wednesday) morning, at the country seat of Ex Gov. V——, young V—— having by particular request chosen that place as the scene of the meeting. V—— is thought to be fatally wounded, and this unhappy circumstance has plunged his family into the deepest distress. Of course, the family of so distinguished a public servant as Ex Gov. V——, cannot fail of meeting with universal sympathy.”

“Great God!” exclaimed Florence as the paper dropped from her hand, “what next?” The faint hope which had yet supported her, that all might be concealed, was over. Her name was in every mouth—yea, even in the public prints;—it was the property of every newsboy, who vended it about for traffic. *Her* name,—*hers*, the proud, the exclusive Florence; she upon whose refined ear the very name of “the mass” fell with a repulsive sound. The very shelter of the roof which covered her was grudgingly given. Where could she turn, in this her hour of desolation, for consolation—advice—friendship? To Ella Vernon? Was not her brother the victim of his passion for her? Eva Moreton had no home to offer her, even as a temporary refuge. Mrs. Moreton—she was not the person to turn to in such an emergency—and the remainder of her dear five hundred friends—where were they? where indeed! The eyes of fashionable friends are proverbially weak, and can only discern an object when the bright rays of prosperity flash around it; they are utterly unable to pierce through the obscurity of adversity. One ray alone gleamed through the darkness around her, and that encircled with a halo the fatal name of St. Julian. With a calmness which surprised herself—the unnatural calmness of desperation—she wrote to him:

“The die is cast. All is over with me now, Claude. Henceforth my fate—though it be eternal misery—is linked with yours.
FLORENCE.”

Days passed, slow miserable days, before an answer came. Florence locked herself in her room, and saw no one; at last, hurried and blotted, it arrived.

“Dearest, pardon and pity me. For the present I cannot come to you. As soon as circumstances permit, I will do so. Say but when, where, and how I shall see you, and believe that I would brave the horrors, not only of this—but of the eternal world for you. C. St. J.”

CHAPTER LIII.

SEVERED TIES.

Love's sweet light once cold and dim, around the household hearth,
Oh! never more can light like this be found on this wide earth.

WHEN Claude arrived at home, painful and preoccupied as were his thoughts, it seemed to him that an unusual gloom and stillness reigned through the house;—the servants too looked quiet and serious as if hushed into an overawed silence;—but without pausing to ask questions, he went straightway to his dressing-room. He started at the apparition which met his eyes as he flung open the door. Marion stood in the middle of the floor; the letter he had written to Florence clasped tightly in her hands; her sunken eyes, and pale cheeks, bearing traces of weeping and sleepless vigils, but now cold and tearless as stone,—apparently frozen into rigidity. He sprang forward and tore the fatal missive from her grasp, exclaiming with eyes flashing fire, and tones—almost for the first time in his life to a woman—harsh and stern; “Great heaven! Marion, why did you read this letter?”

She quailed not, moved not, 'neath his glance, and the low tones of her reply came hissing through her teeth.

“To discover the full measure of my wrong and insult. To find what a false traitor is the man who vowed at the altar, ‘forsaking all others, to keep him unto me only.’ Henceforth I—your hated wife—will be no barrier between you and ‘the world of bliss’ from which I ‘have hitherto separated you;’ I will no longer be ‘*the upas tree, barring*

your soul from what it would deem its seventh heaven.' You are bold in guilt, since you do not quail at the repetition of your own words. Yes, they were traced carelessly on this paper, it may be,"—and she crushed the letter in her thin, small fingers, with a nervous violence and passion of which he had scarce believed her capable;—"but they are burned into my soul as with a brand of scorching flame. Fool that I was, to bear as long as I have done!—oh! weak, silly fool! as you must have thought me. But you see the worm *can* turn. I am resolved at last. We part for ever from this day. Go to your ——"

"Hush!" interrupted her husband passionately. "No word against *her* from *your* lips, or any others, will I permit. She is as pure and free from intentional wrong as yourself; nor shall you *dare*, because *chance*" (and a smile of scorn curled his lip) "has made your lot more fortunate than hers, to brand her name in *my* presence. But what madness is this you talk, about parting?" he added; for though it was the very thing which in his inmost soul he most ardently desired, still he was unprepared for this sudden determination on her part—or chose her to believe he was, at all events. Ere she could reply, a thought struck him, which sent a gleam of joy thrilling through his soul; and with tones whose sorrowing calmness belied the fevered eagerness which lurked under them, he demanded, "You do not wish a divorce, Marion?"

"Yes, I do wish it; and so help me heaven! I will apply for it."

"Very well," repeated Claude, with startling solemnity of look and tone. "Remember your words—you have called heaven to witness that you will apply for a divorce; you cannot now recall them."

She started, and turned, if possible, paler than before; but a moment afterwards, answered with forced calmness,

"I have no desire to recall them. The last link which bound us together is severed—our child"—— she paused, overcome by the violence of her feelings, and unable to proceed.

"What of our child?" he demanded, recalled to the remembrance of her, whose very existence, in this stormy interview, he had for the moment forgotten.

“ Our child is dead ! ” murmured his wife hoarsely. “ Look, she is there. ” She pointed to the door of the next room.

Struck dumb with horror, he opened it, and there, in her little bed—that bed where he had often bent over her, to watch her calm, innocent slumber, her infantile loveliness, with fond delight—shrouded in the white habiliments of the grave, pale, cold and moveless in death, lay the form of his child.

Every other feeling was forgotten in the absorbing grief of the father. In these first moments of a mutual sorrow, he would have called Marion to his side ; he would have wept with her over the dead child ; he would have implored her to forget and forgive all ; but in this, his hour of repentance, she came not near him, and thus the last link was indeed severed between them. The long night passed, and the dreary morning came, bringing the undertaker, with his dark, fearful burden—the last prison-house of the dead—and his aspect of stony indifference ; and the loved face was looked on for the last time, and the coffin-lid closed over it. Then came the funeral, with its slow, solemn procession, and long train of carriages, “ suitable to the station of the deceased, ” filled with the cold and careless, or mocking with their formal emptiness the grief of the bereaved. It was over, and Claude turned to his desolate home with a stricken heart. Still Marion came not near him. She had watched over the child, who had been taken with a sudden and violent fit of croup, and whose low and painful breathing had startled Claude in his occupation of writing to Florence (how deeply he regretted now, that he had not laid down his pen, and sought the origin of that sound) ; alone she had watched over her during the sleepless hours of that long, miserable night, unconscious even that her father was in the house ; alone, save with hireling servants, she had received her last breath, and closed her eyes ; alone she had wept over her ; and then, when wondering at his—as she thought it—protracted absence, she had sought his dressing-room, to find there, instead of him, that fatal letter. It was the last drop in the overflowing cup ; the sudden blow which struck like a bolt of ice to the heart of the wife, freezing her last feeling of affection or kindness for her husband. And in this her hour

of utter wretchedness, like spectres from the past, the image of the betrayed love of her youth, her mother's warnings, her disobedience, the early errors—never concealed—of the wild profligate boy, with whose fate she had chosen to link her own, rose up before her; and those fatal, oft-repeated words of "lang syne," "I had rather be miserable with Claude St. Julian, than happy with any other man," rung the knell of hope, and love, and peace, and joy in her soul.

When the last sad rites were over, she made her preparations for departure in coldness and silence. These completed, she left for New Haven, without even announcing her intention to her husband, and accompanied only by a servant. Not until the old familiar sound of "*home*" fell on her ear, was the icebolt on her heart unloosed, and in her mother's arms the long pent-up tears gushed forth.

"I have come home, mother. Your poor, disobedient child, has come back to you to die. Cecy is gone, and I shall soon follow her."

Violent and despairing as is the grief for the loss of a child, it is perhaps more evanescent than any other near and dear bereavement—at least with one whose domestic affections had been so little called into exercise as those of Claude St. Julian. Thus, though he bent with agonizing sorrow over the grave of Cecy, though he dwelt with mournful tenderness on her memory; this was not sufficient to recall his thoughts and feelings entirely from the world in which he had hitherto lived, moved, and had his being; and after two weeks of lonely wretchedness, he turned from his darkened home, dreading to linger within its gloomy precincts. In the first agony of his bereavement, Florence's note was handed to him; and as he read it, he felt the only pang of conscience he had ever experienced for his course of conduct towards her, or his wife. As soon as he felt sufficiently composed to dwell on such a subject, he scrawled the hasty answer we have seen, and had heard nothing from her since. Now his heart whispered "Florence" once more.

Marion was gone; separated of her own free will from him. He knew her scruples of conscience too well, not to feel that she would, after the words he, unconsciously to herself, had drawn from her, apply for a divorce; but under present circumstances she might fail to get it.

Some decisive step must be taken. He wrote again to Florence, over whose head those two weeks had dragged even more wearily than over his own. The result was an interview, and the next day Claude St. Julian was closeted all day with his lawyer.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE FUGITIVES.

"O'er the glad waters of the deep blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free."

BYRON.

THE good ship rode proudly over the dancing waves of the blue Mediterranean. The moon poured myriads of diamonds over the bosom of the bright waters, and the air was soft, clear, and warm, for it was the breath of spring beneath a tropical sky.

On the deck of the ship—deserted save by these, and the drowsy watch—paced a lady and gentleman, in low, earnest converse. The lady's head was raised; her dark eyes upturned to the moon, which threw its beams on her beautiful, but melancholy features. The gentleman gazed upon her with impassioned tenderness.

"You are sad, my Florence; wherefore so? Are you not with me?"

"Yes, Claude, and would be, oh! so happy; but—but do you think God will bless ties like ours, Claude?"

Her companion was nonplussed for a moment.

"Do not think of such things as these now, dearest," he replied at length. "Think of the wretched home you have left; of the cold, heartless world, whose sneers and censure you must have braved, had you lingered there—of your lonely lot; and then think of the bright clime to which I bear you; of the love, nay, the adoration I lavish on you."

"Dearest!"

"And then, too, I will soon be bound to *her*, even by the cold formality of a legal tie no longer, and then you shall be mine by the laws of earth, as you are now by those of

heaven; for the laws of love are the laws of heaven. Believe me, love, I have more to regret in leaving my native land, than you; and yet, for your sake, I have left it. The grave of my child is there." His voice trembled, and his lip quivered.

"Dear Claude, forgive me. I feel how much you have given up for me, and I *am* happy; for have I not *your* love?"

The tears sprung to her eyes; he kissed them away.

They were approaching the harbor of Genoa. The vine-clad shores of Italy had been for some time visible, and now the marble palaces and stately domes of "the proud city" rose to view, sleeping in the soft moonlight.

"Oh! look, Florence; this is Italy,—there is Genoa!"

She could not repress an exclamation of delight, as that fair southern land of beauty and fragrance burst upon her, with the soft, mysterious spell of moon and starlight lingering over, and hallowing its loveliness. All the romance of her nature kindled within her, as she gazed upon the fair scene, and looking up, met those love-lit eyes beaming into her own, as he murmured; "This is our home, Florence."

CHAPTER LV.

THE RECONCILIATION.

"For Time makes all but true love old,
The burning thoughts that then were told,
Run molten still in memory's mould,
And will not cool
Until the heart itself be cold
In Lethe's pool."

CAMPBELL.

IT was thought advisable to conceal from Lilian the real situation of Harry Vernon.

When she recovered from her long, deathlike swoon, she was informed by Mary of the duel; that he was badly, but not dangerously wounded, and that, though any excitement now was forbidden, in a few days she would be permitted to see him.

Some trifling quarrel, originating in the excitement of wine, was alleged as the cause of the duel. In vain Lilian pleaded for permission to see and nurse him. The peremptory orders of the physician forbade it. All her wrongs forgotten, she sat hour after hour in the opposite apartment, with clasped hands and eager eyes, watching every one who passed to and from the sick room, which to her was a forbidden paradise—for was not Harry there? Mary and the physician seemed to her the most enviable of mortals, for were they not permitted to hang over, to soothe and watch him? Why was this denied her? Occasionally, a groan from the sufferer would thrill to her very soul.

The first request of Harry, on returning to consciousness, was for Lilian. The first day it was denied him, and in the feverish paroxysms of pain he seemed to forget it; but as day after day it was repeated with more and more importunity, and as the doctor marked the paling cheek of the anxious watcher without, he at length conceded.

On the fourth day, when he woke from a slumber of some length apparently much refreshed, Lilian was informed, with many cautions to be calm, that she might see him. A moment afterwards she glided noiselessly into the room, and then, instead of, as was her first impulse, throwing herself into his arms, she checked herself, and stood wistfully gazing into the dear face before her, the very sight of which, after their agonizing separation, sent a gush of mingled feelings thrilling through her soul. His eyes met and fastened on hers; one glance told volumes of love, of sorrow, of forgiveness. He held out his hand beseechingly.

“Lilian!”

“Harry!”

Now she was in his arms, panting and sobbing wildly, all caution forgotten, her only sense of feeling, of existence, that she was on his bosom once more;—those long weary hours of estrangement over; let her die now; yes, let both die; existence was too blissful to survive that moment. It was useless to talk of caution—of calmness; no force could tear her from him. All must be explained.

“Oh, Harry! I thought I was forgotten, deserted; tell me it was not so!”

“Deserted! Lilian, did you not write me you never

wished to see me again? Am I not violating your wishes in being here now? Was not my love, my repentance, my offer of righting you rejected?"

"What offer, Harry? I never heard of this before!"

Now it was Lilian's turn to pour forth her tale of sorrow; her crushing grief, her hoping against hope, her vain waiting and looking for—what never came—assurance of love and fidelity; and then the terrible certainty which seemed to frown upon her, that all was indeed over, and the darkest side of the picture the true one.

Then it was that the conviction of the falsehood of his trusted friend, sudden and vivid as a lightning flash, broke upon Harry.

And now a thousand unprincipled acts, to which he had before been wilfully blind, rushed upon his memory, and his soul recoiled from the treachery of which he had been the victim. Yes! he had been his dupe throughout. Maddening thought! The worst misfortunes of his life had never, perhaps, thrilled with a keener pang of anguish to the soul of the young man, than the conviction of his betrayed and insulted friendship.

But he must not dwell on such thoughts now; he was with Lilian once more; all was explained; let him but recover, and all would be right."

And his boy? he was at the home house with Dame Burton; he must wait awhile before seeing him. The physician was sure that his present excitement would prove fatal; but in spite of his skill, both as a prophet and a leech, Harry rallied, and grew stronger and better every day. Perhaps the elixir of hope, and the determined energy of a newly aroused will, had more to do than any thing else with his recovery.

Lilian never left his side. There he lay, her own proud, manly Harry, his gay nonchalance, his careless independence all gone; pale, weak, helpless—she was stronger than him now.

In prosperity and happiness love is a blessed boon, in its holy and calm purity, to woman; but when, in sickness and sorrow, the latent energy, the deep feeling, the boundless tenderness of her full soul is drawn out, then it is that she realizes fully the God-given power and intensity of her

own feelings; then, and then only, can man wholly discover the richness of the treasure he has won in her love.

To soothe with kindly and gentle tones, to watch with unwearied vigilance, to bathe the fevered brow with grateful restoratives, to lay her soft, healthful cheek, to that of the sufferer, red and fevered as it is, as if thus she would impart her own fresh, glad life, to his languid being; all these are the most grateful tasks of a true woman.

Notwithstanding Lilian's care, and his own efforts to regain strength, Harry's convalescence was somewhat slow and protracted.

His mother pleaded indisposition as an excuse for not visiting him, but his father was often with him, and Ella Vernon insisted on sharing the cares of the sick room. Thus they were brought in constant contact with Lilian; the past was explained, and the foully wronged and innocent one stood before them in her true light.

Hourly her pure, lovely, and gentle character won upon their affection; and when Harry disclosed his intentions towards her, it met with their full approbation.

Harry thought the ceremony which had taken place between himself and Lilian quite sufficient; in the eyes of heaven she was absolved from all intentional wrong, and in those of men, the holy ceremony, even though pronounced by unrighteous lips, might be considered—with the consent of both parties—binding; but he had too much delicacy to say so.

It was, therefore, repeated by "orthodox lips," and with a purer, deeper feeling than he had ever before known, Harry sealed it on the lips of the faithful wife of years.

The marriage was strictly private. A rumor was set afloat that young Vernon had been for some years privately married, in opposition to the wishes of his parents, and that now, having attained his majority, the thing was to be openly declared.

People commented for a while upon "the romance" and "mystery of the thing," and dropped it in the more exciting topic of the elopement of "the divine St. Julian" with "la belle Fulton."

The world of fashion seemed never to tire of this interesting theme. Old ladies—we beg their pardon, there are

no *old* ladies in fashionable life—ladies past the first flush of their *premiere jeunesse*—in other words, of no particular age—met in coteries to discuss the absorbing topic; to pity “his poor wife,” and to declare that “they always knew exactly what it would come to at last.” They never admired “the ways” of that Florence Fulton from the first: with all the fuss the men made around her. It had all turned out precisely as they had expected.” Oh! the wisdom and foresight of this world!

Youthful damsels privately lingered over the forbidden subject, with a sort of mingled delight and horror, and young men laughed openly, and swore they envied St. Julian.

CHAPTER LVI.

AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN TWO OLD FRIENDS.

SOME few days after his marriage, Harry Vernon was startled and grieved by the announcement of the sudden death of his mother; sudden to him, and to every one, because, though for years she had been an invalid, they had not expected her death as a near event. People grow accustomed to the ill health and complaining of a confirmed invalid. They grow weary of sympathizing, and cease to feel the awe and alarm naturally experienced when the strong, healthful, and blooming are stricken down before us; and when they die, we are as much taken by surprise for the moment, as if sickness and suffering had not for years given silent but sure warning of the approach of death. Too often the sufferer, as well as those around him—blinded by the slowness of decay to the terrible reality—is, “when the hour cometh,” unprepared for the dread summons. Ella Vernon flew to Lillian and her brother for consolation, which, if we may judge from sentiments formerly expressed, Harry, at least, was well prepared to give. Gov. Vernon bore the misfortunes which darkened around him, with serene and manly fortitude. He sincerely grieved over the death of his wife. In the grave, a generous soul buries all faults; and in the hour of bereavement, the heart will cling to the love of its

youth, whatever the after faults of the object of that love may have been; the memory of the "olden time" comes back, the time when the golden sunlight, the green fields, and gushing streams of life's young glad years, were the brighter, the fresher, and the more joy-filled from their presence; and the after years, too, when many a grief and pain was shared with them, when we were bound to them by a common joy and a common sorrow. Yes! over the grave of even an unworthy partner, the life-tie is revered, and its severing regretted.

Events seemed now to crowd upon each other. The pecuniary embarrassments of Gov. Vernon being made public, the people bethought themselves of their tried and faithful servant. An offer to release him from his difficulties was made by the Legislature. This was refused; but an appointment from the President, worthy his talents and position, accepted. Some time elapsed before necessity compelled him to undertake the duties of his office; the interval was to be spent in arranging his affairs; and after the disposal of the town property, and a mortgage on Vernon, which would enable him to settle all present difficulties, he thought there would still be something comfortable left.

Harry and Lilian were to reside at Vernon, and Gov. Vernon and Ella with them, until the departure of the one, and marriage of the other; which last event Lieut. Minton was anxious should take place as soon as possible, as his furlough being nearly out, he was compelled to resume the duties of his profession.

Harry went to the city as soon as he was able, to assist his father in his business arrangements. A day or two after his arrival, he was interrupted in the tedious and complex operation of looking over bonds, bills, etc., in the library, by the abrupt entrance of Arthur Plumdale. He advanced with extended hand, exclaiming,

"My dear fellow, how are you? Glad to see you out once more. Had a tough time of it, eh?"

The words died on his lip, as he met the indignant glance which his former dupe fixed upon him, as he stood erect, with folded arms, not deigning to touch the outstretched hand proffered him.

"What is the meaning of this?" he faltered, struck with the sudden consciousness of guilt.

"It means, sir, that I am no longer your dupe, and do not wish to be looked on as a friend, by one I consider an accomplished scoundrel!"

"Ha! what is this? What do you mean? Your proofs?" hissed Plumdale, trembling between his catlike rage, and his coward fear.

"Proofs? look you, Arthur Plumdale, I loved, I trusted you—with the love of a brother, with all the trust of my nature. We were friends,—is there a more sacred tie between man and man? You betrayed my confidence; you wrought upon my feelings for you, to make me the tool of your own base designs, and then laughed in your sleeve, no doubt, at the folly of your victim. You led me into every form of dissipation. You ministered to my worst passions, and initiated me into the hellish mysteries of your accursed vocation,—gaming. Your base machinations, your ingenious representations, led me into the commission of an act which sullied the purity, and darkened the life, of one dearer to me than my own soul. The interposition of an overruling Providence arrested me in my mad career, and called me back to my better self, ere you completed my ruin. I awoke from my weak dream of confidence, to see you in your true light, coward and villain that you are."

"Have you any desire to repeat the scene of the 20th of March?" (the day of the duel,) hissed Plumdale, with impotent fury.

"Not with you. When I fight, it must be with a man I consider my equal, in point of courage; at least one whom I know possesses some of the principles of a gentleman. Thank your own worthlessness that you escape my vengeance. I would not stoop to trample on a worm."

All the Vernon pride and spirit burned on his brow, and blazed in his flashing eye, as his curling lip uttered these scornful words.

"But hist!" he added, after the pause of an instant; "Lilian is now my wife. Dare to profane her name by one whispered word, and I will shoot you down like a dog; your life shall not weigh a feather in the balance with my vengeance. Utter her name lightly, and you shall no longer

profane this earth by your fair outside, your serpent tongue, and heart, as black as hell itself. Go, sir ! I have endured the contamination of your presence long enough."

Arthur Plumdale, who had stood in crestfallen silence during this tirade, assuming a stare of mingled fierceness and surprise ; muttered at its close some threat of vengeance—which, however, he thought proper to render unintelligible to his companion, and which only met a mocking smile in return—and beat a hasty retreat from the lair of the aroused lion.

CHAPTER LVII.

EVERY DAY EVENTS.

" COME, Eva, the carriage is waiting. Don't you want to go with me to the St. Julian sale this morning ? "

" Yes. It is true, then, that the furniture is to be disposed of to-day ? "

" Yes ; I heard it at Stewart's this morning, and came directly back for you. St. Julian left directions with his lawyer, they say, to wind up all his affairs here, as he expects to reside in Italy entirely for the future."

" Poor Florence ! I wonder what will become of her,—what her future fate will be ? "

" Can't say, really, my dear. Don't waste your sympathy where it can be neither known or appreciated. The sale at Gov. Vernon's comes off to-day, too. Let's look in there first, and then go to the other. It is early yet, only half past twelve. Make haste *ma petite mignonne*."

Eva ran up stairs, and soon tripped down again, bonneted and mantled, and looking fresh and sweet as a white tea rose, in her simple morning costume.

Mrs. Moreton was in the highest spirits, and with good reason, for, by the recent decease of cousin John (that is a dear old name ; pity it is so common ; for that reason Nebuchadnezzar is preferable), she found herself in possession of two hundred thousand dollars, " just in time to stop an impending execution,"—as Mr. Moreton solemnly af-

firmed in their closet consultations, when his wife silenced him, as usual, by declaring that he was "only trying to torture her weak nerves."

Fifty thousand was left to Eva's mother, to hold in trust for her children; too much, entirely, Mrs. Moreton thought, for a person who had no establishment in the city to keep up. Our worthy, kind, and benevolent readers, are doubtless not much pleased at this disposition of the property of the defunct grocer; but, as Mr. Moreton remarked, "'tis the way of the world" to do such things, and in this veritable history we write not so much with regard to the pleasantness of fiction, as the strictness of truth.

The carriage stopped before the door of the stately mansion of Gov. Vernon. Judge Woodward was there, and came out to assist them in alighting. A variety of heads, covered with a variety of hats and bonnets, looked out of the windows to watch their descent. Little boys climbed on the light and elegant iron railing in front of the house, and ran up and down the broad marble steps, munching oranges and nuts, and decorating the aforesaid steps already dirty, damp, and slippery, with many foot-tracks, (New York is always very muddy, or very dusty), with a miscellaneous variety of nutshells and orange peel; to the infinite danger of upsetting any one so unfortunate as to tread on them.

"Are there many persons here?" asked Mrs. Moreton of Judge Woodward.

"Yes, a great many. I wanted to attend the St. Julian sale to-day, too, but fear I shall not get off from here."

"A motley assemblage for these aristocratic walls," whispered Mrs. Moreton to Eva, as they entered the room where the crowd was principally gathered, and where the voice of the auctioneer could be heard exclaiming, in his rapid tones,

"One hundred and fifty dollars only bid for this splendid mirror. Shameful sacrifice! Cost twice that, at least. Immense attraction, ladies! Look at yourselves, if you please. Did you ever look as well in any mirror before? One fifty! one fifty! Are you all done at one fifty?" then the ominous ring of the hammer, and "Gone to Mr. Fitz Friske, at one hundred and fifty dollars."

There is indeed no place where a more motley assemblage can be found, than at a "sale of household furniture," at a great man's house—great either in point of wealth, fashion, or distinction—in our northern cities, and there are generally present as many women as men.

There is the rich *parvenu* and his wife, who wish to furnish their new house, and who think any thing will pass current which has once ornamented the apartments of a member of the *bon ton*. There is the mechanic's family too, who wish to get a peep into high-life; and there are the dear five hundred friends of the unfortunates who are "compelled to sell out,"—or do it by choice, as the case may be; then there are the many belonging to each of the classes described, who come merely to look, and stare, and comment, unmindful of all that has been felt and suffered within those walls, once sacred to the associations of home. But in this, as in most other mixed assemblages, "the aristocracy" get together usually, and form a sort of *clique* among themselves, separate and distinct from the rest of "the crowd." As for me, I am no aristocrat. If I had "all the blood of all the Howards,"—which, thank heaven, I have not—I would not give up the thought of being one of the people, or cease to feel every throb which agitates the mighty heart of "the many," vibrate with electric sympathy through my own. But we are digressing. Governor Vernon looked calm and serene. He felt that he had the sympathy of all good men in his losses. Many had stepped forward with offers of friendship and assistance; in fact, by all those whose sympathy was worth having, he seemed to be more venerated, more highly esteemed than ever.

Harry was present also, looking pale from his recent confinement, and sad, but self-possessed.

"What in the world can Fitz Friske want with that mirror, when he has just furnished his house thoroughly this winter?" said Mrs. Moreton, to Miss V. Smith, whose back was towards her, but whom she recognized by the voluminous folds of her green velvet cloak, and exuberance of bonnet plumes. Plumes turned her faded visage—dimly discernible through a cloud of pearl powder and corkscrew ringlets—towards her friend.

"Oh! how are you? Don't know indeed; bought it for his mother, I believe. Do let's find out all about it."

“Are you not sorry for the Vernons?”

“Yes, but just what one might have expected; they always lived above their income. Harry Vernon such an extravagant scapegrace too. Government will be sure to provide for Governor Vernon, and they still have their country place left; besides, Ella Vernon is to be married very soon.”

“Ah! who to?” inquired Mrs. Moreton, trembling for the reply.

“Why, have you not heard?”

“No. I never have nothing to do with the gossip,” she was about to add, but thinking this remark—addressed to the greatest scandalmonger of the day—would be rather *mal-apropos*, she prudently forbore.

“Why, to the gay naval officer Lieut. Minton, of course,” said Miss Virginia, smiling as if she thought she was communicating the most charming piece of information, and watching her victim at the same moment, with the joy a cat feels over the prey in her claws.

Now this intelligence—anticipated though it was—was extremely disagreeable to Mrs. Moreton; for not only had she a real *penchant* in that quarter, but she had wasted a whole season of smiles and coquetries on the conquest of the handsome lieutenant, with the sole design of getting him hopelessly in love with her (all in the most irreproachable way, of course, for her offerings were made on the shrine of vanity, not of Eros or Anteros); and now the man whom she had intended to add to the list of the “unfortunate victims of her irresistible attractions,” her pet conquest, not only laughed at her power, but was actually wearing the chains of another, and before the whole world too.

“He courted her when he thought she had a fortune,” continued Miss Smith, “and now I suppose he is ashamed to back out, and so is going to enact the disinterested lover, and carry off his penniless bride, with no dowry but her beauty.”

“Romantic cavalier!” cried Mrs. Moreton, no trace of the thoughts which passed like lightning through her mind, perceptible on her smooth brow, or in her gay laugh. Even Miss Smith’s penetration was at fault; and disappointed that she had not succeeded in inflicting pain, she resolved to turn her attacks in another quarter.

"Do let's go and find out why Fitz Friske is buying all that furniture. There's something in the wind, you may be sure."

Judge Woodward was beside Eva.

"If you see any thing you like particularly, let me know," he said, in a low tone. "I have bought several things, to save them from being sacrificed. They will do very well for our establishment," and he smiled, calling a vivid blush to her cheek as he did so. "I prefer consulting your taste, of course. Take my arm, and let us look around."

"*I promessi sposi*," sneered the old dowager we met at Mrs. Moreton's fatal ball, as Judge Woodward and Eva passed, to one of her spinster daughters. "The idea of a man of Judge Woodward's age, making himself such a fool as to marry a silly little chit like Eva Moreton."

"Hold your tongue, mother," snapped her dutiful daughter. "They'll hear you. It's no business of yours. You are always talking about people, and I believe that is the reason you can't marry off your own daughters. It is a judgment on you."

Mrs. Moreton and Miss Smith passed into the room which had been Ella Vernon's chamber, where they came, to the infinite satisfaction of the last named, full upon old Mrs. O'Friske, arrayed in her usual tawdry style. She was trying the rocking-chair, examining the lounge covers, and poking her hand into the feather-bed and mattress.

"How do you do, my dear madam?" said Miss Smith cordially. "You seem,—or your son rather, seems to be making extensive purchases this morning."

"Yes, it's me he's buying for. You see, honey, I find it's not exactly the thing—that is, I don't think it will do for all of us to live together. And sure, we're plenty able to keep up a separate establishment, as my daughter Gustavus calls it; and why shouldn't we? I can get a nice housekeeper, or companion, I believe they are called among the *tong*; and the children, which I suppose in the course of time, they'll have, can stay between the two places. I shall feel independent then; and besides, as Gustavus would say, it will add to our grandeur—the two places."

"Exactly, my dear madam," replied the complaisant

virgin, casting a sly glance at Mrs. Moreton, who walked to the window to conceal her laughter.

"It is very lucky for you that this sale happens just now."

"Oh, yes; it saves me the trouble of running from pillar to post in search of things; but the saints presarve us, they sell dreadful dear. But, to be *sure*, it's something to have furniture that once belonged to the Vernons.

"They have been *great dashers*, eh? Pathrick—I always call my son Pathrick, though, somehow or other, he seems to hate it; Pathrick in company, and Pat for common, when there's nobody by,—well, as I was saying, Pathrick didn't want me to come here this mornin'; but sais I, Pathrick O'Friske—or Fitz Friske, I should say—I will go; for sais I, you'll go, and give any price, when I'll be on the lookout for a bargain. You see, Pathrick niver had to a day's work in his life; and thim as don't know how money comes, don't care how it goes ginerally. So I came, though Gustavus wouldn't, and made believe she had a headache; but I'll bet she's round at that other sale now; for she's mortal fond of every place where there can be plenty of money spent, and none made."

Mrs. O'Friske paused for breath, delighted at having found an opportunity of giving vent to this lengthened tirade, and to so fashionable and appreciative an auditor.

Mrs. Moreton glanced at her watch.

"I am going round to the St. Julian sale now," she said to Miss Smith, "and should be happy to have you take a seat in the carriage with me."

"With pleasure! Let's ask *her*, too," she added *sotto voce*, as Mrs. O'Friske's back was turned for a moment; "it will be such good sport."

Mrs. Moreton graciously complied. To the astonishment of both, Mrs. O'Friske declined the honor, adding,

"I don't want nothin' to darken my doors as iver belonged to no sich man as that St. Julian. (The Lord presarve us, when people git to callin' sich men as him saints! It's a burnin' disgrace to the holy Catholic religion, it is.) A villain. I pity that poor girl he run off with. She was a real lady, bred and born. I seed it in her, though I didn't know her much. Any body could tell she

was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Would you believe it? *my Pathrick* courted her, and she wouldn't have him. It is a fact; and just to see what's become of her now. Well, there's no tellin' what married men can do, when they do turn out to be devils—savin' your presence, ladies; they know a woman's nature so well, you see, they know exactly where to take 'em."

These confidential communications were interrupted at this juncture, by the entrance of Mr. Fitz Friske. He started, as if he had suddenly come in contact with red-hot iron, when he found the two ladies in close confabulation with his mother; but they passed out at the same moment, and after finding Eva, drove to Waverley Place.

"To what base uses may we come at last," remarked Mrs. Moreton during the drive. "The idea of old Mrs. O'Friske in Ella Vernon's sanctum; the adornments of the temple dedicated to this fair goddess"—a scarcely perceptible sneer—"desecrated to the use of that horrid old woman."

"Ella carried away every thing that she prized particularly," said the matter-of-fact Eva.

"Oh! the Vernon pride will have to come down at last," responded Miss Smith to Mrs. Moreton's remark.

"By the way, have you ever seen the heroine of that rowdy Hal's romantic love scrape, the now confessed Mrs. Harry Vernon? The idea! the daughter of old Stanley, the overseer."

"I have seen her," said Eva, with spirit. "I called with Judge Woodward on her and Ella, when they were in town the other day. She is the sweetest, loveliest creature, I ever saw; perfectly graceful and refined. I have always heard her father was a gentleman, though he was poor. Poverty is no more a proof of plebeianism, than wealth is a badge of aristocracy. If the Vernons have pride, it is the right sort. They have neither the arrogance, nor the superciliousness, to insult and trample on the helpless."

"My dear, you are warm in the defence of your friends," said Mrs. Moreton, seeing that Miss Smith looked discomfited. "Miss Virginia meant nothing, I am sure. But here we are in Waverley Place."

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE DESERTED SHRINES.

THERE was as great a crowd in the former home of Claude St. Julian, as at Gov. Vernon's, but not so varied in character.

Claude was an accomplished connoisseur in all articles of *vertu*. A few came, doubtless, to select some gem from his collection of paintings or statuary, which, though small, was very fine; but the many were impelled hither solely by curiosity. 'Tis astonishing, the celebrity—or shall we say notoriety?—an act which every body condemns, sometimes gives a man.

Since his last exploit—unrivalled since the days of Helen—the name of him who was before the leading star of the *ton*, whom women adored and men imitated, seemed invested with tenfold interest. The merest anecdote relating to him was listened to with absorbing eagerness. Indeed, had any enterprising Yankee, with a little native genius to back him, brought out about this time a book entitled, “Scenes in the Life of the celebrated C. St. J——,” we doubt if it would not have proved a greater speculation than Barnum's autobiography.

So all the world of upper-tendom rushed to the open portals of the former retreat of the invincible St. Julian. Was it not a treat to walk about quite at one's ease, examine the statuary, criticise (most learnedly, of course) the paintings; penetrate even into his dressing-room, or sanctum rather, where he had “dreamed away uncounted hours;” where he had read and thought; where he had performed the wonderful operation of making the exquisite toilet, which had thrown every observant dandy into fits of agonizing envy. Here, too, he had doubtless penned many a billet-doux to “*la chère Florence*.” Glorious reminiscences! So thought the mustachioed exquisites, who lounged through the rooms. So, too, thought the young ladies, and their prudent chaperones. Somebody picked up a book, a volume of poetry, marked in many places, and in

one place the name of "Florence" written; but—greatest prize of all!—some one stumbled in a remote corner on a note to her—actually a note! hastily written, half-finished, and partly torn. A group of young men gathered around the lucky finder, and for the time being he was quite a hero.

Thus is the lustre of greatness reflected on all who come in contact with it!!

The next day, the fragmentary note, with comments thereon, occupied a whole column in the public prints.

There, too, was his wife's chamber, where his child died, and where Marion had spent many a lone, sad hour. But what was that to the crowd?

To them, that room—temple of love and sorrow, except for its association with the star which had once illumined its darkness—was but an empty, cheerless apartment, the walls looking cold and damp, and every thing wearing an air of deserted loneliness.

Every thing sold at the highest prices. One young man bought every article in the dressing-room—we suppose to fit up another exactly like it, cherishing, no doubt, some visionary idea, that this might conduce in some degree towards rendering him "an irresistible."

Mr. Moreton bought most of the paintings. Mrs. Moreton bought the sleeping Cupid.

"It will remind me of that dear St. Julian," she whispered to Eva, "who, say what you will of him, was certainly the handsomest, most fascinating creature on earth. Do you know, Eva, that since I have been here, I have been thinking continually of Florence? It seems to me I should like so much to go through her rooms, and recall her to memory now;—and, by the way, you know she had a beautiful and very rare collection of flowers; no doubt the old miser, her uncle, would like to dispose of them. Let's go around there and see. I'll pretend to have heard some such report."

Eva demurred, but was overruled. Miss V. Smith was too much engaged with Mrs. Fitz Friske,—to whose infinite horror, and her own enjoyment, she was relating the meeting with her mother-in-law, having been made cognizant of all her affairs, etc.—to leave; and Mrs. Moreton and Eva drove alone to Mr. Fulton's, not very sorry, if the truth must be told, to get rid of the vampire.

Mrs. Moreton told the servant who appeared at Mr. Fulton's door, that she was very anxious to procure some of the flowers for her conservatory, and thought perhaps Mr. Fulton might not object to disposing of them.

He "did not know; Mr. Fulton was not in; he would ask Mrs. Sharp."

In a few moments the housekeeper appeared. She "did not know either; had never heard her master say."

"But he could not object to our looking at them," persisted Mrs. Moreton. She "supposed not; they would please to alight."

She looked at them as if she divined the object of their visit, but seemed to take a pleasure in gratifying it; a cold sardonic expression, half of triumph, curling her thin, pale lips, and gleaming in her cold blue eyes, as she threw open the door which led to the hot-house, through the former apartments of Florence.

"Every thing is just as *she* left it—poor Mr. Fulton's ungrateful niece," she said, as she observed the ladies look around with curiosity and interest. "Not even a duster has touched a thing."

There they were in that old, familiar spot, her boudoir, redolent of a thousand associations of the past, breathing so much, yet so coldly and silently, of the departed one.

There was her harp; but where the fairy fingers went to call forth such wild, sweet notes? the flowers faded in their vases, as if mourning the neglect of her who was wont to tend them; the favorite canary, looking neglected and deserted, and breathing its song with a low, melancholy chirp; the empty *fauteuil*—where was the magnificent form which had once reposed on its yielding softness?

Far different were the thoughts of the two ladies as they looked around.

Mrs. Moreton thought of the presiding goddess of this temple of the graces, as a star who had suddenly disappeared from the firmament of Fashion, never again to appear there. Who among the present constellations could fill the place of that bright, erratic orb?

Eva thought of the young girl she had loved; whose lip had often pressed hers with maidenly affection, and whose eyes had so often met her own, beaming with gentle-

ness and kindness; and now she was gone for ever; and to what a fate! and Eva shuddered, as a cold sickening melancholy crept over her heart.

Eva was infinitely relieved, when Mrs. Moreton, after looking through the conservatory, and naming the flowers she would like to purchase (which, by the way, were sent her next day, accompanied by a note from "the old miser," requesting her acceptance of them), glanced at her watch, and turned to depart.

"Home!" said she, as she threw herself back in the carriage, to the obsequious footman in splendid livery, who stood awaiting her orders. "It is five o'clock," she added to Eva, "and we shall scarcely have time to dress for dinner. I invited your *fiancé ma chère* Eva, and Virginia Smith invited herself. Heigho! after to-day's fatigue, I shall not be fit for the opera to-night."

CHAPTER LIX.

THE MIDNIGHT CULPRIT.

"Sin plucks on sin."—SHAKS.

IT was the evening after the stormy interview between Harry Vernon and Arthur Plumdale, that the latter sat lolling back in the luxurious ease of a purple velvet *fauteuil* in the back parlor of his sister, Mrs. Fitz Friske. A bright, cheery fire burned in the grate, and a splendid chandelier threw its beams on the luxury and comfort of the richly-furnished and spacious apartment.

Mrs. Augusta Fitz Friske sat on the other side of the fire, in the graceful *demi-toilette* becoming a quiet evening at home, trifling with a purse she was netting. She seldom spoke, and her pale, though fine face, wore an expression of *naïve* indifference, which would have thrown a fresh aspirant after "fashionable repose of manner" into the keenest pangs of envy.

Lettie was trying a new opera air on the piano. The voluminous proportions of old Mrs. O'Friske, were spread

out as close in front of the fire as she could possibly get ; her feet propped on the fender ; her face all in a glow ; her eyes resting complacently on the broad, fat hands, loaded with enormous rings, which were crossed in approved style on her lap. On this occasion, bright scarlet, instead of yellow streamers, floated from her mast-head, forming an odious contrast to a dress of rose-colored de laine, becoming the fairest, freshest specimen of juvenile loveliness.

Mrs. Plumdale was present also, spending the evening with her daughter—her custom whenever the latter was at home. In fact, Mr. Fitz Friske had already begun to find, that marrying into a fashionable family was not always the grand desideratum of existence, and that, instead of confining his matrimonial alliance to Gussy, he had, in common parlance, “married the whole family.” There was an air of faded gentility perceptible about Mrs. Plumdale, as she sat regarding Mrs. O’Friske with that patronizing condescension, which a poor patrician may be supposed to feel towards a rich *parvenu*, whom they choose to honor by using their wealth for their own purposes.

Mr. Fitz Friske had gone to a corporation meeting, or something of the sort—one of those bores with which men of wealth are always afflicted, no matter what their mental capacity for the thing may be.

His marriage had proved of some advantage to him. The fact of his being settled in life, added to his importance in many points of view ; and Mr. Fitz Friske began to consider himself quite a public character, and talked largely of “our agricultural and commercial interests,” “the corruption of Government officials,” etc.—terms of which he understood about as much, as a great many others who discuss them.

“Why are you not at the theatre to-night, Gus ?” asked Arthur Plumdale. “It is the last night of Forrest’s engagement. As for me, even the opera has become a perfect bore.”

“Mr. Fitz Friske had an engagement, and I cared very little about it. Lettie wished to go, but she had no one to attend her.”

“It seems to me, people are run mad about theatre players,” interposed the dowager O’Friske ; “and every furriner

that comes here, with a bray like a jackass, and a lingo as no Christian body can't understand, runs off with more money in one night, than half a dozen good honest men could make in a year at hard work. I niver did approve of no sich doin's mysilf."

"My dear lady have you no appreciation of the fine arts—music, poetry, et cetera?" blandly inquired Mr. Plumdale, with a sly glance at his mother.

"I knows nothin' about your fine harts," replied the lady addressed in great wrath; "and what's more, I niver want to know, if fine harts means running to see a passel of nasty show-people, that do nothin' but fiddle and fool all night, enticin' poor souls to everlastin' ruin. I used to be fond of the circis mysilf when I was a girl, but I have long since seed the folly of it."

Gussy looked entreatingly at Arthur, as if to stop the argument.

He yawned in reply, and said, "Well—hum, as I don't feel very well, Gus, I think I'll spend the night with you. What time will Fitz Friske be in?"

"Not until very late, if at all. He said he might sleep out, as he would be detained down town late, and told me, if he didn't return by twelve, not to expect him."

"Ah! well, I shall not sit up for him then. It is eleven now," glancing at his watch. Gussy rung for candles.

A few minutes afterwards, Arthur Plumdale was seated by the fire in the comfortable chamber which had been assigned him; his face wearing a totally different expression from the gay and careless look assumed in the drawing-room.

"Gussy feathered her nest well when she took in this rich fool," he said to himself, as he glanced around the room; the closely drawn curtains of snowy muslin, the bright fire, the warm, rich carpet, and the completeness of all the arrangements, realizing his every idea of comfort. "I wonder what is to become of her poor devil of a brother. One thing is certain, New York is not the place for me now. The forgery of Fitz Friske's name on the — bank must be discovered soon; and ere it is, I must be far away from the clutches of these cursed police officers. Thank God! I have some funds left yet—though not what I want,

by a d—— sight. Thought I could borrow from Hal Vernon,—went with that intention this morning—what did I get for my pains? Curse him! Oh! if I could but meet him some dark night, and murder him, before he knew who struck the blow, and then hiss into his ear, as he was in his last gasp, ‘Your old friend Plum.’”—He paused for a moment, as if his mind delighted to dwell on the fiendish picture thus conjured up, and then he went on muttering to himself: “And that girl Georgina, what will she do, when she finds I have cleared out? Play the fool, and fret herself into her grave, perhaps, after a man that doesn’t care that” (snapping his fingers), “for her existence. I do believe if she knew I was a swindler, a murderer, and every thing else that was mean, she would follow me to the ends of the earth, if I would but say the word. Well, if a woman will make such a fool of herself, it’s no fault of mine. Curse the affair! I have tired of her long since, with her whining and puling,—and so away with all thoughts of it. But the money—I haven’t half what I want. Why can’t Gussy give it me? She ‘has made too many demands on her husband’s purse and kindness already,” mimicking her tone. “By heavens! she shall repent her refusal. I was in her dressing-room to-day, and saw her handling diamonds as carelessly as if they had been pebbles. My fingers itched to clutch them. What right has she to the plucking of this pigeon more than I? It is all chance and luck, after all. ‘An overruling Providence,’ pshaw! I wonder if it will do to ——” the words died on his lip. He bent over, his elbows on his knees, his face resting between his hands; and gazed into the fire, as if there he expected to read the answer to his half uttered question. The clock chimed twelve; then one; and the last sounds had died away in the house, and all was still. He had listened intently for the opening and shutting of the street door, but no such sound was heard. Every thing betokened repose. He rose at last, and drawing what seemed to be a bunch of trunk or bureau keys, and a small steel instrument, in form not unlike a chisel, from his pocket, he surveyed them by the light of the candle.

“If none of these dozen keys fit, then this instrument will serve my purpose. Oh! for a dark lantern; but she is

asleep, I guess, and I will make no noise. Asleep or awake I must go. Pride will stop her mouth if she detects me."

He stole down the staircase noiselessly, shading the light with his hand. His sister's dressing-room had two doors, one communicating with her chamber, the other with another room, so that it could be used as a dressing-room at will, from either apartment. It was through this second, and unoccupied room, that Arthur Plumdale crept noiselessly. He laid his hand on the bolt of the dressing-room door; it turned with a slight noise. Then it was that he shrunk back; the attempt was so rash. Gussy must almost inevitably detect it. It was but for a moment. "Pshaw!" he muttered, "I will go on;—'nothing venture, nothing have.'" He opened the door and went in, still shading the light. The door leading into his sister's room was slightly, very slightly, ajar; he durst not bolt it for fear of awakening her. He went deliberately to the bureau, and tried the drawer where he had seen her in the morning deposit her casket of jewels. Fortunately for him, it was not even locked. He opened it; in another instant clutched the casket, and turned to leave the room, congratulating himself on the ease and success with which he had accomplished the robbery, when his startled eyes fell on the form of his sister. She was standing holding the bolt of the door in her hand, white as the nightgown she wore, her eyes fixed with a terrified gaze on the midnight culprit.

"My God! brother—Arthur, what are you doing?" she gasped as soon as she found breath to articulate.

"You see to what your refusal of this morning has driven me," he replied coldly, and with assumed *sangfroid*.

"O God! that I should live to see my brother a—a——"

"Robber, why don't you say? Don't be mealy-mouthed. Better say you pity the poverty which has reduced him to this extremity. You begrudge me the jewels doubtless," he added bitterly; "take them." And he extended the casket.

"No, oh! no," she said recoiling, "keep them, I could never bear to wear them again."

"Now, Gussy, what is the use of these mock heroics? You know how I have to struggle through life. You have caught me in the commission of rather an awkward act, I

confess, but for your own sake—not that you care a damn for me—you will not expose me, and who will be the wiser? Why then these sentimental airs? There is no one by to see them but me, and I despise them. Go to bed, you will catch cold. I am much obliged to you for the jewels, and hope when next we meet, you will have forgotten all about the affair.”

“When next we meet,” he little thought, they would only meet again before the bar of an avenging God. He bowed at the conclusion of this speech with mock ceremony—though the baleful light which gleamed in his catlike eyes belied his seeming coolness—and left the room, and the house. His sister turned to her own room, to sink down, and weep with bitter shame over the torturing scene she had just gone through.

How wretched is the fate of those who, themselves of naturally high, pure feelings, are doomed every day to see some new instance of heartless depravity in those around them, those perchance who should be nearest and dearest. Such was the fate of Gussy Plumdale; such it had always been her lot to endure; and though corrupted in some degree by the fatal influence of association and example, the angel in her nature was not altogether lost, and she wept with the keenest pangs of shame and mortification, over this last instance of the total debasement of her only brother. Splendid as was her lot in some respects, it was one of bitter and painful trial. It was long ere she again heard of her brother; when she did, he was figuring in a Southern city, far from the scene of his crime, under an assumed name, a dandy of the first water, the leading exquisite of the ton; his betrayed and deserted victim—over whose fond weak love, and heartless betrayal, we have not had time, or space, to linger—having sunk meanwhile into an early and dishonored grave. Of his ultimate fate, his sister knew not till long afterwards.

CHAPTER LX.

THE DIVORCE CASE.

And this is what thy vows are worth,
Thy holiest, deepest vows, oh earth!

IN due time, as was confidently expected by her husband, Mrs. St. Julian's appeal for a divorce was laid before the Legislature. As may be readily imagined, the feelings of the moral and influential portion of the community were strongly with the wife, and against the fugitives; so that it was generally thought the bill would be passed immediately,—granting the divorce, but prohibiting a second marriage on the part of St. Julian.

A small minority were against the latter clause,—pitying perhaps the fate of the well known, brilliant, and beautiful woman, whose destiny was involved in the decrees of the tribunal—and a stormy debate was the consequence. But it required the intervention of such men as Gov. Vernon and Judge Woodward—who, besides their strong general influence, had connections and warm personal supporters in both houses—brought to bear upon it to the utmost, to free St. Julian from his former shackles, with the liberty of assuming the same under other circumstances. While he looked with the deepest indignation upon the conduct of the latter in the affair, Judge Woodward had not so far forgotten his former feelings towards Florence, and the high opinion he once entertained for her, as not to pity her he believed his victim, in due proportion.

But before acting on these feelings, it was necessary to discover whether St. Julian, even were it in his power, would repair the wrong he had done her, and remove the dark shadow with which he had clouded her fair fame.

Procuring his address from his lawyer, he wrote to him, requesting, before taking any steps towards procuring his entire freedom from his marital obligations, some pledge that if successful in doing so, it would be followed by reparation of the wrongs of Florence.

In return he received an answer from Claude, declaring

that it was his sincerest wish to unite himself "to the only woman he had ever loved" (these were his very words), by legal ties, and declaring that he awaited but the fiat which would place it in his power to do so. With this pledge in his possession, the judge scrupled not to act. He was ably seconded, as we have before stated, by Gov. Vernon and other influential men. The tide of popular feeling was struggled against with sufficient success to procure the desired decision. In due time the report was forwarded to Italy, and immediately upon its reception, Claude St. Julian and Florence Fulton were married.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE HOME IN ITALY.

FIVE years have elapsed, since the period when we last met Claude and Florence, on the deck of the ocean steamer. It was in Rome that Claude and his beautiful and romantic bride, fixed their residence.

He purchased an enchanting villa—a very model of architectural art and beauty—situated on one of the eminences skirting the seven-hilled city, and commanding a view of its most picturesque and classic portions. They preferred Rome not only for the attractions it possessed in itself, but because there was no place in Italy where they could so frequently hear from their native land; no place where they so often met Americans. Their reasons may seem strange in those who were voluntary exiles—exiles too under such circumstances: but let us leave our birth-place from what cause we will, though it be to fly from the persecutions which beset us there, to a happier home in a fairer land, still the words "home" and "native land" will always fall with a heart-stirring echo on the ear; and any tidings from thence will be listened to with eager interest.

In Italy Florence expected to meet and be reconciled to the relatives of her mother, who resided in Venice; but her grandfather was dead, and by the other members of the

family, she seemed to be looked on so much as an alien, that she felt but little inclination to renew ties which had been so long severed.

Three golden-winged years after their flight, flew over the path of Florence and Claude ; and during this time, the lovers seemed to have escaped the retribution which usually falls to the lot of guilt. A more devoted husband than Claude St. Julian had proved, could not be found any where. In Italy, where the women arrogate to themselves privileges, which here are considered the peculiar prerogatives of the lords of creation, and where inconstancy is considered a more heinous crime in man than in woman, he had not, perhaps, the temptations he would have met in our own prudent and orthodox land ; but even supposing he had been disposed to unfaithfulness, where could he have found one being who could long charm the senses, or fire the soul, of the man who had shared the delights of reciprocated tenderness, with a woman like Florence ?

Both were fond of, and mingled a good deal in society ; their villa being so situated as to enable them to command at will the pleasures of society, or the delights of seclusion.

Florence caught the language—of which she before had a partial knowledge—almost intuitively ; and Claude, who delighted to call her every talent into exercise, and gratify at the same time his own impassioned love of the art, procured for her the best masters in music ; and her remarkable and cultivated talent thus improved, and her fine voice enriched by skill and practice, she could soon vie even with the far-famed performers of that land of song.

Her rare loveliness, her unequalled powers of fascination, proceeding, as they did, from a mind whose versatile genius enabled her to fill any rôle which pleased herself or others, rendered her a star of the first magnitude in the circles of Rome ; and *la bella Americaine*, and her no less accomplished lover-husband, were objects of universal interest and admiration.

True, vague rumors reached the ears of the many, now and then, that the past was not all right ; but “ they don’t mind these things ” in Italy. She was improvised, serenaded, raved about, overwhelmed with a perfect flood of adoration wherever she appeared. But all in vain ; fond as she

was in her gay and sparkling moods of the applause and glitter of society—*l'esprit du monde*—the whole nature of “the spoiled belle,” the oft-named “heartless coquette,” seemed formed for one purpose, and that purpose, intense adoration of some one object.

“Let her smile on others as she will, it is only to one she ever turns with that tell-tale expression which says plainer than words, where the heart is.”

Thus remarked some shrewd observer, one night in a crowd, to the infinite dismay of an English Milord, three Italian poets, and a French Vicomte—all hair, shrug, and bow; all of whom seriously contemplated suicide on the strength of it.

“Dese Americaine women are like your Anglaise,” said the Vicomte—who prided himself on his English—to Milord. “Dey have one strange taste. It is husband, husband, noting but *husband* wid dem;” and he shrugged his shoulders, and walked away with an air of infinite disgust.

Yes, with all the intensity of her boundless soul, that soul into which genius had poured its God-given power of feeling, Florence adored Claude. He himself never dreamed of the extent of his influence over her. She was never *exigeante* in her demands upon his attentions, and though she could not repress at all times the overflowing tide of her feelings, she never poured them forth until, by a thousand winning ways and nameless fascinations, she had charmed his senses, and wrought up his feelings to the highest pitch; when she knew her love-fraught tones, and fond caresses, would fall on his yearning soul like rain on the parched and thirsting earth. This was one secret, mayhap, of her influence over him. She knew well how to forge every hour new fetters for the heart, which possession might otherwise have cloyed; how to fling round the monotonous tie of matrimony the rose-hued light of feeling, the dreamy sweetness which renders the heart's early love-dream so enchanting. Yes, whether moving in the brilliant throng of society, the gayest, the most brilliant there; or in the solitude of their own beautiful home; or wandering together—as was often their custom—over “the vine-clad slopes of sunny Italy,” lingering with romantic ecstasy over its shrines, temples, and ruins; still they were all in all to each other.

One object alone shared and cemented their idolatrous love; their child. Beautiful and bright as the fairest vision of seraph loveliness that ever charmed the senses of inspired saint, in his most enraptured dreams of heaven; too beautiful, too bright for this earth,—where every glorious gift, whether of genius or of beauty, is a curse to its possessor—was the child of Claude and Florence St. Julian. It was hard for the gazer to determine which was the most peerless in loveliness, the mother or child.

The Florence of these sunny days of happiness was changed in appearance, though not less lovely than the Florence of old. Her eyes wore a deeper light, her cheek a softer bloom, and in her whole countenance might be read the expression which adoring love—even though wrongly bestowed—stamps on the human face; the heaven light of lost Paradise. She was less haughty and self-assured than in former days, more of the dependent, loving woman, in her air and mien.

We are now approaching a dark epoch in the life of one, who, with all her errors of conduct (not of heart), we love. We would fain pass rapidly over it, nor pause to linger over an event, which darkened the sunlight of her life with a cloud never more to pass away. Florence had found it difficult, after the birth of little Claude, to procure a foster mother for the child, but at length succeeded in doing so. She thought she recognized traces of the gipsy race in the fine, though dark features of the woman, or rather girl—for she seemed very young—who presented herself as a candidate for the situation; but her appearance was neat and modest, and her recommendations good. At all events she had no choice, and the place was accordingly filled.

She soon found that she had no reason to regret her kindness; the girl—who seemed to be destitute alike of home or relatives, and who therefore awakened a corresponding degree of interest in Florence, in whose bosom a chord of sympathy was touched by even the humblest under such circumstances,—repaid the kindness with which she was treated, by the most unbounded gratitude and zealous devotion.

Her love for the beautiful and winning foster child—though indeed few looked on but to love him—partook of a degree of enthusiasm singular in its nature. He seemed to fill entirely the place of her own lost child in her heart.

Such was the perfect confidence of Florence in the girl, that she never hesitated to leave her child in her care, when accompanying her husband into society. Often on such occasions, 'tis true, she would have preferred remaining at home in the discharge of her maternal duties—for with all the sparkling glitter of her manner on the surface, she had much of earnest womanly home-feeling in her nature; but Claude, as we have said, delighted to exhibit her beauty and talents for the applause of the world; and his love was too precious to allow her to run the risk of losing it by thwarting his wishes.

Lolah had been in the service of Florence more than two years, during which time her mistress had been often heard laughingly to exclaim, that “she believed, if perfection existed on earth, as far as amiability, truth and affection were concerned, she had found it in Lolah;” when one day the girl brought a party of gipsies into the presence of her lady, saying that they begged leave “to tell her fortune.”

Some degree of resemblance existing between an elderly and commanding-looking gipsy woman, and Lolah, startled Florence, but no intelligence seemed to exist between them, and the half-formed suspicion died in her mind.

She declined having her destiny foretold, saying smilingly, that “she was content with the present, and did not wish to pry into a future which might be very terrible;” but with her usual generosity, dismissed them with a handsome gratuity. Perhaps it was for this reason that their visits were repeated again and again; until Claude, annoyed by their importunities, ordered them off in no very gentle terms; unheeding the dark, revengeful glance, which the woman we have before alluded to, and who seemed to be the queen, fixed upon him. Some six months passed away, and no more was seen or heard of the gipsy gang. It was in the fair, bright days of early spring, that Claude and Florence were invited to a *fête*, given at the villa of Rosamonta, the beautiful country-seat of the Marquis De Vilezza, distant about twenty miles from Rome. Florence, on this occasion, disliked so much the idea of leaving little Claude, that she almost resolved to decline the invitation for herself; but her husband would not hear of this.

With no family had they cultivated such a degree of in-

timacy; from no other had they received, when comparatively strangers, such marks of kindness and attention. Their presence on the occasion was particularly desired, and it would never do to refuse. They would return probably the next day, and Lolah would take the best care in the world of Claude.

Thus overruled, she prepared to obey; for the wayward, wilful Florence of other years, was now the yielding being, whose every action could be swayed by the lightest look or word of another. Oh, Love! verily thine is the true talisman of power.

While the splendid equipage stood in waiting, the fiery horses, panting and pawing with impatience to start, and Claude in the door eager for her coming, Florence took her child—then just at the bright, lovely age of three years—into her arms, and kissed again and again his pouting, saucy, little ruby mouth, and rosy cheeks, and twined her fingers in his dark curls, and drank the love-glances from his large, soft black eyes, and pressed him again and again to her heart, as if she could never separate from him; and when at last she resigned him to Lolah (who looked so sad that her kind mistress, forgetting her own feelings, spoke a few cheering words to her), and followed her husband into the carriage, she looked back as far as she could see him, and waved her handkerchief; while his glad, silver tones, as he clapped his hands, and shouted in his soft Italian tongue, "*mia madre! mia madre!*" sunk into her inmost soul.

One of those sudden and fearful storms peculiar to southern climes, detained them at Rosamonta, on the day appointed for their return; and as she gazed out on the dark tempest, and listened to the wild hurricane, whose awful music fell like a dirge of death on her ear, Florence could scarcely rally her spirits, to join in the gayety of the party assembled within the walls of the villa.

Darker would have been her soul, more lonely her spirit, had she known whose young, tender years, nursed in luxury and tenderness, were exposed to the fury of that storm.

The next morning, the sun smiled with as fair a beam as e'er it up an Italian landscape into the glow of an almost divine loveliness, and Claude and Florence returned to Rome. Never had she felt such an intense longing---such a feverish

yearning for the sight of her child. She could scarce repress her impatience until the carriage stopped before the entrance to the villa. Then alighting, she dashed up the broad marble steps, through the massive portal, and up the light staircase into little Claude's nursery.

As she threw open the door and glanced eagerly around, she found the room was empty. The morning sunlight streamed through the large window into the deserted apartment, lighting up the marble floor, the frescoed walls, the little snow-white couch, with its lace curtains, and the beautiful pictures with which she had delighted to cultivate the taste, and charm the eyes of her child, with mocking gladness. She rushed to the balcony overlooking the beautiful gardens, and groves of orange trees surrounding the villa, in the hope of hearing his glad voice, as he wandered through the flowers with Lolah; but no Claude, no Lolah was there. A vague, but terrible fear shot through her soul with lightning rapidity. She flew to her husband.

“Oh! Claude, my child! I cannot find him!”

Laughing at what he termed her foolish fears, he summoned the servants. They came, pale and trembling; and then the terrible tale was revealed. They had been tempted to take advantage of the absence of their master, to attend a merry-making at some distance from the villa; when they returned, Lolah and her charge had disappeared. The storm had prevented their at once sending to inform “his excellenza” of the alarming occurrence. Now it might be too late.

Too late! Oh! the horror of those words, to those whose dearest hopes in life hang on the utterance of them. In vain Claude raved. In vain Florence called on heaven to give her back her darling, until nature sunk exhausted and overpowered beneath the agony. Though every effort was used by the police; though the country was scoured, and gold squandered like water, to obtain some intelligence of the lost child; no trace of Lolah or her charge was ever discovered. With all the intensity of her nature, the distracted Florence mourned the loss of her child. She refused all efforts at consolation, until strength and reason threatened to give way beneath the pressure of her sufferings.

When Claude, forgetting his own sorrow, attempted to console her, her only reply was, "I cannot be reconciled. There is no comfort for me. Oh, God! to lie through the sleepless night, and think of my child, exposed to the pitiless storms, unsheltered, weary, perhaps starving. Oh! Claude, how can I ever smile again? *I*, the wretched mother whom heaven has thus accursed. To know he was dead, would be a blessed boon; but even this is denied me."

This boon was not denied her long. Some three or four months after the fatal event, a letter was one night left at the villa, by a man hooded and disguised, who disappeared immediately after delivering it. It bore no postmark, but was in the well-known and imperfect chirography of Lolah, and filled with penitence, and prayers for forgiveness.

Without explaining the cause for her departure, she bewailed the terrible destiny which had surrounded her, by circumstances, compelling her to commit the fearful act which had desolated the heart and home of those she still remembered, and loved as her benefactors. She disclaimed any evil intention in carrying off the child; stating, on the contrary, that she had known for some time previous to her flight, that she would be compelled to leave them; but such was her overpowering affection for her foster child, she could not bear the idea of parting from him. To use her own expression, "it seemed like tearing soul and body apart, to leave her own little nursling," and tempted by the opportunity offered by the absence of his parents, she had fled with the baby boy pressed closely to her breast.

She went on to say that she had intended to rear him as her own; to devote her life to him, as some expiation for her own selfish feelings, in tearing him from his parents; but that he had never recovered from the effects of the pitiless storm, to which he was exposed on the second day of their flight. In the picturesque language of her race, she continued:

"Your child sleeps in an early grave, lady. A fearful oath forbids me to tell where is his last resting-place, as in so doing I would reveal one of the secrets of my tribe; but fear nothing. That little grave is in one of the most beautiful spots of this wide, beautiful earth; the forest breeze murmurs softly over it; the warm sunlight rests lovingly upon

it; moon and starlight look down kindly on it; wild, fresh flowers spring ever around it, and nature's voice, in bird and stream, warbles for ever there the requiem of beauty and innocence. There, too, Lolah weeps her never-ceasing tears of penitence and love."

Though she was destined never to know where in the wide world was the grave of her lost boy, such was the sense of relief to Florence to find that he was dead—to feel that he would never have to struggle with want and desolation in a hard world; to think of his spirit as of a bright angel in heaven; that she, who had made "deal gently with the erring" the ruling motto of her life, could not find it in her heart to refuse poor Lolah forgiveness.

But the cloud never passed away from her soul. True, she was now comparatively content, but her former sparkling gladness returned to her no more. A gentle, subdued melancholy weighed always over her; and when, sometimes—in grateful return for the efforts of her husband to win her back to happiness—she smiled, the smile was sad as moonlight on a grave. All the love of her tried soul centred on Claude.

It is in sorrow alone that the heart is capable of its truest, most intense love. We never know the depths of our own feelings, until they are tried by the ordeal of suffering. In hours of happiness, a thousand gay objects may woo our thoughts from the one; but in sorrow, where does the heart turn for hope, joy—yea, life itself?

And Claude repaid her by the tenderest sympathy, the most devoted affection. He, too, was changed. True, he had not altogether lost the sparkling flow of spirits which once made his presence as sunshine to those around him; for when did any blow darken man's life for ever, which touched only his affections?—but still he was subdued. The loss, and the fearful circumstances attending it, of his last, best beloved child—the child of Florence, the only woman he had ever really loved—came upon him like a fearful stroke of retribution for the past; and if it did not bring him to repentance, it at least saddened and sobered his feelings, and rendered him, in many respects, a wiser and a better man.

Strange to say, this fearful affliction did not bring Flor-

ence to the only shrine where she could reasonably hope to find mercy, peace, and consoling love. Alas! what retributive act of a dread Providence yet awaited her?

CHAPTER LXII.

THE SHADOW OF MIDNIGHT.

“It is a fearful thing
To love as I love thee; to find this world,
This bright, this beautiful, this joy-giving world,
A blank without thee.
I have no hope that does not dream for thee;
I have no joy that is not shared by thee;
I have no fear that does not dread for thee.”

L. E. L.

PALACE, temple, and ruin of the Eternal City, were bathed in the ethereal radiance of an Italian sunset. The sky wore the brilliant mosaic hues peculiar to the heaven of a clime, to whose varied loveliness no pencil of human poet or painter can do justice; for it is the master-piece of the great Poet and Painter of Nature. But there was one whose passionate admiration for the beautiful would have been kindled into the most rapturous emotions, in the ordinary state of her feelings, who now, though she stood at the window, her gaze directed towards the mass of glittering cloud, heeded not its beauty.

Pale and motionless she stood, her hands clasped, her form slightly bent forward, the raven curls pushed back from one small, fairylike ear, as if she feared their thick tresses might impede her hearing; her wan paleness rendered more conspicuous by the contrast, not only with her jetty curls, but with the sombre mourning robe, which, without ornament or relief, was gathered close around her throat, and swept the floor in voluminous folds. There was in her face that expression which tells of vain watching for some *yearned-for* object.

The soft south wind fanned her cheek, and played with mocking lightness amid her curls. She heeded it not, still standing there, silent, cold, and moveless, with clasped

hands, and the same fixed gaze, moment after moment, until an hour—a long, weary hour—glided away. The casement at which Florence stood commanded a view of the whole of Rome; on the other side, the window looked out on as fair a scene as ever slept in soft, serene loveliness, 'neath an Italian sunset. One glance around the lofty and spacious apartment, would have assured the beholder of the ample resources and exquisite taste of its occupants. The light draperies of rose-colored silk, gracefully fringed with silver, were looped up to admit the scented breeze of evening, and afford a glimpse of the heaven-tinted sky and fair scene without. Flowers bloomed in their sculptured vases of alabaster, in rich and rare profusion; pictures by the old masters, so rare, so beautiful, that one might gaze, and dream, and die, ere the spirit drank in the full measure of their soul-filled power, adorned the walls; the silent beauty of the sculptured marble too was there; and magnificent mirrors reflected the splendor of the whole. The harp was pushed aside, and music lay scattered around, as if it had been abandoned in disgust or weariness.

At last Florence turned from the window, with a mingled expression of deep disappointment and fevered anxiety, and paced wildly to and fro the room with impatient steps, murmuring, as she did so:

“Yes! I feel it! something must have happened to Claude; he would not stay away from me thus otherwise. It is time, too, for the messengers I despatched to Rosamonta—that fatal place—to return.”

There was indeed some reason for her fears. Claude had two days before accepted the oft-renewed invitation of his friend, the marquis, to spend a day with him at Rosamonta. It was the first time he had ever been prevailed on to go there, since the fatal visit of two years previous. A thousand torturing feelings and remembrances were awakened in the mind of Florence, at the very mention of it; but she determined not to sadden her husband, or deprive him of a pleasure he had promised himself, by communicating her feelings to him.

There was a public road, travelled twice a week in the direction, as also a carriage road, a shorter route, leading through a mountain pass, celebrated for its picturesque

beauty, and boasting some of the loveliest scenery of Italy. This road was seldom travelled, on account of the rumor of the mountain being a resort for robbers; and, indeed, there seemed ground for such reports, for even the public road, at the time we speak of, was seldom travelled without an armed guard, from the fact of several daring robberies which had been recently there committed in open defiance of the authorities.

The humor seized Claude to go on a day when the public conveyance was not passing; and laughing at the fears of Florence, he took the less frequented road, in a light, open carriage, which he drove himself, attended by only one servant.

"I prefer this road vastly," he said in reply to her remonstrances, "on account of the scenery; and then it is shorter, too; and as to the robbers, that is a tale of the romance writers. So good-bye, love, and take care of yourself, until Claude comes back."

"Oh! Claude, remember your last visit to Rosamonta was fatal," trembled on her lips, but she forcibly checked its utterance; yet she looked sad with a deep, though undefined presentiment; so sad, that he kissed her again and again, with more than usual tenderness, and sprang hurriedly, as if to chase dark thoughts, into the carriage.

He looked back at her, as she stood on the portico, gazing after him, and kissed his hand.

"I shall be back this evening, I think; if not, to-morrow morning, dead or alive, darling," he said gayly. The horses dashed on, and she saw him no longer.

Why did she turn away with that heavy, chill dread, sinking into her heart? Could it be that she had felt his last kiss—heard the last tones of his voice? Pshaw! such fears were foolish, springing only from nervous weakness. Thus she tried to dispel them. She took her harp, but sung in vain her favorite songs. He was not there to hear them, and the music sounded like mockery. She had recourse to her birds and flowers, but these, too, failed to amuse.

The weary day at last faded into night, but he came not. She endeavored to repel the alarm she felt, by recalling his last words. "He will come in the morning," she thought. But when morning came, and went, and brought no Claude, wild with terror, she despatched three servant men well

armed, in the direction of Rosamonta. They had not yet returned, though she had conjured them, on their lives, to make all possible speed.

The gorgeous hues of sunset faded into twilight, and still the watcher lingered, every nerve strained to its utmost tension, to catch the first sound, see the first approaching object. She stepped out on the portico, where the shadows were gathering softly, and the evening breeze seemed to her saddened ear, to murmur a mournful requiem through the funereal branches of a cypress near.

Many a soft, bright night in that glorious clime, had she stood in this graceful portico, with its picturesquely wrought colonnades, and spiral pillars of white marble, gleaming in the moonlight amid the vines which encircled them, watching for the return of Claude, after perchance an hour's absence.

There, surrounded by a perfect wealth of flowers, whose distilled balm filled the air with fragrance, she had often stood with *him*, gazing down on the Eternal City—on palace, tower and dome, radiant with the magic spell of moonlight—with that intense rapture we feel when some romantic vision of our early years is realized, and the heart is filled to overflowing with the rapturous sense of beauty. Now, how far different from the glow of those happy hours, were the sombre thoughts which maddened her soul.

Suddenly a troop of vultures, those ill-omened birds, wheeled in the air above her, and flew in the direction of the mountain pass towards which her strained gaze was directed. She was not superstitious, yet trifles affected her feelings in their present state, filled, as her mind was, with vague and terrible forebodings.

Far off in the northwest, in the direction of her native land, seemed to hang a dark cloud; small at first, but increasing gradually in size, until it assumed a portentous aspect. It was perhaps a phantom of the imagination, but it seemed to the fevered vision of the gazer that the faces of Marion and Cecy—the divorced wife and the dead child—looked out from that cloud, coldly, sadly, reproachfully upon her. An icy chill ran from her head to her feet.

Dusk had fallen, veiling all things in obscurity, when she discerned through the gathering gloom a dark mass ap-

proaching. As it neared the house, so that she could discover its proportions, she saw that it was a litter borne by several men.

Her heart, buoyed up during the last few hours by some faint hope, sunk within her; she would have fainted, but summoning all the mighty energies of her soul to her aid, she resolved to know the worst. She saw them enter; she discerned the outlines of a form beneath the dark cloth which covered the litter; she heard wild, torturing words uttered around her; but still she restrained herself; until their burden set down in the hall, by the faint glare of a lamp, they threw aside the cloth;—the horrible certainty was revealed, and with a shriek which rung like the knell of a doomed soul through the awestricken bystanders, she threw herself on the cold form of the murdered Claude. He must have fought bravely, and well, against the fiends who beset him. His clothes were soaked in the blood which had scarcely ceased welling from his side; his left arm was shockingly mangled, and in his right hand he clasped a blood-crust dagger, fast in the stiff, cold clinch of death. His raven curls were clotted in gore from a wound in his right temple.

There he lay, her wildly worshipped idol—stricken down in blood and dust before her. Never more could those eyes open upon her, warming her desolate soul with the loving gaze of old; cold and moveless, the lashes slept on the marble cheek; never more her lips feel the clinging kiss of those whose last quiver in death had syllabled her name; vainly now she pressed her wildly throbbing heart against his, whose beating pulses in life had told no numbers that did not echo in thrilling response to her own. No warm thrill of love responded to the fiery agony of her soul. All was cold, and dark, and vacant; a coldness that defied all warmth,—all life;—a darkness that covered the world with its funeral pall, and made of hope and joy an unholy mockery. God of mercy! could she realize it? It was too dark a curse for one alone to bear! Shriek after shriek—so wildly agonizing the listeners shrank in terror, and looked at each other in mute, powerless pity—burst from her lips, as raising her head from that clay-cold bosom, she once more gazed on the mangled corpse.

“Oh God! why take him from me? He was all I had on

earth. Claude—*my* Claude, do not leave me. *Dead!* no, not *dead!* You *cannot be dead.* Awake!—look once more upon me. Listen to Florence; 'tis your own, your desolate Florence that calls you, Claude. Father in heaven! let me die too. If Thou hast any mercy Thou canst not refuse my prayer; the prayer of the most sorely stricken being that ever breathed in this dark—dark world. Oh! it is so *dark.*”

It was only by force that she could be removed from the body, while it was taken to another room to be shrouded. She had not once asked the particulars of the dread catastrophe. Of what avail was it to know the circumstances? it was sufficient that he was dead. Heart and soul were absorbed in the fearful consciousness. Had she inquired, she could have discovered little. All that her three messengers could tell was, that they found the murdered form of “his Excellenza” alone in the mountain pass. His carriage was there too, but the horses and servant had disappeared, where, they knew not, unless they had been carried off as trophies by the robbers. There were traces around of a severe struggle. Beyond this they knew nothing.

Wild incoherent words,—words which breathed of the erring past, and deprecated the fearful judgment of an offended God,—fell from the lips of the wretched Florence. Her startled attendants shrunk from her in terror, for they thought her reason wandered.

Once more in the room, where was laid the form of her husband, divested of its stained habiliments, and arrayed in the snowy vesture of the grave, in which he was so soon to be hidden for ever from the eyes of earth; she turned upon them, and commanded them to leave her. Silently they obeyed, and she was alone with the dead;—alone with the still, cold form, through whose veins two short days—nay, perchance a few short hours since—the life-blood had flowed freely and proudly. And now, what was she?—what was life? All gone on whom she had any claim of protection or love. She felt as if the record of every heart which has bled, and suffered, and died through the countless ages of this doomed earth, could afford no parallel to hers.

She could not pray; a mocking fiend seemed to rise through the darkness around her, and *jeer*, and *scoff*, and say, “*No hope, no mercy,—yea, no God for thee!*”

Utterly exhausted, she sank on the floor; and there, extended in prostrate abandonment,—the dark hue of her dress brought out in strong relief against the rich hues of the Persian carpet; her glorious hair—that crown of a beautiful woman—floating in neglected masses around her, amid all the appliances of luxury and comfort; heedless of all, dead to all thought, save of *the one*—lay the form of the once beautiful and idolized "*la belle Fulton*." In the wan moonlight, which was the only light in the room, that dark mass looked cold and lifeless as the corpse beside it.

Where were now the beaming glances which won all hearts; where now the smiles which once diffused happiness around her; where those very flatterers, who once bent as slaves at her feet? Cold, absent, forgetful,—or worse—breathing her name with a sneer on her former errors, and blasted reputation.

But what was this—what was all the splendor, all the glory of the past to her? She had sacrificed all beside on earth, for him, and he was gone—yea, gone! The die upon which she had staked her whole existence had lost,—what remained now? A shipwrecked mariner on life's stormy sea, with the dark frown of an angry heaven above her, where could she turn for refuge?

Long she remained in the same position, no one venturing to intrude on her solitude; all feeling an awe of that chamber of the dead man, and the maniac,—for such, after the wild words she uttered, they believed Florence. The wild glare of excitement had fled from lip, cheek, and brow; leaving but the fixed gaze of a speechless sorrow. There was no repose in that breathless stillness, unless it was the momentary repose which the mind seizes, to prepare for some great, final effort. Suddenly she moved. Her features grew more rigid, her brow contracted; and the lip, pale and cold as marble, was compressed as with sudden resolution. A momentary and crimson glow swept over her face, leaving it white, wan, and deathlike as before. Rising with an effort, she took a key—suspended by a slender black cord around her neck—from her bosom, and approaching a small escritoire, opened it. It was filled with a miscellaneous variety of articles. Opening by a spring a secret drawer, her own miniature was disclosed to view, and some

faded flowers wrapped with a scrap of white paper, on which was traced in her husband's handwriting, "the first flowers given me by Florence." In another paper she found a long jetty curl of her own hair, twined with one of the shining ringlets of their lost child. As her eyes fell on these mementoes of the past, her whole frame shook convulsively: and for the first time since her bereavement, large tears gathered beneath the long, thick lashes, until they were damp with moisture. Pressing them back with a forcible effort, and mastering the emotion which once more threatened to overwhelm her, she walked deliberately to the corpse, turned down the snowy sheet, and laid the emblems of former happiness, one by one, on the ice-cold bosom; then replacing the sheet reverently, without a sigh or groan she gazed long and mournfully on those proudly and perfectly chiselled features, pale, calm, cold as sculptured marble, over which reigned the unearthly beauty which death alone can give.

Turning silently away at last, she seated herself before the escritoire, took out pen, ink and paper, and wrote.

"I am resolved. My brain has been wild, but it is calm now,—calm and deliberate. There is nothing left in life for me—no country, no home, no friends; my child lost, my husband, my all of earth gone. Death has no terrors; for there cannot be a world more horrible than this, and there is no other deliverance. I die,—I go to Claude. May God forgive the deed, or, at least, permit my condemned soul to wander through eternity with his. My only prayer is to share his doom, though it be the horrors of eternal misery. For my child, if by some strange fatality—which mocks and haunts my soul in this last death-hour—he be yet alive, I can only wish a lot more blessed than that of those who gave him birth. O God! protect him, he is innocent; visit not the sins of others on his defenceless head. Ah! I falter at the thought of my child; my brain reels! methinks I see his cherub face,—hear his beloved voice, calling me by the blessed name of mother! Pshaw! why this mocking phantasy? My child is dead. The struggle is over. Farewell earth,—farewell all things. Bury me with Claude."

She left the sheet open, but directed to no one, on the table; then opening a third drawer of the escritoire, took from thence a dagger, turned, stood by the body of her

husband, drew the blade from the jewelled sheath, and paused. Then and there, with the deadly weapon in her hand—whose shining blade flashed in the moonbeams—she paused. At this moment the clock of St. Peter's chimed, or rather tolled, slowly, and solemnly, the hour of midnight. It was midnight in the Eternal City; midnight in that lone, fearful chamber of death; but the deepest, darkest, midnight of all, was in the soul of the doomed woman. A throng of emotions swept over her—her features worked convulsively. Perhaps in that fleeting moment her whole past life—its false pleasures, its passionate errors, its world of thought and feeling—cherished for what—but to come to *this* at last—swept with panoramic distinctness before her; yet she faltered not in her purpose. "Claude, *Claude!* I come to thee—beloved, receive my soul!" and with this last prayer offered on the shrine of her earthly idol, instead of that of the dread Judge into whose presence she was about thus madly to rush, she buried the dagger to the hilt in her bosom. A torrent of warm blood gushed forth, accompanied by a shriek so unearthly, that those who heard never forgot; and with this shriek Florence fell prostrate, dead, twining her arms, as they stiffened in death, around the form of Claude. Verily Retribution cometh, though it be at the eleventh hour.

CONCLUSION.

"It is pleasant to think, that though there be many wretched, there are some happy in the world."

A YEAR has passed away since the cold grave-clods first hid from earth the forms of Claude St. Julian, and his erring and unfortunate bride; seven years have flown since last we met any of the other characters of our story. To the inhabitants of Vernon, those years have been one long, sunny dream of happiness; and the progress of time can be marked only by the budding roses of each returning spring; and by the growth and opening bloom of the living roses, which grow in gladness within the walls of the old mansion.

To Lilian, the young spring-time of her heart has returned, mingling with the graces and virtues of matured womanhood. She is fresh, gay, and birdlike, as in her first glad years; childlike in her loveliness and innocence, but yet wearing, when she chooses, the crown of matronly dignity with graceful ease. As for Harry, he has sowed his wild oats, and promises to settle down into that most admirable character—a country gentleman, with hand and heart open as the day to the calls of charity and hospitality; fond of field sports, and expending his superabundant vital energy, and high spirits, upon the exhilarating and healthful pursuits of country life, in preference to the baleful excitements of dissipation. Lilian is just the sort of wife for such a man; she gratifies his favorite tastes by the most enthusiastic admiration of his hounds and hunters; and though even her best drawing-room is not exempt from the incursions of his canine favorites—the greatest of horrors to most women—she takes it all in the most amiable way in the world; they are “Harry’s,” and that is quite sufficient to render them lovable in her eyes. The sound of his hunting-horn resounding amid the hills, is to her ear the most eloquent of music.

Three buds of promise have been added to the household. Harry,—our darling little Harry—has grown into a fine, noble-looking boy, who looks on himself in the character of a man, and a protector for his two little sisters.—Ella, the fair, gentle, gold-haired Ella, the wild, lovely, little sprite Lilian,—and the bright, crowing babe in the mother’s arms, who rejoices under the aristocratic appellation of Stanley Vernon.

A short time after the reunion of Harry and Lilian, the latter was informed one day that a gentleman wished to see her, who would not send in his name. Her heart bounded with a half-joyful, half-painful throb, as she received the message. Her presentiment proved to be true. A moment afterwards she was clasped in her father’s arms; the erring child was forgiven, even ere he learned how wrongly he had accused her,—how bitterly and how fully the seeming error had been atoned for.

On leaving Vernon a miserable, stricken-hearted man, Mr. Stanley had roved he cared little whither. Accident,

combined, perhaps, with some memories of earlier days, led him to the far distant home of an old, widowed, and childless relative, whom he found with barely the necessaries of life—though at one time a man of affluence. Gratitude for benefits received in early life, prompted Mr. Stanley to devote himself to one who had claims, both of blood and affection, upon him. With his talents for business, it was not difficult for him to procure employment in one of the new cities of the West, near which the humble home of his uncle was situated, and he devoted his earnings to the support of the latter, equally with himself.

Of Lilian he occasionally heard, through a confidential correspondent. He was convinced, as far as worldly comforts were concerned, she was amply supplied; and he resolved—much as his heart yearned towards her—to show no manifestations of fatherly affection towards one who seemed determined to persist in error. There was something mysterious in the conduct of his relative; he was often closeted alone for hours, and never explained the cause of this strange proceeding.

People whispered that he was a miser. The generous and high-hearted Stanley refused to listen to such reports. Was he not always complaining of the pressure of the times upon poor people? and did he not submit to being a dependent on the labor of another?—this, in itself, was enough to refute them.

His astonishment was therefore great, when, upon his uncle's death, three years afterwards, the will was read by his confidential lawyer, which placed him (Mr. Stanley) in possession of a comfortable fortune, consisting of funds in the — bank, territorial lands, besides some odd thousands stuck about in holes and corners of the old tumble-down house; all of which his nephew had never dreamed he possessed.

The truth was out; he was indeed a miser, preferring to live on the hard earnings of another to spending one farthing of his precious gold. Well, in death, at least, he did him justice, who, he averred, was the only person who had ever showed him disinterested kindness; but whom the world pronounced, "a 'cute fellow, who knew how to play his cards, and understood exactly what he was doing all the time."

After the loss of his only relative in that stranger land, —in the possession of an income which placed him above the necessity of any fixed employment, that “medicine of a diseased mind;” the heart of Mr. Stanley yearned more than ever after his discarded daughter. About this time he received intelligence of her illness, and the separation between herself and Harry. Visions of Lilian, lonely, forsaken, and destitute, rose up before him. As soon as he could arrange his affairs so as to admit of his doing so, he flew to her succor, and found her under far different circumstances.

Since that period he has continued to reside with them, sleeping, and having his study at the cottage; which, with the exception of the two rooms occupied by him, remains exactly as it was in former days. Yes, there it stands, sweet, quiet, Rose Cottage, a temple of the past; and many an hour is spent there by its lovely mistress in meditation, prayer, and communion with the spirit voices of other and fondly remembered, though less happy years.

When the soul becomes too much absorbed in its own happiness; when it is tempted to forget amid the pleasures which surround it here, the higher goal to which its onward pathway tends; 'tis then that we should recall if possible, amid the associations of the past, the sorrows of darker years, and strive to realize how vain and fleeting are all earthly things, and how important it is to lay up treasure whose existence shall be eternal, and whose joy “fadeth not away.”

It was for such a purpose as this that Lilian made Rose Cottage the oratory of her devotions. Gov. Vernon spends all the time which his public duties allow with his son and daughter-in-law; and Ella and her two lovely children, are often there during the absence of her husband, now Capt. Minton. We linger fondly amid the pleasant scenes of thy happy home, sweet Lilian. We are loth to part with thee; yet could we leave thee under fairer auspices? Happy in the discharge of the sacred duties of wife and mother, in the idolizing love of thy husband, in the reverential affection of thy children; with the peace of God which passeth all seeming, “shedding its pure, holy, and gentle influence in

light and joy, around thy daily path, what more could we ask for thee?

We turn with feelings of pleasure to another home, that of Judge Woodward and Eva. It would amuse the reader to see the graceful and matronly dignity, with which the gentle Eva presides over the household of her lord. With reverential tenderness she looks up to him—

“He for God only, she for God in him.”

Mrs. Moreton laughingly asked her one day in playful malice, if she didn't think her grave and distinguished husband looked a little old. “Old!” echoed Eva, her eyes beaming with feeling,—“old! when I look in his face I see only the soul beaming through it. To me, with *that soul*, he will always be young and beautiful.”

Mrs. Moreton smiled at her enthusiasm; she should rather have sighed for the priceless gift which was denied her own false worldly heart.

Nor did the judge look old, as, in his hours of relaxation from his graver duties, he played with his wife and children; his heart filled to overflowing with the domestic happiness which for long years had been denied him.

Released from the incubus which rested upon her every plan of display or enjoyment, by the death, some four years back, of her mother-in-law, Mrs. Fitz Friske is now the leading star in the world of fashion, taking precedence of even Mrs. De Vere Moreton. Old Mrs. O'Friske's predictions have not as yet been realized, for there is no heir to the honors of the Fitz Friske house. Poor Gussy! she is trying to forget, amid the splendor and frivolity of her present life, that she once possessed a heart. As for the Moretons, they are pursuing the same routine of life as when last we met them; but they seem to be losing caste in some degree, and no longer enjoy that monopoly in matters of taste and fashion they once possessed.

People say their fortune is gone; that they are living on borrowed capital, and can't keep up much longer; but people will talk, right or wrong; besides, the latter clause is certainly not true, for there are certain people who will—to use a vulgar expression—“dash,” though they may have the last dollar in their pocket, and know not where the next is

the night shadow be removed, save when the storm-cloud of Sin is dispersed by the first glorious beams of the Resurrection morning.

“What is writ, is writ; would it were worthier.” If this narrative has served to beguile one weary hour—impart emotions of pleasure to one heart, I am repaid for the thought and trouble it has cost me. If perchance to any old friend—who may recognize or guess the writer of this work—it brings back the memory of the past—of hours which fell on our hearts like fresh rose leaves scattered by a south breeze on the grateful turf, 'tis all I ask. I am weary, reader, and so perchance are you; but ere we part, let us each give a “God bless you,” and a prayer that we may meet again, in peace and happiness.

THE END.

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