

**MAIDEE, THE ALCHEMIST;**

**OR,**

**TURNING ALL TO GOLD**

**BY**

**SUSAN CANNON.**



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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
MY OWN NOBLE AND PRECIOUS MOTHER,  
THESE PAGES ARE MOST AFFECTIONATELY  
*Dedicated.*



# MAIDEE, THE ALCHEMIST.



## CHAPTER I.

“WHY is it that Mors, pale, wan, like a dim spectre rises before me? In the hour of pleasure, when the heart is thrilling with happiness, she is there, like a dark incubus, casting light and gladness from her pathway—covering each footprint with thorns. Is it a bodement of coming gloom? or is it alone that a shadow has fallen upon my heart? that the chrism of a mother’s love was withdrawn when poor, yearning nature refused to yield its treasure? O spirit of my mother! if indeed thou art permitted to hover over thy child, thou knowest how deeply I have mourned for thee, how many tears are daily shed for thee, how, when my poor heart is crushed and bleeding, I have longed for thy sympathy; for thine alone could have sufficed!

“I have watched the planets, when night had cast its sable mantle over all things, and wondered if it were possible that that were your dwelling-place. Even the little stars, ‘God’s lights’ sparkling from their starry thrones, have been associated with thee. I have listened to the whispering winds, hoping they would bear some message from

thee; and oh! how futile are my efforts to crush out the memory of the past."

A low, convulsive sob, a shuddering of the frame, and the head bowed as if in meek submission to a destiny which seemed inevitable; the aching forehead pressed heavily against the marble mausoleum, reminding Marian still more of the last parting, when the icy lips gave back no response to the orphan's caress.

"Marian, can I not fill to some extent the aching void within your heart?"

Marian started. Strange that voice had never seemed so musical before. She looked up; her stepmother stood before her.

"Marian, my child, will you not cast off the chilling hauteur which has so long existed between us; and let me be to you that which my feelings prompt—a kind stepmother?"

She entwined her arms gently around the young girl. Perceiving no resistance, she continued,

"I do not ask for the unfathomable love that was your own mother's; that I know to be impossible. I do not ask for more respect, for you have never deviated in the slightest degree from the Fifth Commandment. I do not ask for your mourning for the departed to cease. God grant that that may never be; but I do ask, my child, for your confidence; and, if years of kindness can obtain it, your affection. I am a being with like frailties and like feelings with yourself, and not the obdurate, stern creature you imagine; and, my darling, I have learned to love the retiring, shrinking girl, who can not sepulchre the love of other years. Love and cherish your own mother's me-

mory, and if need be, together we will plant rare exotics near her grave, rearing them by tender care, until the tomb shall no longer wear the cold, chilling gloom which it does now to your young heart."

Marian stood aghast. Could this be the one whom busy gossips represented as the usurper? the one from whom every latent emotion must be concealed? in whose presence the dead should never be mentioned? She gazed upon her stepmother; but there, instead of a face of adamant, a look of deep sympathy responded. She traced intellect which, irradiating the whole countenance, gave an animation and power which seemed irresistible, and at the same time such purity of soul breathed from every feature, that Marian Lee bowed in humble admiration before that guileless nature. Strange that the love which for weeks she had rejected as unworthy, should now seem quite a *desideratum*. Tears of deep contrition betrayed the generous emotions which nestled in the innermost recesses of her heart.

"Forgive me! forgive me!" she faltered.

"Forgive you, Marian? Alas! you have no need for forgiveness."

"Oh! yes; I have been so selfish in my grief; but indeed you know not what I have lost. She was my perfect dream of perfect womanhood; it was her delight to listen to the 'dawn of my little joys,' to aid my mind in its varied developments, and she alone was the nurse of all that is spiritual and exalted in my character. When sickness came, how gentle, how kind! 'Twas at her knee I first learned to lisp, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' It was there I first learned to reverence holy truths. You

can not think me culpable when I say that since she left me my heart has known no happiness: all nature seems clad in mourning; and even the little flowers, with their dewy petals, I think at times shed tears of sympathy with me."

Mrs. Lee looked upon this child of genius, this poetical dreamer with perfect admiration; and murmured faintly, "She must love me."

"Marian, believe me, you are not alone in your grief. Where can you find one who has not been called to yield up the loved? How many have scarce a stray sunbeam in their homes to light its desolation: where of all that they once cherished, naught

" 'remains but a handful  
Of light dust. Thus man comes to his end;  
And our one conquest in the fight of life  
Is the conviction of life's nothingness.' "

"But all have not lost a mother."

"True, but too true, Marian; and indeed this is the great grief of life. Wandering dreamily back upon the past, it is ever *my* mother's face which illuminates the retrospect. Amid the wildest ambitionings of early youth, it was her commendation that sanctified the end when attained. Alas! how few appreciate the sacred devotion of a mother until death has cast its cold signet upon her affection. But we have all a mission in life, the responsibility of which we can not surrender to another.

" ' Within the deep,  
Still chambers of the heart, a spectre dim,  
Whose tones are like the wizard voice of Time,



Heard from the tomb of ages, points its cold  
And solemn finger to the beautiful  
And holy visions that have passed away.' ”

“They can not be obliterated; but should that not alone be an incentive for higher aims and higher wishes? Remember, ‘the dead are only sleeping.’ You have draped the morning of your life in an impenetrable gloom; but would your mother, think you, if she, as many presume, lingers near, be happy, as your guardian spirit, at the thought of your talents buried, your time spent in ceaseless regrets at her tomb? Would not her mandate, on the contrary, be, ‘Go forward, unwavering in your duty, employing the talents usefully, which God has so generously bestowed?’ ”

A faint smile fitted over Marian’s pale face. “Think you so, mamma; think you so? Will I indeed be fulfilling the wishes of my mother, by heeding your admonitions?”

“Undoubtedly, my child.”

“But I can not renounce this sacred spot.”

“That is not necessary. The great heart-agony of my life has been that my mother’s grave is in a dense copse, far from human haunts, and that the sacredness of grief must give itself vent in the presence of others; for I can not visit it alone.”

“Ah! then you too have suffered?”

“Suffered, Marian—suffered! If you call the entire isolation of years, with no human affection I could scarce call my own, until your father’s wealth of love was placed at my feet, suffering, then I have suffered. Genuine friendships are rare. ‘We require individuality in our at-

tachments. The sympathy which is diffused over the many will commonly be found so much attenuated by the process that it can not become affection for any.' ”

Mr. Lee stood there in the gloaming. “ I thank Thee, O our Father ! ” came in incoherent sounds from his lips, unheard by mortal man ; but the winged messenger sped onward and upward, with this utterance from a grateful heart, placing it at the footstool of the Great “ I Am.”

## CHAPTER II.

POPLAR GROVE, bathed in a drapery of Arcadian beauty, had been for ages the home of the Lee family. Built of stone, it had withstood the ravages of time. Ivy covered the antique walls, and the lofty turrets and domes enhanced still more its beauty. Reared strictly in an oriental style, one could have imagined himself in ancient Persepolis or Samarcand, had the light of Islamism lingered near. Tall poplars covered the banks of the river where the old homestead stood, reminding the classical scholar of the physical myth of Phæton; the mournful wail of the Heliades chanting their sad requiem over the ambitious but ill-fated youth, touching afresh a sympathetic chord within the heart of the listener. To augment the delusion, pet swans dipped their silvery wings in the lucid stream, causing a feeling of regret that a friendship like that of Cynus should be buried to the world.

Here the rich foliage of the magnolia vied in splendor with the mock-orange; water-oaks and hedges of every description flourished in the greatest luxuriance.

Planted near an aquarium was an acacia, imported by some member of the Lee family from Polynesia, and carefully nurtured as a relic of foreign reminiscences, bearing upon one of its branches a bottle-shaped nest, the little home of the baya. Near this spot Marian loved to

linger, watching her special pets in their numerous domestic duties, as they made their egress and ingress; and these little strangers, transported from their native clime, had learned to know and love her. Here she would amuse herself for hours dropping small articles; but ere they reached the sparkling water, the baya would bear them up again in its bill, delivering them to the excited creature, whose pleasure at the act could scarce be restrained by necessary silence.

Here, holding high carnival, were insects of every hue; birds from every land, caroling such melodies that man, "foot-sore and weary," charmed for a moment into forgetfulness, listened to the lullaby, enraptured.

There was a touch of pathos in this austere grandeur; each little leaf, each little flower were but emblem of that canopy of love which only for a moment, as it were, shielded and protected—whispering to the orphan's heart of an irreparable loss. But the Lares were there, mingling amid these woodland beauties; beneficent hierophants, unknowingly to the inmates, pleading gently for nature's God.

At the entrance of this vast domain which a munificent hand had embellished, metamorphosing it into an elysium and the poet's dream, stood grim Cerberus, faithfully discharging the onerous duties imposed upon him, driving back the frightful shapes which would have alone tarnished by their touch this fit asylum for the pure and holy.

In a retired nook, where the yew and weeping-willow had cast their mournful shadows, stood a mausoleum,

glistening in the sunlight, which would have rivaled in beauty the last resting-place of Timur.

The grave had been prepared, the corpse lowered, the sad words uttered, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," when with a wild, despairing shriek, which startled nature in its mournfulness, Marian Lee cast herself at her father's feet.

"Spare me! oh! spare me this agony. Give me only a small dwelling for the dead, and I will not murmur! Oh! you can not, you will not permit those cold clods to remain on her dear head! Father, father!" she shrieked, "you are killing your child! Give her back, give her back!"

Mr. Lee pressed the pallid cheek to his own. A wild stare caused the beholder to quake; life and death seemed blended. The work ceased. The corpse, raised from its gloomy cell, was borne back with Marian to the desolate homestead.

Weeks glided by—weeks of terrible suffering and watching to the lone man. One had been taken, and now another seemed ready to cross the threshold of death. How could he murmur, "Thy will be done"? But the proud man, who had scarce known the purity of prayer before, now wept and humbled his stern nature; pleaded that, if it were possible, this cup of bitterness should not be forced upon him. That gush of anguish was answered; and when Marian Lee again walked forth, the home of her mother in its proud beauty met her bewildered gaze. The little key was placed in her hand, and opening its sacred precincts, she feasted upon the placid features of the dead.

Mr. Lee, tremulous and pale, would fain have shielded her from such an ordeal ; but such holy calm, such quiet resignation enveloped that ethereal being, that the sorrow-stricken mourner read in the revelation, that the promise had been kept.

### CHAPTER III.

WHEN God, in his just wrath, blasted for man the innocence of Eden, driving him forth a wanderer, placing "flaming cherubim" at the entrance to the spot which for him had alone breathed beauty, he sank down beneath this weight of woe. The skeletons of evil—frightful spectres that they were—glittering here and there on the cursed earth which he had been commanded to go forth and till, mowing down each blade from which he fain would draw comfort, rose up menacingly before him.

Glancing into futurity, the earth, with its vast sea of tombs—humble graves with scarce a slab to mark the poor man's dwelling; mausoleums and stelas, carved and beautified by man—passed rapidly before his mental vision. Its piteous pageant presented naught to soothe the being created in the similitude of his God. But one faint hope still lingered; a gentle, confiding nature touched fallen man, presaging peace, painting bliss yet in store while commingling their joys and sorrows. Over the harbinger of his grief a veil of oblivion was cast, and he now clasped her to his heart as the harbinger of happiness.

The mantle of our great mother has fallen gently upon her posterity. How often has weary man pleaded that

the thunderbolts of heaven might sink into a total eclipse each darkened vision! But in the midst of the impossibility, we cling mournfully to the memories that have fled, canceling naught, but amalgamating the lights and shades into harmony.

To-night we are opening the propylæum of the past few years at Poplar Grove, unfolding the mysticisms which yet cling around its inmates.

Day was fast mellowing into twilight. Seated in an oriel window, whose uniqueness would have charmed the connoisseur, sat Mr. Lee, busily disintegrating each link in the chain of his married life. No hideous gnomes were near, uttering contumely for neglect of the dead; no sibylline leaves revealing harshness; no asperities with which he could reproach himself were wafted back by the survey; duty, stern, unyielding, was portrayed in every act.

The gentle virtues of his wife had certainly won his esteem and respect; but his heart had been in the keeping of another ere the plighted vows had been spoken. One face had ever lingered, queen of his ideal world, seated upon a pedestal from which he had vainly attempted to dethrone it. But the calm exterior, the vigorous surveillance over each thought and emotion, blinded his daily companion to this latent pang; and she died—blessing him for a tenderness and thoughtfulness to each wish which had rendered her stay on earth so happy—with his name the last on her lips, because the most dear.

Hour after hour he sat there, buried in thought, mingling its hues with the celestial world, motionless, apparently unconscious of every thing around him.



“Maidee, Maidee!” at length he murmured, “why can I not, like the Chaldeans, ‘people the stars,’ and trace in their brilliancy thy fate?”

A sharp ring, a quick step, and Clarence Heywood, the friend of his youth, his bosom companion, was clasped warmly and affectionately to his heart.

“Clarence, my dear friend, you can not divine how opportune your arrival has been. Gloomy feelings had the ascendancy, and, like ‘Banquo’s ghost,’ they appalled; but your coming has exorcised them.”

“Impossible, impossible, Lee, that you admit such visitants in so charming a retreat!”

A *coup d’œil* had revealed to Clarence Heywood—whose penchant for the beautiful amounted to a passion—the exquisite taste of his friend; statuary, by the most finished sculptors; paintings, which bid fair to rival Raphael; shells, *rayonnant* and beautiful beneath the light of the chandelier, revealing the splendors that lurk amid ocean depths, enticing the fancy into the belief that “each wave”

“Had caught a star in its embrace,  
And held it trembling there!”

Birds resting lightly on green boughs, in the act, as it were, of warbling forth notes—ariose strains which would enchain the auditors—their gorgeous plumage and inimitable arrangement persuading man momentarily of their reality.

“Ah!” sighed Clarence Heywood, “I breathe once more in fairy-land.”

“Come, Clarence, away with such delusions—to-night,

at least. Suppress your love of art, and relate the history of the years that have glided by since we met last."

Clarence Heywood, convulsed with laughter, seated himself by the side of his friend.

"Yes; I anticipated a lecture, and, as I have received one, will subside into reality. Now for a *tête-à-tête*."

"Well, in the first place, explain the cause of your celibacy. Surely you do not intend remaining a bachelor always?"

An expression of pain passed over that joyous face.

"To be candid with you, Lee, within the last few months I have, for the first time, appreciated those lines in *Don Juan*:

"'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark  
Our coming, and look brighter when we come;'

I would give my countless wealth to obtain the affection of one being—a nonpareil, according to my views."

"Well, really, this is becoming grave. I had imagined you *blasé*, indifferent to love, and indeed to womankind; but I find that time, which casts a tinge o'er all things, has not touched your enthusiasm."

"Far from it. In me you find the same old monotone. I would willingly submit to the proximity of the serpent, notwithstanding my repugnance to it, if, like Melampus, I could plunge into the depths of futurity, and prognosticate my success."

"Surely, Clarence, she is not invulnerable to your charms?"

"Even so, and with an obduracy which is inexplicable."

"When did you meet?"

“Well, to be more explicit, I will give a full account of this passion; for with me it certainly amounts to that. One day, while reading a newspaper in the city of M——, I met with a perfect gem in literature, a stray waif over which all were enthusiastic, but to which no clue as to the authoress could be obtained. Hastening to the editor of the paper—a personal friend—I urged a revelation of the place of concealment of the one, who had so singularly written in unison with my own feelings. At first, my entreaties were unnoticed; but finding I could not be repulsed, he commanded secrecy, and disclosed the name. In a short time, a happier man, I was searching the dwellings in the suburbs for the favorite. At last, amid the *débris* of what had once been an elegant home, I saw a glimmering light. Knocking upon the door, in a moment all that my fancy had pictured, stood before me—a true woman, with

“ ‘Eyes like the starlight of the soft midnight,  
So darkly beautiful, so deeply bright.’ ”

Ah! beneath the witchery of those eyes even the cynicism of Heraclitus would have vanished, and then he could have propounded his abstruse riddles without fear of not being understood.

“Who can resist the magic power of a cultivated mind? And then, too, a voice of such thrilling loveliness—that Euterpe, even in her palmiest days, could not have excelled it! I tell you, Lee, I have listened for hours enraptured! But, by the by, I am still keeping you at the door. Of course, I represented myself as having lost the way, and apologized for stumbling into the apartment so un-

ceremoniously. An old gentleman then made his appearance, whom I recognized as an acquaintance. Inviting me to enter, the proposal was accepted; and seated, we chatted for hours on various topics. When rising to leave, they politely requested a repetition of a visit which had been mutually agreeable. This, as you may presume, I did, time after time, quite cheerfully."

"Beware, Clarence, lest your devotion lead you, like the Goldi, into fetichism."

"Lee, were it not for that large heart of yours, I would compare you to the icicle, treasuring up your feelings, drop by drop, until the whole is congealed."

"Well, well, I know my caution is lost upon one of your enthusiastic temperament; so class this among my venial faults, and go on. I am impatient to hear more."

"Only upon one plea—of no more interruptions."

Mr. Lee smiled an assent.

"During my intercourse with the old gentleman, formerly an attached friend of her father, I heard her sad story. She had once been very wealthy; but the cruelties of war having deprived her of her ancient patrimony, she now, with a devotion equal to Lamb, was supporting an afflicted brother, who had received a severe fall years before, which proved detrimental to his mind; earning their daily bread, receiving a miserable pittance for her labors; but amid her daily task, no murmur had ever escaped her lips. O Lee! I have never witnessed such nobleness, such purity."

"But the name, Clarence, the name?"

"Oh! that curiosity. As much as man denounces his first mother, I do not believe, if the luscious fruit had been

placed before him, he could have resisted the tempting bait."

"Clarence Heywood!" exclaimed Mr. Lee, in almost a sepulchral voice, "tell me her name."

But the excitement of his friend seemed unnoticed.

"You ask me her name. I can not tell why I should be reticent, and yet I am loth to give it up. It is a name which is as familiar as household words, and has caused many to laughingly trace her lineage back to the one whom Byron has immortalized in verse."

"Maidee Chaworth? Impossible!"

The hands clasped convulsively over the face; a terrible revulsion of feeling shook that strong frame.

"Lee," gasped Clarence Heywood, "what is the matter? Surely you have not been intimately associated with Maidee?"

Soon friendship and hope seemed engulfed in a horrible maelstrom, with no mode of egress; and here, for the present, we leave these two magnanimous natures bowed down beneath a weight of conflicting emotions.

## CHAPTER IV.

**VOTARESS** of pleasure, devotee at the altar of Mammon! did you ever pause amid mouldering ruins, and think of the ancient dwellers there, whose hearts throbbed once as wildly as your own, whose brains teemed with ambition quite as great, whose labyrinthine maze of perplexities, blended with a sheen of surpassing loveliness as fair as the emerald which now stereotypes nature with her unmistakable mark?

Did you ever think that one as beautiful oft listened to the faint whisperings of a love as immutable as your own? That heart-aches have been her inheritance as well as yours? That as many have attempted to storm the citadel of her affections, entreating that its arcanum should be unveiled, as have craved a withdrawal of the bulwarks within which you have so securely intrenched yourself? —magnanimous natures, humiliated, bowing at a shrine of purity, pleading for a love without which poor suffering man must die?

Ah, you constant dreamer! life with its past memories, life with its present realities, life with its future mystic portal yet unopened, beckoning on and still on to happiness yet unrealized, and, sweet dreamer, perhaps never to be; yet still beguiling, enticing into the belief that some wondrous power yet unseen will snatch from parched and

burning lips the misery in store, causing the atmosphere of your life to be alone redolent with flowers and the glamour of sunlight.

Is it the inundation of a love too great for man to fathom, that, overwhelmed beneath the weight of the terrible burden imposed, with no anathema upon His lips—the incarnation of holiness—murmured simply when the immolation was complete, “It is finished”?

Is it the finger of a God before whose majesty and sublimity perishing mortal falls prostrate, in whose limnings we trace naught but care and protection; by whom even the little swallow is not forgotten? Is it, I say, the all-Omnipotent breathing in each work of nature his wisdom and power, that reconciles man to the mutability of earth, that teaches him to exclaim from the depths of his heart, “All will yet be well”?

Lonely to-night is Maidee Chaworth—lonely in her isolation, intrenched amid hope’s “solitary pyre.” The rain patters slowly down, the wind capers wildly, exhibiting its varied antics amid the tremulous leaflets, wafting back on the fitful breeze, “Ichabod, Ichabod!” The soft hands are pressed to the aching temples, to still their maddening throbs: the ebbings of a grief long silent gives itself vent.

“O Henrique!” comes from those pallid lips, “could I have shielded thee from such a death, how gladly would this frail frame have been offered as a sacrifice for thee! To see thee pass from earth without one gleam of reason, without one word of love to alleviate the secret yearnings of an affection which knows no bounds—to know that thou must die, and I be left alone, utterly alone! ’Tis

sweet to work, to labor for thee; and I could bear all and never murmur if thou couldst be spared. Perhaps my love has been too sacred, too deep, and God is calling my idol home!"

Borne back upon a breeze which disturbed the window-curtain but for a moment, as if in mockery, "Ichabod! Ichabod!" came to her soul.

"Yes, yes," sighed the maiden, "the glory is indeed departing; the last scion of a proud and wealthy race is standing upon the brink of eternity, clasping hands even now with the spirit-world."

The clock gave signal of each waning hour, but the pale watcher unheeded its constant warning; the dismal cry of the night-owl, and the lugubrious howl of the guardian of each household filled the air, as if they knew the light would soon be extinguished, and a mortal ushered into the presence of his Maker.

One! Two! Three! Four! The last gasp came, and Henrique Chaworth dwelt with his fathers.

By that departing spirit a fair form was kneeling; the eyes were tearless, but an incense of pure thoughts, of agonizing wishes ascended from those bloodless lips; a prayer that she too might mingle with the denizens of the spirit-land, and not be left alone with no one to cheer the lone hours of labor and toil, looming up in the future. But the picture was too much fraught with expiring hope, and a heavy fall, as if the prayer had been granted, alone broke the stillness.

Did peans of joy resound in the heavenly world over the woes of a frail being? or did ministering seraphs, with the speed of lightning, reach the crushed mourner, flut-



tering near, whispering of joy yet nestling in some secret nook for the apparently lifeless one? A shadow was on the wall. Was it one in whose ear angels had poured the sad story of a mortal with like wishes, insulated, praying for death? or was it one within whose breast emotions of deep feeling, undying and unquenchable, were burning? The manly form sprang eagerly forward, the gelid lips were kissed again and again; but pillowed upon that strong arm, the gurglings of grief flowed swiftly on and on into the turbid stream, mingling at last with translucent waters, and at its confluence incalescing beneath the burning rays of love.

The last rites had been performed for the dead, and Henricque Chaworth placed in his long, narrow home; with naught to disturb but angelic songs, and the effulgence which marked the coming and going as the rapt spirit was borne to the "mansions prepared for the blest," there to be a participant in the immortal joys denied it on earth. But these beatific visions, unseen though they were, diffused a light and joy over two mourners standing near; for within their hearts lingered religion's great prototype—Faith.

The last brief farewell was spoken in low tones, and the visitants turned from the spot which had witnessed heart-pangs and heart-yearnings; but Maidee felt, as they wended their way slowly back, that the chalice of life was not entirely replete with bitterness, as she listened to the words of one so long idolized.

"Maidee," said Mr. Lee, "yours has been no Protean love. Tell me now why our engagement was dissolved?"

"Leslie, this has ever been a sad theme for me. I

feared you would abhor the being who could so readily crush, without one word of explanation, the hope of years; but it was for my brother's sake that the sacrifice of an affection as deep and abiding as your own, was made. I feared the poor invalid, in my transcendent love for you, might be neglected."

"Maidee, God has accepted the sacrifice, and I can also blot out the memory of the pang inflicted. Your exoneration is complete."

"I knew your magnanimous nature would forgive, but believe me, the oblation proved a Sisyphean task. Love had entwined its delicate tendrils so completely around me, that in the separation I felt truly, I had forever renounced happiness; but Henrique's extreme helplessness proved an antidote to further regrets, and I devoted myself exclusively to his comfort."

"Maidee, Clarence Heywood told me of your trials, of your mother's death during your travels, and of your brother's affliction which immediately ensued; and then, my darling, knowing your self-abnegating disposition, I appreciated, for the first time, what you had suffered."

The little hand was grasped still more warmly, and the speaking eye betraying deep affection, evinced but too plainly that two hearts, which had long been estranged, had at last found a proper nucleus.

"What of Clarence Heywood, Leslie—the pure, the noble friend?"

"Ah Maidee! you have spoken but too truly. How rare, amid the filth and rubbish of this world, to find such disinterested friendship as he bestows. There is a 'mysterious cement' which has ever bound us together; a sa-

cred link—a chain which has remained unbroken for years. When I told him of our love, without hesitancy, he nobly renounced all attempts, for the future, to gain your affection, promoting all my efforts for a reunion—promising that my daughter should be well cared for, during my absence.”

Smiles, like glad sunbeams spread themselves over her hitherto saddened features.

“Then you have a daughter, Leslie? How much I shall love her.”

“She is a noble child, but rather mature for her years; indeed, she seems to have emulated Hypatia’s example. With a mind teeming with brilliant thoughts, I have feared, at times, her fiery imagination would prove an ignis fatuus, in whose mephitic atmosphere she might be wrecked. But under your guidance, Maidee, with you as cicerone in her daily walks, I shall fear no more.”

The trembling “Thank you!” betrayed how much the compliment was appreciated.

How sweet to lean upon this palladium of pure manhood; to feel his arms encircling her, with the words uttered in the softest cadence, “All my own, precious Maidee; entirely my own!” still lingering in her ear. To hear the happy allusions made to “*our* home”—she, the isolated, forsaken one, a few days before, now enveloped in an aureola of happiness; nimbus rays flitting near the once care-worn face, brightening and purifying the furrowed marks, rendering her radiantly beautiful.

## CHAPTER V.

WITHIN nature's fairy archive, upon a rustic bench—the latter a freak of nature—reclined Marian, book in hand, clasped by the daintiest of fingers, relishing keenly the witchery of each sylvan shade, and the delicious fresco of the morning clouds, watching the pearly drops of dew as they coquettishly kissed each tiny flower, then sank gently into the earth, which opened her parched and burning receptacles, burying them forever from view.

The pet canary, the little anchoritess in nature's eyrie, released for a short time from its caged home, chanted its morning orisons in spontaneous outbursts, as if, in the introductory song, it would give thanks to the great Giver of all good for even temporary freedom; and, Cleopatra like, conscious of its bewildering beauty and of the magnetic charm of its little lays, it wished to assert its queen-ship over the warblers of the forest.

Peeping into the castellated arcanum of womanhood, Marian beholds alone in the arena, the glittering gold, without being cognizant of the quicksands beneath by which many a thread of happiness has been severed. Smiling sweetly at the words, "My child," which fall from loving lips—a type, they think, of the present, but which she is conscious, is only symbolical of the past. Yet how gladly we note the changes which months of contentment

have produced; each delicately-chiseled feature, indelible pencilings of the great beauty which is the common inheritance of southern climes.

Yes, notwithstanding the indolence which is the usual concomitant of an atmosphere so enervating, beauty unparalleled, intellect the brightest and most genial, is of indigenous growth; and how justly, years ago, were Southern sons and Southern daughters pronounced the "true *noblesse*" by one of the liberal *literati* of Northern soils.

With lofty aspirations, purity of souls corresponding with the precious caskets, is it strange that from "a tablet of unutterable thoughts" a few gems should be culled and raised by trembling hands to the Supreme Being who has fashioned them, invoking with the descending benediction, an amulet whose intrinsic worth shall preserve them from the Macchiavellian policy which threatens to entomb the manhood of the South, by forcing upon her sons and daughters an equality with a menial race, who are scarce worthy of the primordial thralldom from which they have been emancipated?

Marian opened her book, and commenced reading.

"Strange," she exclaimed aloud, "that the book should have opened at this passage."

"The past but lives in words: a thousand ages  
Were blank, if books had not evoked their ghosts,  
And kept the pale, unbodied shades to warn us  
From fleshless lips?"

repeated Mrs. Lee as she advanced to Marian. "And what is it, that my little truant's sapient voice pronounced so strange?"

"Remarks on genius, mamma, in Carlyle's *Schiller*, which brought you so visibly before me, for I think you follow its precepts in all things."

"Ah! read it, Marian."

"Genius, even in its faintest scintillations, is the "inspired gift of God," a solemn mandate to its owner to go forth and labor in his sphere, to keep alive "the sacred fire" among his brethren, which the heavy and polluted atmosphere of this world is forever threatening to extinguish. Woe to him if he neglect this mandate, if he hear not its small, still voice! Woe to him if he turn this inspired gift into the servant of his evil or ignoble passions; if he offer it on the altar of vanity, if he sell it for a piece of money!"

"And why, Marian, did your mind dwell at the moment upon me?"

"Because, mamma, Mr. Heywood spoke so frequently of your writings; your beautiful metaphors and exquisite imagery. I did not know your *nom de plume*, consequently have never knowingly read any thing of yours; but the praises of one so gifted as Mr. Heywood is, I think, sufficient encomium."

"Yes, my child; many expressions, like 'misty stars,' had long lain dormant; musical thoughts floating in wild confusion which required tangible shapes, and I determined to give these

'airy nothings

A local habitation and a name.'

I had often dipped the wings of fancy in the stream of literature, but simply for my own amusement. Sheer

poverty drove me at length to publication. The thought that I must mingle amid the great Babel for my daily bread was not an agreeable sensation, by any means. The would-be iconoclasts, worshipping trembling genius to-day, defaming on the morrow, who always antedate their opinions ere the clear, practical *critique* can pronounce judgment, cast a dark pall over my literary aspirations; but then circumstances forced me to do something. There was Henrique, pale, weak, helpless—calling forth all of the tender emotions of my nature. I could have taught music, but alas! it was in unison with latent poesy. My Caaba, which could not be unveiled to the beginner, whose jarrings might lacerate its sacred precincts, causing its chords to bring forth discordant wails, at which even Orpheus might shudder; eliminating bitter streams from fountains which had hitherto only given forth sweetness.

“I felt that the autumn of my life had truly come. Tears congealed upon my cheeks as I dwelt upon the Titanic difficulties, and the little sympathy in store for the laborer. Indomitable energy urged me on. A mere tyro in learning, I had many misgivings; but I knew that indefatigable perseverance and study would accomplish almost any thing. What right had I to fold my hands calmly, admitting no claims upon my efforts, causing *ennui*, with its sirocco blasts to pass over me, blighting the intellect which phrenologists had told me many times God had stamped upon my brow, when, by a little exertion, I could disseminate a gem which, springing upward, budding and blooming, might drop from its branches seeds which would fructify into unutterable happiness?”

"You spoke of phrenology, mamma; what think you of its dogmas?"

"Marian, I never meet with a genuine phrenologist toward whom my enthusiastic temperament does not yearningly reach forth, longing to clasp him by the hand, and bid him God speed in his teachings. It is alone the sciolists in this great science who accumulate for it lasting injury. Works on phrenology should have a sacred niche in every library; its truths ought to be promulgated throughout the length and breadth of this broad land; and *Wells's Phrenological Journal*, in my opinion, should be read by every fireside, and fully discussed with the youth of the country, inculcating its noble principles in their susceptible minds, ere they are warped by prejudice or arrogant opinions.

"It is indeed owing to a phrenologist, and an incident which occurred years ago, that my thoughts turned upon authorship, when poverty grasped me in her chilling atmosphere. If you are not weary, I will relate the circumstance."

"Do, if you please, mamma; you know I am always a happy listener when you are the speaker."

"Indeed, Marian, you are becoming quite a flatterer."

"Oh! no; not a flatterer—only an appreciator of your intrinsic worth."

Mrs. Lee kissed the sweet lips affectionately.

"I believe you are sincere, Marian. That lovely mouth is a stranger to falsehood. Years ago, before war had desecrated and pillaged our beautiful South, a merry, happy group, visitants at one of the most fashionable summer resorts upon the sea-shore, were busily engaged in collecting



shells, sea-weeds, and mosses for future curiosities. They were of the *élite* of our sunny clime. Wearied at length, they gradually assembled themselves upon the edge of a canyon, an anomaly in nature, formed perhaps in the past, by some terrible cataclysm, but an antithesis to the sparkling, sandy beach, which proved quite a relief to the eye. There, beneath the dense foliage, we enjoyed the lovely aqua-marine of the waters, its low moan lulling the whole party into quietude—enchaining, as it were, by the song of a siren—obliterating temporarily the loves, sorrows, and enmities of life.

“Suddenly, a tall, gaunt figure came in our midst; a tiara, made of aquatic weeds, interspersed with flowers of every hue, encircled her forehead; a long tunic, clasped in folds at the waist by a fantastic belt, covered her person. Wild shrieks from the timid, frowns from the brave, greeted her appearance; but I was gratified, for my love of the marvelous had fresh food with which to nourish it. I seemed to behold ‘Norna of the Fitful Head’ before me, loosened from her shackles in the ethereal world, to terrify man or teach man his duty, I knew not which. Singling me out in the gay throng, she came in rapid strides toward me, and seizing my hand, she turned eagerly to the palm, and asked if I would know my fate? I replied in the affirmative. The finger was raised ominously. ‘Maidee Chaworth,’ came forth in guttural tones, ‘heed the voice of one who wishes thee well. Talents of no common kind are yours; with them, you can accomplish any thing; an exuberance of joy is now your part; enjoy its buoyancy while you can, for a dark, dark chasm lies in advance; its fitful shadows breathe of sorrows almost annihilating in

their power—but ah! I trace a bridge, weak, ready to break beneath a heavier footfall, but which yours passes over safely; but the meridian of your life culminates in such happiness! such happiness!’

“She dropped my hand, and turned smilingly to another group; our long-loved bent over, and whispered in my ear, ‘All is true, darling; but the sorrow—that we will blot out.’ I smiled, and watched the weird figure as she continued her mission; now weaving a garland of flowers near some sensitive shrinking plant, which, like the modest violet, lies hidden until the brush and wildwood are torn aside, revealing in its place of concealment marvelous beauty, passing

“‘Their lives so unobtrusively, like hearts  
Whose beatings are too gentle for the world.’

Then, while the carnation tinged the cheek of the trembling listener, she would read in the language of these little flowerets an episode of such inimitable sweetness, picturing a lovely cottage home, upon whose cantaliver the honeysuckle and Chinese westeria had placed their graceful tendrils, clinging for the support which their fragrance and beauty entitled them to; speaking of the tenderness and love which would be hers, reading it in the countenance of the manly form, upon whom the fair one leaned with all of the artlessness of childhood.

“We read in those trenchant, stern features that she

“Would not flatter Neptune for his trident;  
Or Jove for his power to thunder.”

Her sophistry caused many a cheek to blanch, and I

shuddered for the fair ones as she would speak to them of little ripples of affection opening within their hearts, which would be unrequited.

"Sadly, she prophesied the hurling of the pennoncelli of our country from the hearts of millions of Americans—idle forebodings, we thought them; truisms, the future proclaimed. Then vanishing as suddenly as she came, casting her weird spell over almost all of the group.

"Upon me the impressions were, for the time, ephemeral; but I thought much over them when the realization came.

"One in our midst, with whom age had dealt leniently, only touching his long-flowing beard and hair with the frosts of winter, leaving his spirits gayer and happier, if possible, than in his youth, marking the sadness on some brows from her words, introduced a phrenologist within our little circle, presuming he would prove a psychiatry, which would soon banish all thoughts of gloom.

"A crowd is ever vacillating, swayed by each passing breeze, and soon we were talking merrily over his facetious remarks and home-thrusts.

"To the avaricious, he smilingly spoke of the unloved life and unregretted death which would be his, did he not curb his ruling passion; to the literary aspirant, he gave words of encouragement which drew forth many a happy smile; to the melancholy of temperament, he spoke of the importance of mirth and laughter; and ridiculed the power of the fortune-teller, who presumed to lift the veil of futurity, tracing in our surroundings her great power to read the destiny, which she would fain persuade us was ours."

"Bravo! my dear wife; you shall have the premium for your graphic scene."

"Is it not a truthful one, Leslie?"

"Certainly. Had Marian been a participant, she could not have realized it more vividly."

"Ah papa! were you there?"

"Yes, dear one; who, but myself, could have whispered those words to my precious wife?"

He drew the hands of his wife and daughter within his own.

"And, papa——"

"What, Marian?"

"Must we not verify the statement of the fortune-teller?"

"With your help, darling. I know your mother thinks we can."

## CHAPTER VI.

“O LESLIE! come quickly and tell me what singular anomaly this is—some slight claim, undoubtedly, upon the anthropoid race, but more of the monkey than the man. The eccentricities of dress are truly laughable—hat, umbrella-shape; boots, large enough for a grandfather; making the piteous object a miserable pedestrian.”

Mr. Lee and Marian sprang eagerly forward.

“Unfortunate child!” said Mr. Lee in saddened tones, “she is an unfading monument of that terrible fiat of a just God, ‘visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.’ It is poor Maggie Dickson, wearing the impress of a father’s diabolical habits upon her brow, from her infancy—transmitted by a parent not worthy of the name; more an object, indeed, for the rolling wheels of Juggernaut than a companion for a lovely, sensitive woman.”

Mrs. Lee sighed.

“One would scarcely recognize in her, a sentient being; but by careful culture and training she might improve. Think you not, so?”

“I can scarcely hope so, Maidee. In the first place, there is not the slightest prospect of her surroundings undergoing a change while her father lives; her mother

would be capable of rearing her children well, were she not inundated with trouble. In days gone by, Mrs. Dickson and her children called forth the charitable sympathy of Marian's mother; but for years I have lost sight of them. Dr. Dickson commanded at one time, the entire practice of this neighborhood. A nascent love of wine finally proved his ruin. One by one his patrons dropped off. When the influence of the miserable narcotic subsided, he would spend his time vainly searching his pharmacopœia for some preparation which would prove a panacea for burning stomachs and unquenchable thirsts. They have one daughter, the *fac-simile* of her mother, a refined creature, born before the pabulum of her father's life was alcohol,

“Mrs. Dickson and Ida were ever the unwilling recipients of the bounties bestowed by the philanthropist, and they would have long since, by their labors, cast off indigence, had not their miserable pittance been used by another in his ephemeral enjoyments. Perhaps I am wrong in manifesting so little sympathy with the inebriate; but when I behold man casting love—the wealth of home—pure principles, the palladium of manhood, into an unpurified crucible, whose fiery furnace throws out alone his tocsin for death, I confess the bitterest thoughts are engendered. Man, ‘whose rainbow empire is the mind,’ its brilliant lamp soon to be extinguished if not carefully shielded from gairish day, with its extraneous influences.

“Remember the wonderful power with which the beneficent Divinity has blessed us; think of the Titan aspirations of a Franklin—pinched by poverty, plunging un-

dauntedly amid the thick briars which infested his pathway, erasing from his lexicon the word 'failure'! See him with the key in his hand, attached to a string and kite, watching with eagerness the revelations of that terrible thunder-storm, as the kite swayed to and fro in mid-heaven, disclosing to his penetrating vision the mysticisms of electricity! Puerile act it might have been deemed by some at the time, as he dallied with the little key, but leading to a discovery which has proven one of man's greatest safeguards.

"Think of a Galileo, who in the lonely midnight hour, conning a task which the starry heavens illuminated, asserting in the light of day scientific theories which drew forth anathemas, but to which he still clung with the greatest tenacity.

"Think of a Milton, the sightless orbs enlisting deep sympathy, his grand, majestic nature battling unshrinkingly amid the vicissitudes of life, in whose emanations all nations trace the potent intellect and the unyielding piety.

"But faithful laborers in the vineyard, who tremble not before duty's stern dictates, your name is Legion. What more sad, then, than to see

"The outward form decay,  
A soul of genius glimmered through the clay;  
Genius has so much youth, no care can kill,  
Death seems unnatural, when it sighs, 'Be still.'"

"And what is the inebriate with his moria expression but dead to all former associates—a death to his friends far more horrible than the death which leads to realms of immortality?"

"I read a statement the other day, a quotation from a French medical journal, which caused my blood to curdle, at the thought that man should so universally allow his faculties to be blunted. It said, 'Every nation, savage or civilized, seems to have its intoxicating drug. Siberia has its fungus; Turkey, India, and China have their opium; Persia, India, and Africa, from Morocco down to the Cape of Good Hope, and even the Indians of Brazil, have their hemp and hasheesh; India, China, and the Eastern Archipelago have their betel and betel pepper; the islands of the Pacific have their daily hava; Peru and Bolivia have their eternal cocoa; New-Granada and the chains of the Himalaya their red thorny apple; Asia, America, and the whole world, perhaps, patronize tobacco; England and Germany use immense quantities of stimulating beer or ale; Ireland and Scotland use whisky; France, Italy, and Spain, etc., use wines to intoxication."

The painfully slow efforts made by Maggie to ascend the marble steps arrested Mr. Lee's attention. The family met her at the door.

"How are you, Maggie?" said Mr. Lee, extending his hand.

"O Mr. Lee! mother says do come; she believes she and Ida are dying."

"Dying, Maggie! and your progress up the avenue, so slow?"

"I can not help it, sir! I can not help it! They will make me wear father's old boots, and I defy any one to go any faster. Oh! you all talk as you please in your grand homes, but nobody thinks of poor Maggie when she's starving."



"Starving, Maggie!" exclaimed all in the same breath; "do you want your breakfast?"

"Yes, I should think I did, when I haven't eaten any thing in a day or two;" so much kindness causing the poor voice to tremble a little.

"Yes, I was mighty glad when they told me to come up here. I knew Mrs. Lee—but this is not Mrs. Lee, or she's changed a heap since I saw her last;" giving a long stare.

Tears sprang to Marian's eyes, and she hastened away for the wished-for food, hoping to conceal her emotions before one who had made so many sacrifices to brighten her pathway; and not unsuccessfully, her heart had reached. When she returned, Maggie was relating with great earnestness the hardships she had endured since she had left Mr. Lee's vicinity; and how her mother had prayed to come back to Mrs. Lee.

While the child was devouring the food, the family were preparing such delicacies as they thought the invalid might require.

The carriage came to the door; and Mr. and Mrs. Lee entering it with Marian, invited Maggie to follow.

"No, no!" she almost shrieked, "you don't catch me in there, where I can't get a breath of air; but I will ride on this high place up in front, if you will let me."

Mr. Lee, much amused at her conduct, assented; and, bidding the driver go rapidly on, they were soon in front of a miserable hovel in a barren field, one lonely patriarch, a giant oak, its sole shade.

A single glance, upon their entrance into the hut, con-

vinced Mr. Lee that food was no longer an essential to the cadaverous-looking figures before him.

"Oh! they have come," said Mrs. Dickson; "but I can not see them. What is the matter with my eyes?"

A spasm of pain almost deprived her of utterance. Pouring some blackberry cordial into a glass, Mrs. Lee raised the feeble being; and, placing it to her lips, she drank it with avidity. Reviving a little, she continued,

"Alas! Mr. Lee, your family know but too well that my brief life has been filled with pangs. I am glad the past requires not rehearsing now; for I would forget, if possible. Oh! to have been educated with care, and then die in such a manner, and in such a place. Why is it? Why is it?"

Tears coursed down the cheeks of the listeners; for the being before them plainly indicated the refining influences of an early life.

"But, my poor Maggie! Mr. Lee; you will all take care of her for me?"

"Rest assured we will, dear Mrs. Dickson."

"God bless you for the promise! Now I can die without a murmur, since she can be under Mrs. Lee's care. But, poor child, I have not done my duty by her. I could not. I was compelled to work so hard—so hard. Had it been Ida——"

She ceased speaking. Again was wine given to relieve the exhaustion; but the lips were still motionless. Life, with its solemnities and its mutations, was fast passing from her view. What were sublunary things in comparison with the bright vista opening before her?

"O mother!" said a feeble voice by her side, suddenly

arousing from her torpor, opening her large, liquid eyes, whose beauty was strangely at variance with the care-worn face, "I am so glad I am going to die. Maggie will have more food now."

What a terrible thought! Who knew the sufferings that had incased that fair child from her birth—that had rendered her home a dark, dark spot, without even one sweet oasis of happiness to which she could revert in her dying moments!

The cold, clammy drops indexed the waning life of the two; and he, the author of all this misery, sat there in his imbecility, apparently unconscious that the missile which his conduct had sent, had, by slow excisions, killed, displaying but too plainly the *habitué* amid the haunts of the drunkard.

"The gods love the good too well to allow them to remain long on earth," repeated Mrs. Lee, as she gazed mournfully on the two shrouded forms. "How appropriate seems this apothegm now! Here is Maggie, obliterating from her mind, with scarce an effort, the remembrance of her great loss, by contrasting it with the inexpressible happiness of being able in the future to gratify her alimentiveness; but

" ' A pebble in the streamlet scant  
May turn aside the mighty river ;  
A dewdrop on the baby-plant  
May dwarf the giant oak forever.' "

God grant she may not be so dwarfed in intellect and feeling, that my feeble efforts may not prove efficacious in uprooting the foibles, with which she is impregnated. And

the father, probably to be the next victim in the plot, unable to rally, even for a moment from his lethargic state!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Lee; "and how applicable would be the motto of the Carbonari, 'Revenge upon the wolves who devour the lambs,' in the home of the drunkard. Its misery oppresses me!"

"Oh!" said Marian, when alone in her sanctum that night, "why is it that at the acme of happiness, when life is beginning to wear a new aspect, the drapery of golden and crimson leaves must be drawn suddenly away from the sacred necropolis of the spirit-world, revealing the futility of earthly hopes and aspirations? I fancy to-night my feelings must be akin to those of Scipio when in the midst of his great triumph—when Rome, forming for his magnificent ovation a superb pillar which was surmounted alone with adulations, placed by his side in the gilded chariot a base menial, who, when the plaudits of the populace were at their height, whispered in his ear, 'Remember, Scipio, thou art but mortal.'"

Lowly the knee was bent in prayer for strength to battle with her great sorrow, and that she might not appear ungrateful to those who so loved her; and echo answered, "Why ungrateful? Should the love of the denizens of earth render the ties which bind us to the tomb less dear? Ah! no. Man could not wish it. Woman, never!"

## CHAPTER VII.

“WINTER, with all his rising train,  
Vapors and clouds and storms,”

had come; all the lovelier for ushering in incarnadine lights, refulgent firesides, in whose beds of crimson the old man beholds pencillings of a glorious aurora, inarching the past with his present, and upon whose silver tide he soon floats, silencing the wailing winds, casting off the sear and yellow leaves of autumn, and the sparkling cascade which had iced beneath old winter's touch, his snows incalescent under the radiant influence of the sun, beholding alone the happy home of the spring-time of life; his household gods reinstated, in whose presence the sacred dead, released from their dismal shrouds and pallid looks, are, as in other years, resplendent with the charms which had first captivated him.

But to-night Poplar Grove is wide awake with many voices, and a wild, mysterious music, as if in its rainbow hues it is determined that the diaphanous rays of a “silver lining” should alone reflect joy.

Ah! the first party! Who knows the rapturous emotions which fill the heart of a maiden, as passing from the immaculate *boudoir* of girlhood, the sacred trysting-place of glorious thoughts and blissful musings, she lingers fondly upon its threshold, as if loth to leave its dear precincts?

It was Christmas night, and, mingling with the happy group, are those in every stage of life. Here, with the sunny curls and cheeks of carnation, were childhood's representatives, assimilating with the golden tints of nature and the delicate mechanism of each tiny plant in the garden of life, reminding the gazer of "the winglets of the fairy humming-bird." Mrs. Lee had so earnestly pleaded that they should be there; that at Marian's first party no little hearts should be baptized in acrid waters, but that all, all should be happiness. She wanted her pets to be overwhelmed in a flood of joy which would apotheosize in their young hearts the remembrance of the Son of God, in whose rills of love, their early lives had been consecrated. She knew no one could object to the proximity of these lovely cherubs, luminous with sunshine, whose very smiles would expel nascent evil; if they did, who cared? It would be only those, whose bosoms mirrored volcanoes from which issued daily a thick lava of malice, envy, and hatred.

That matchless reasoning convinced, and these astute beings, cunning in the midst of their very artlessness, like the mocking-birds, constantly warbling their little notes, links of some inanimate song in the octogenarian, which yields no sounds unless touched by congenial vibrations, but in their young hearts a continual utterance, at one moment plaintive, at the next joyous peals which awake their constant echoes.

Marian gazed over this brilliant parterre of intellect, beauty, and fashion, concealing beneath a delicate cob-web texture a facial of thought and feeling with an entablature oftentimes of deep duplicity, yielding readily to

the corrosive influence of Momus, and wondered why this great variety of sensitively-organized beings could not banish evil, and assume once more primeval simplicity and purity.

“What a new aspect,” she sighed, “life would wear if all would cast a mantle of kindness over the defects of others!”

“Let me claim you for a while, Miss Marian; I would introduce you to the gay world,” said the happy voice of Mr. Gardiner, as he drew her unresisting hand within his own.

“Believe me, I will be more than delighted,” replied Marian. “You have relieved me from both an agreeable and disagreeable meditation.”

“Indeed! Then I am quite welcome in some respects, if not in others. But I do not intend quarreling to-night; for such beauty and loveliness must not remain in this quiet nook.”

“How like you! I can almost imagine the old days back again, when you, hand in hand with your *petite* sister and pet Marian, as you then called us, encouraging all of our infantile sports, aiding us while weaving sweet Maysongs; and at last, lost in wonder and astonishment at abstruse utterances, charming compliments, and brilliant repartee, our silly prattle hushed in our eagerness to comprehend what our inexperienced minds could not unravel, but which your patience and kindness soon elucidated. Ah! those were happy days, ere the rhythmical flow of life had met with any interruptions.”

“True, but not more agreeable than the present. A phantasmagoria of the past is always pleasant; but I have

fancied the last few weeks clothed with a novel charm; there is an absence in my being, it is true, of the wild, gleesome feelings which were once daily visitants, but passing before my mind is a kaleidoscope of delightful sensations hitherto foreign to my nature. I have a secret, however, to reveal some time soon, which will give you the source of my joy."

"Of course, as of old with you. 'Give the imagination fair play, and a single hint may beget a picture,'" laughed Marian.

Mr. Gardiner bowed low, acknowledging the applicableness of the quotation—appreciating at the same time, the spirit of mischief in the mirthful eyes before him.

"Miss Marian, by a prerogative which friendship ever claims, I brought an old and cherished friend—although unknown to your family—here to-night. Do not be astonished at the idiosyncrasies of his character. As to his faults, if he has any, they are like the infusoria, so minute that nobler traits cancel them. In conversation, both his phraseology and diction are unrivaled; but his inexpressible charm consists in earnestness of soul and feeling—a hidden fire breathing in each tone and sentiment. His father's murder during his absence in Europe proved a shock from which he has never entirely recovered, and at times I trace upon his countenance an effort, as it were, to fathom the undefinable."

"Murder! By whom?"

"It was rumored then—for as yet nothing positive is known—that the crime was committed by one who had long been a beneficiary of the family; his motives, the relatives can not divine."



“Horrible! What evidence does the suspected party leave of guilt?”

“None, except his immediate withdrawal from their protection, and a slight clue which Mahon fancies he has, but which as yet, he will not promulge. For years, Mahon searched for the culpable party; but finding all efforts fruitless, he commenced devoting himself assiduously to a profession as the only panacea for a frenzied mind; enjoying the *éclat* that distinguished talents call forth, alone, I presume, as the witchery of ladies’ smiles pass unheeded.

“We were college mates; in our early friendship disguisements of all kinds were ignored, and except in one instance this rule has been observed; but on that point he preserves an impenetrable silence. It is with regard to a box which rests in an alcove in his apartment, from whose highly ornamented architrave a damask curtain hangs. Upon first view, my thoughts involuntarily turned on Poe’s ‘Oblong Box’—Wyatt’s wild, hysterical laugh ringing in my ear, haunting me for days. Accidentally, the curtain was raised, and the secreted objects stood before me, living testimonials of a gloomy mystery; but the look of pain that met my inquiries caused me inwardly almost to blast an idle curiosity inherent in my being; and in order to hide the confusion to which this gave birth, the various objects of *vertu*, carefully collected during Mahon’s travels, were eagerly sought and minutely examined.”

“You are certainly, Mr. Gardiner, pursuing the proper course to enhance his charms in the eyes of the ladies, incasing him within so much mystery.”

“He does not require that to augment his attractions; for if report speaks truly, he is almost too fascinating now, with the fair sex.”

“Then I, for one, shall remain unscathed—declining an introduction, even with the prospect of being considered rude in my own home hanging over me. Oh! who is that beautiful girl with one of the delicate hues of the iris tinging her cheek?”

Mr. Gardiner colored slightly.

“Do you indeed admire her? We think her exquisitely lovely; it is one of my sister’s friends.”

“Ah! Then I no longer wonder at ‘the source of your joy.’”

“Strange, Miss Marian, the power woman has of penetrating man’s secrets. I admit I have nothing now to conceal, and can alone ask that, for the sake of years of friendship, you will

“‘Take my flower, and let its leaves  
Beside thy heart be cherished near.’”

“Believe me, Mr. Gardiner, I shall only be too happy to do so. For whom is she in mourning?”

“For a brother—one who, in his untimely death, bequeathed to his country the memory of genuine worth, and a life which, though impotent to save, perished—fighting bravely, struggling for pure principles, which he could not suppress, because his conscience forbade it. The sacrifice proved for naught; but man should ever discharge his duty unwaveringly and unflinchingly, and such a being was Harry Heywood: loving the inspiring influences of a quiet home, yet trampling upon affection’s

ties, casting all behind—extinguishing them for the time in the lowering clouds which threatened his loved South.

“I can never forget the evening Lilian Heywood heard of his death-wound. We had been eagerly watching for the dear old *Evening News*—ever a welcome messenger to the parents and sisters of the toil-worn soldiers. The little errand-boy approached, but too slowly for Lilian; she sprang hastily toward him, and seizing the paper, turned to the list of the dead and wounded. His name first met her gaze. Raising a countenance portraying the incurable lineaments of grief, she entreated to be carried to her brother.

“What could I do? A confederate soldier’s entrance into the enemy’s lines was impossible. Finding she would not renounce the contemplated trip, I bore her as far as possible, then returned with many misgivings to our camps.”

“She sought for him for months. At last, in a lonely spot, amid rocks covered with irregular groups of lichen, of greenish and yellowish color, a small slab was found, placed there hurriedly by a kind comrade, with a few simple words, revealing the last resting-place of her brother. Long a strict optimist, she has prayed unceasingly for resignation.

“Alas! how few in the world are cognizant of the blighted hopes each secret by-way has witnessed; the daily strugglings and intense pleadings at the throne of mercy. Did you ever realize, when your heart is gay and happy, that within that of your nearest companion, perhaps, there is a quiet mourning which can not be silenced?”

"Hush!" almost whispered Marian; "for one night, at least, let me witness happiness without thinking of the tomb: its darkness is so terrible. Introduce me to your friend. I would forget in her pure presence that the grave has been touched upon."

"Lethæan waters, then, shall obliterate our sad thoughts; or—shall I say it for her?—her elevated piety will rob our theme of its gloom."

Magnanimous minds readily detect the jewels which brighten and purify; and in their affiliation with congenial natures, produce a friendship ripening into unadulterated love, overwhelming the mists and exhalations which would otherwise corrode and extinguish budding affections. Such a union proved Marian's and Lilian Heywood's; each nobler instinct harmonizing, they soon discarded all ceremonials, and communed with the enthusiasm of long-tried friends.

The ruined, blighted prospects of the South, the universal burden with its people, was soon introduced; but the gloom which pervaded other minds, causing many to withdraw beneath a supine cloak of indifference, nestled not in Lilian Heywood's thoughts and feelings. During the discussion, turning appealingly to Marian, she asked her opinion of dreams.

"Dreams!—a mere vacuity, of course. Why not ask, Lilian, my views on chiromancy?"

"I am prepared, Marian, to contend against ramparts of incredulity; nevertheless can not refrain from giving credence to some of those mysterious revelations that entertain our exhausted frames—especially when in connection with a cherished brother."

The lips quivered, and pellucid drops moistened the brilliant eyes. In her struggle for composure, the line,

“Sweet lips that were hushed with a prayer,”

withdrew for a moment from Marian’s *repertoire* of learning.

“Forgive this temporary weakness, Marian; it shall not occur again. During the war, my brother was severely wounded, and died soon after; my mother and myself were living alone upon our plantation, when the rumor came that twenty thousand of the enemy were advancing rapidly. Instantly all was in confusion. I had been educated North, and hoped that, were our country so unfortunate as to be flooded with the army, the proximity of former acquaintances would shield from at least brutal treatment. The latter hope, however, seemed so meagre and faint that I cast myself in an arm-chair, the picture of despair. I knew that were the report true, the casualties of war might deprive us ere morning of even the means of sustaining life. Finally, wearied and exhausted, I sank into a gentle slumber. My brother, with God’s holy word clasped in his hand, approached me. ‘Lilian,’ he exclaimed, ‘why do you weep?’ Immediately my sad story was poured forth. ‘Turn,’ he said, ‘to the third chapter of Malachi, commencing with the eleventh verse, and read on through the twelfth.’ I did as commanded, and read the following words:

“‘I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the

Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.' ”

“ Need I say, I arose buoyant and happy, determined from that time always to rely implicitly upon the protecting power which, in great wisdom and love, condescended to pour this small stream of comfort into the heart of an erring wanderer, who had for one moment permitted herself to forget his omnipotence. The promise given in the dream was fulfilled. Tidings came on the following morning of the withdrawal of the enemy, and during the entire struggle we rested in perfect security. Do you wonder, then, Marian, that I believe the departed are often with us, whether waking or sleeping, sent by our heavenly Father to soothe and expel evil forebodings? That, even now, this dream returns to me, a gentle whispering ‘ that all nations shall yet call us blessed ’ ? ”

“ Truly you have had unmistakable proofs of intimations from the spirit-world, and I no longer feel surprised at your credulity.”

“ The emancipation of the negro,” said Mr. Gardiner, “ I have never regretted. For the benefit of the whites, they should have been manumitted; but not their own. The evidence of their unworthiness for liberty is daily seen; stinging poverty, urging upon them the importance of labor, and yet it remains unheeded; they, daily walking our streets, stupefied from indolence, watching with avidity every opportunity to seize what little the whites can accumulate.”

“ I think,” replied Marian, “ we should impress upon the youths of our country, the wisdom of the Magian

saints, who were compelled to work out their salvation by the labors of agriculture."

"Then you, I presume, would instill into the minds of the young men, as well as the youths of the South, the charming maxim of the Zendavesta, 'He who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater stock of religious merit than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers'?" exclaimed Mr. Gardiner.

"Think you not," pleaded the gentle tones of Lilian Heywood, "a combination of the prayers and labor, would have a happier effect, proving more efficacious in uprooting any threatened evil?"

"Thank you, Lilian, for recalling us to our duty. We would not draw down contumely upon the religion of our ancestors. But, earnestly speaking, I have thought at times we must indeed cast off our old aristocratic ideas of labor, or take as our motto, '*Velis et remis*'—ready for every emergency—for a terrible simoom may soon besom our hopes and wishes, ejecting us from the haunts of childhood, leaving us wanderers and homeless."

"Any thing, any thing but deserting the homes of our fathers! That must not be," said a rich musical voice by her side.

Marian glanced eagerly up, and met a dark, searching eye, magnetic in its influences, and whose depths spoke of beds rich in genius and talent.

"As I am not a pet of society, Gardiner, I claim the fulfillment of your promise. Those were the only reasons Miss Marian urged, I believe, for not permitting an introduction."

Mr. Gardiner laughed heartily; but Marian, confused

and blushing, wondered secretly how her remarks were overheard. The polished, elegant gentleman, by his pleasing, graceful manners and conversation, soon convinced her, however, that the obnoxious words were forgotten; or, if remembered, remembered alone in a spirit of raillery.

“Your mother informs me that you are a sweet songstress; may I not hope, in the dismemberment of this little circle, I will not be considered reprehensible, and that you will sing me one song?”

“With pleasure, Mr. Mahon.”

Marian turned gracefully to the piano.

“Her voice was like the warbling of a bird,  
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear.”

Its delicious melody seemed to touch all of the divine secrets of his soul; its plaintive vibrations engendering ecstatic feelings which had not been exhumed for long, weary months.

“How truly has Pope written,

“ ‘Music resembles poetry; in each  
Are numerous graces which no methods teach,  
And which a master hand alone can reach.’

You know not what pleasing reminiscences your voice has recalled. It is to me like an echo from the past.”

“Have you always been fond of music?”

“Passionately so. To-night, while your soul seemed speaking in delightful strains, I thought of the wild melodies my mother chanted in days gone by, to curb and subdue the proud, passionate nature of her son. Your



voices assimilate strangely, convincing me of one thing—that depth of feeling and a strong poetical being are really essential in music, to evoke rapture within the heart of the listener.”

“Our views harmonize, then, entirely. A soulless nature should never be a musician.”

“Yes, you are right. I can not imagine, indeed, a greater happiness than to listen to the grand old pieces of Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and other master composers; or to linger enthralled beneath the weird spell cast by some grotesque *fantasia* of Mendelssohn.”

Hilarious outbursts from the children resounded through the room.

“What can that be, Miss Marian?”

“A delirium of applause from the little ones on account of the Christmas-tree, I presume. My mother’s enlivening spirit permeates all things. Every thing around her must, if possible, wear a garment of gayety; and especially for her, from the cradle, as it were, of helpless infancy, wells a fountain of pure joy. She believes in preserving the customs of the Germans in respect to Christmas eve.”

“The chastity and abiding affection of the ancient Teutons, their holy belief that a ‘sanctity and wisdom more than human, existed within the heart of their females,’ thoughts cherished in the very depths of barbarism, should entitle them, it seems to me, to the highest respect, of not only their posterity, but all nations, rendering even their present customs acceptable to us.

“But what do you say to mingling in this wild excitement? These sports are ever contagious.”

Marian readily consented, and soon each was busily occupied, diving with the most perfect *naïveté* into the innocent amusements, relieving the burdened tree of its precious freight, distributing to each beaming face some little gift, previously prepared by the busy hand of Mrs. Lee or Marian.

The tones of glee and mirth hushed; the echoing footsteps of departing guests silent; and still Mr. Mahon lingered, loth to part until the thoughts produced during the evening within the heart of Marian had been disinterred to his penetrating view.

“Would the ‘pet of society,’” he inwardly asked, “prove a welcome guest in the future, or would the morning’s dawn find him utterly forgotten?”

## CHAPTER VIII.

“THIS glorious sunset, bespangling all nature with its blood-like rays, clothing it in a crimson livery, transplants me once more beneath one of the ‘palaces of nature,’ grand old Lebanon.”

“You require alone, Mr. Mahon, the beautiful anemone, dotting the scene, shedding its cheerful hue o’er all things, to extend the delusion. Is it not so?”

“Yes; you have anticipated me. I was reminded, while dwelling on this landscape, of that bright little flower which deluges in the East, the entire earth with a red glow. Now, to place the great archetype more vividly before us, imagine in the distance the unrivaled emporiums of the ancients, indenting the Syrian coasts—their magnificent temples wrought with untold labor—palaces reared by opulent owners, embellished with lofty domes, whose grandeur often excited the cupidity of towering ambition; demolished sarcophagi, nestling amid scarlet tulips; fragments of ashlar; porphyry columns, now decapitated; the whole but a semblance, as it were, amid their present ruin, of the grand architectural beauty which once added lustre to the giant undertakings of man.”

“Yes; and I can almost fancy Lebanon, in her magisterial greatness, smiling down complacently upon those

perishable emblems of the 'child of clay,' bearing upon her exhilarating breezes the mournful words,

"Go to now, ye rich men; weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

"Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

"Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.'

"Truly, Miss Marian, it is a solemn thought to see the masters of earth struggling, sacrificing even life oftentimes, to surround themselves with the pomp of a gorgeous pagantry, while the less fortunate acolyte tremblingly bows before his shrine, turning to this deformed, hideous Yama, that is suddenly thrust into being, as not only the ruler and judge of the dead, but of the living; their sacred thesaurus in which must be deposited each awakening thought."

"I presume then, Mr. Mahon, in its native haunts, you frequently examined the scarabæus?—the cherished symbol with the Phœnicians and Egyptians."

"Often, very often; and, as writers have again and again mentioned, they are to be met with on every tomb, 'carved in carnelian or stamped in common pottery.' From childhood, it had been a constant dream that my feet should tread that hallowed ground. On reaching Byzantium, pæans of praise alone, resounded from a surcharged heart; for I knew that in a short time the radii from which had emanated all that was holy, would become as familiar to me as to the travelers who had preceded, and whom I

had so often inwardly thanked for the graphic views given of a land around which the immaculate Saviour had drawn a halo of light, and which the revered prophets of olden times had consecrated."

"Did you visit Saida?"

"Yes; although I knew it was then eclipsed by the superiority of Beyrout, I could not pass it; for it contained, to my antique-loving eye, an object of great interest—a castle built during the Crusades; and also, within a mile or two of Saida, were the remains of the great Zidon, the ruins of which I had been always exceedingly anxious to visit.

"Zoar, notwithstanding its ancient structures, would not have detained me, had it not been for my curiosity to behold the 'artificial isthmus' erected by Alexander the Great and his invincible troops during the siege of Tyre; then standing beneath its walls, in imagination rebuilding that little islet, so securely intrenched amid its placid waters—its clear crystal stream laving the shore—proudly defiant, resisted the labors of Nebuchadnezzar, but was incapable of baffling the herculean efforts of an Alexander.

"Many other spots of interest were touched upon, and I found those charming lines of Whittier constantly ringing in my ear,

'Blest land of Judea! thrice hallowed of song,  
Where the holiest memories pilgrim-like throng!  
In the shade of thy palms, by the shores of thy sea,  
On the hills of thy beauty, my heart is with thee.  
With the eye of a spirit I look on that shore,  
Where pilgrim and prophet have lingered before;

With the glide of a spirit I traverse the sod  
Made bright by the steps of the angels of God.'”

“But, during the entire time, did you not turn longingly toward Jerusalem?”

“Oh! yes; and, like the Mohammedan in his weary pilgrimage to Mecca, panted to lift the Keswa that concealed from my hungry, eager eyes relics which even my infancy was taught to regard as holy. Joining a mixed throng of pilgrims, consisting of Mohammedans, Christians, and Jews, we entered, with quickened footsteps, one of the four gates of Jerusalem. Carried away by the enthusiasm of the crowd, rest seemed impossible until I had examined with them the various religious edifices and other spots of notoriety. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, erected by Helena; the place of the Saviour's entombment and crucifixion; the Garden of Gethsemane, were all visited with those saddened, holy feelings which such scenes must ever engender.

“I stood upon Olivet, and a vast panorama of beauty lingered below; vivid descriptions given previously by travelers and exquisite gems of poetry chased themselves in rapid succession through my brain, and again, while spell-bound and awed, Whittier's lines arose—

‘Oh! here, with his flock, the sad Wanderer came;  
These hills he toiled over in grief, are the same;  
The founts where he drank, by the way-side, still flow,  
And the same airs are blowing which breathed on his brow;  
And, throned on her hills, sits Jerusalem yet,  
But with dust on her forehead and chains on her feet;  
For the crown of her pride to the mocker hath gone,  
And the holy Shekinah is dark where it shone!’”

“And what of Palmyra? Did not a reminiscence of the great Queen obtrude—her isolated home, the charming little oasis in the Syrian desert which her presence once illuminated—assert its supremacy, urging you to surmount all intervening obstacles, to linger awhile amid those noble ruins?”

“Oh! yes; and on reaching Emesa, the scene of Zenobia’s second defeat, I attempted to present a life picture before me. Aurelian, flushed with success, stern, unrelenting; by his side, Micapor and those very officers who afterwards, through a terrible mistake, proved his assassins; the army clad in all of the gorgeous panoply of war, with victory stamped upon every feature; while Zenobia opposite, surrounded by an immense force, buoyant, although still suffering from sanguinary strife; and the unflinching Zabdas, whose swarthy countenance gave no evidence of yielding, invincible; continuing the delusion, attending the latter in their rapid flight to Palmyra—my sympathies entirely with the sorrow-stricken queen, both during the siege and at the surrender, until her pusillanimous love of life betrays the lofty soul of Longinus, whose genius had dazzled the world, into the hands of an unyielding foe.

“The heart, saddened, could hardly obliterate this revelation of duplicity in one so calculated to win the affections of her subjects, by reveling amid the arabesque forms which intersperse the pages of the novelist.

“In traveling, the delight experienced is often mingled with shades of gloom; for, encircling the *débris* of what, in days gone by, were palatial homes, the white marble gleaming in the sun; rare and exquisite frescoes; floors

inlaid with mosaic, chiefly of jasper and lapis lazuli—the latter often exciting the cupidity of the lovers of the beautiful—we find the little swallow; while within, domiciled as lord of the mansion, the grim owl rests undisturbed.”

“And yet there are moments when I so earnestly wish to be a cosmopolitan, to rest my willful eye upon the charms of Palestine; but still—

“If my feet may not tread where He stood,  
 Nor my ears hear the dashing of Galilee's flood,  
 Nor my eyes see the cross which he bowed him to bear,  
 Nor my knees press Gethsemane's garden of prayer;  
 Yet, loved of the Father! thy spirit is near  
 To the meek, and the lowly, and the penitent here;  
 And the voice of thy love is the same, even now,  
 As at Bethany's tomb or on Olivet's brow.”

“Yes; with the spot where the great propagandists of our faith so assiduously labored, man should familiarize himself. It was within the temple of the Holy Sepulchre that I first felt the glamour of an earnest life creeping over me; while watching beings burdened beneath the weight of sin, noting their tears of contrition, listening to a recapitulation of the sublime sufferings that were borne for our redemption. Are you a professing Christian, Miss Marian?”

“No; I am too unworthy.”

“And why ‘unworthy’? Perhaps you are entertaining some erroneous impressions, deeming perfection necessary; thinking before God's holy temple, the sentence, as in the Eleusinian mystery, should be constantly repeated, ‘Let



none enter these holy walls unless he is conscious of a pure, innocent mind.' ”

“ Indeed you are almost right in your conjectures. I am not skeptical—that is impossible; for, as Wenck has so truly remarked, one of the sweetest proofs to me of Christianity is, that since its inauguration we have not had an ‘Heliogabalus or Commodus, a Nero or Domitian.’ ”

“ Truly, that alone ‘is a potent oratory;’ and had Gibbon, I dare say, heeded historical research, his infidelic soul would have experienced some of the Christian’s peace and comfort. But to wait for the purity you are seeking—alas! were such necessary, how few could ever consecrate themselves unto the service of their Maker—for we harmonize strangely ‘with the whited sepulchres, which, indeed, appear beautiful outward, but within are full of all uncleanness.’ During one period of my life, an event transpired which threatened to extinguish every ray of confidence in a religion for which, from childhood’s dawn, I had been taught the highest reverence. It is a darkened hour, to which, even now, I shudderingly refer; a terrible hiatus between good and evil, when even the inimitable beauty of the rolling clouds, the most delicate cumuli, seemed transmuted into the hideous; but above this alembic of blackened passions poised my guardian angel, fusing the impurities into crystallized gems of countless value. Now, though still delinquent in duty, I often silently exclaim,

“ ‘ Go, wing thy flight from star to star,  
From world to luminous world, as far  
As the universe spreads its flaming wall;  
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,

And multiply each through endless years ;  
One minute of heaven is worth them all.'

But I have detained you long—very long, I fear you think—in this chilly atmosphere ; and now will bid you adieu, as I must return to the city to-night."

"You do not contemplate leaving us, Mr. Mahon?"

"Yes ; my mother's commands are ever imperative with me. She writes, urging a return to her desolate home. You know my visit to Gardiner has extended into weeks ; then, too, he marries in a few days ; and I must be with him. Will you not attend the wedding?"

"No ; papa can not leave home at this time ; and the distance too is so great from here. But as I shall have Lilian Heywood so soon as a neighbor, the absence from the entertainment scarce inflicts pain."

"Your non-appearance will mar my happiness much, very much."

He spoke in low tones, and tremulously.

"We were all anticipating your presence, Miss Marian. I feel that I can not leave you without making one request, and hope you will not deem it premature. Will you not permit me to write occasionally, with the prospect of having my letters answered?"

He gazed scrutinizingly into her countenance, as if he would read his answer there ; but the drooping eyelids were not raised.

"I can not decide now, Mr. Mahon ; but promise the first note, at least, shall be replied to."

"Thank you," was the low response, and he was gone.

She leaned against the beautiful columns, adorned with chaste modillions, watching for a few moments his reced-

ing footsteps; then turned quietly to the library; and gazing long and silently into the dying embers, as if she were reading some rare scroll replete with life's destiny, a smile flitted over the happy face.

"He loves me," she murmured; "or if not, why that emotion at parting?"

Busy were the thoughts, traveling without control on, and still on, into the future. The carillons from the little village broke the stillness—chimes, whose rich melodious peals startled the air with their mournful sweetness on this bright bridal day, so fraught with happiness for her. She, leaning on this strong arm, knelt in the presence of their aged pastor; while a silent blessing, breathed in the midst of prayer, fell from his lips.

"Marian, Marian! on what are you musing so deeply? I have spoken several times; and really you did not know my arms were encircling you."

She drew the confused girl to a sofa; and, placing herself by her side, looked in amazement upon what seemed to her a perfect anomaly; the little hands were thrown up entreatingly.

"O mamma! do not ask me. I have been upon forbidden ground, I fear; glancing into the far depths of uncertainty."

"Marian, my daughter, I do not insist upon a confession; but you surely will not conceal any thing from one who loves you so devotedly."

"And you will not laugh, mamma—will not think me silly?"

"No, my child."

She threw her arms caressingly around her mother;

and then, with all the ingenuousness of a guileless nature, related all that had transpired within the past few weeks—each little word uttered by Mr. Mahon manifesting an interest in herself—concealing naught, not even the wished-for correspondence.

“And, my darling, are you interested in Mr. Mahon—this stranger, who has been in our midst so short a time?”

“O mamma! I can scarcely analyze my own feelings; but do not speak of him as a stranger. You know papa has long known him by reputation. Then, too, he is such an intimate friend of Mr. Gardiner, from whose lips his praises have so freely fallen that I feel I have known him for years.”

“Candidly speaking, Marian, I think he has but few equals; yet I regard you too tenderly, my child—entirely too much so, perhaps, as it causes me too jealously to guard my treasure. I do hope, in your correspondence, you will rely implicitly upon your mother’s judgment. Not that I prefer you should not write; for I readily sanction that, knowing that, in his pure, didactic style, you will derive much pleasure; and, if he is what I now think him, your happiness can be safely intrusted to his keeping.”

“Oh! yes, mamma, you shall be cognizant of all that occurs. I could not be content were it otherwise; for are you not every thing to me—guide, friend, and mother?”

Mrs. Lee was deeply agitated.

“O Marian, my darling, my darling! I have so earnestly prayed that you might feel thus. Believe me that, in marrying your father, I appreciated the solemn responsibility, and did not enter upon its cares lightly. My intense love

for him could not blot out the knowledge that even one's child might darken and blight the fairest home. In hours of reflection the thought would intrude that, perhaps on crossing this threshold, I was chanting my own solemn dirge; for had I not seen the loveliest of stepmothers pale and wither beneath unkindness—noted her earnest yearning for the love of the alienated ones—witnessed their terrible repulsions? But when we met, Marian, a load seemed lifted. I saw one whose intrinsic worth I loved; one endowed with the brightest gifts of beauty and intellect, but which some inward voice instinctively whispered, you alone appreciated, as blessings from your heavenly Father, knowing 'every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. Marian, you were a frail, shrinking child then, and too young to be a professing Christian; but your life had been canopied with purity; you were strongly imbued with the religious truths taught by a pious mother; and God knows, my darling, that in counseling and directing now, I have only your interest at heart; and oh! to-night, as I have again and again done before, I thank him for such a daughter.

"When you spoke of circumstances that occurred between yourself and Mr. Mahon, a saddened reminiscence came vividly before me; the more vividly, perhaps, from a letter recently received. How truly has it been said that, were the history of each life revealed, a novelette would appear, without appealing to the imagination for nourishment. So it proved in the case of Lottie Morgan. We were classmates—oh! in the retrospective, how sweet appears that unadulterated friend-

ship; she was eccentric in many respects; most of the scholars, as well as the professors, thought her dull in her studies, yet, notwithstanding that, every one respected Lottie Morgan; her proud, imperial carriage and beauty, and fine conversational talent, spoke of a latent power which the future might disclose. Reading, with her, was a passion. Straying off into the 'green-room,' as we then called it, we, while the rest were engaged in their numerous sports, were most generally enjoying the rich thoughts with which both the prose and poetical works selected were teeming, culling and storing in memory's *repertoire* choice eclogues.

"The first winter after our release from school-girl bondage, we agreed to meet in New-Orleans, and there, many were the suitors pained by Lottie's decided refusal. Among these was one undoubtedly preferred by her, and penetration was scarcely necessary to perceive his devotion. They met, for the few weeks of his stay in New-Orleans, constantly; upon his departure, I discovered a correspondence decided on. She did not possess that fever-like nature which speaks always of coquetry; consequently, I hoped continued communication in this manner would finally, if it had not already done so, ripen these early impressions into love, for I knew him worthy.

"Years sped on. She, the cynosure of all eyes, had learned to relish keenly the witchery of flattery and admiration. Did she visit watering-places, her name adorned the newspapers by the graceful compliments due the belle of the season. But, strange as it may seem,

letters passed frequently between these quondam friends ; yet he sought not her home.

“ I wrote Lottie that my mother and myself would spend some weeks in New-York City. On our arrival, her cheerful voice was the first to bid us welcome. There they again met. He was all ardor ; she was cool, and apparently indifferent. Business of an imperative nature was urged on his part for past delinquencies. She mentioned his contemplated marriage, as information received from a mutual friend. It was earnestly denied by him, and at the same time he assured her that his heart had alone been true to one ; entreating to be trusted—pleading with all the vehemence of an ardent attachment. But, filled with bitterness from past neglect, and whispers borne on a malignant zephyr of his love for another, his heart-utterances were unheeded. Alas ! could the veil have been uplifted, he would have seen only *his* image reflected.

“ She returned to her home, dejected by the necessity of this cruel discardal, renouncing society almost entirely, losing herself, as it were, in the seclusion and fascination of a student's life.

“ We had been separated one year, when I again sought my friend's genial home. One morning, while conversing over the changes the past few months had produced in the habits of my friend—she recapitulating the many pleasures various musty tomes had brought, the intense relief they had given to her tortured mind—his name fell softly from her lips ; the wrong she had committed was discussed. ‘ But you know, Maidee, he will come again, for we can not love truly but once,’ she said.

“ A servant entered, placing in her hands a sealed package, the contents of which were his wedding cards.

“ A pale, sickly smile lighted her features. ‘ He is not worthy, Maidee,’ I heard echoed in husky tones through the apartment.

“ ‘ Oh ! what a tangled web we weave,  
When first we practice to deceive ! ’

“ I could offer her no comfort ; she would not permit it. His name was from that moment a forbidden one between us. The next day she spoke of her literary aspirations. ‘ Maidee, you have so often chided me for burying my talent ; now we shall see, we shall see ! ’

“ It was spoken laughingly—but was it fancy ? That laugh evoked a sombre, ghostly form, startling me by its look of despair ; it was the receding spectre of happiness.

“ Marian, I need not tell you my predictions were fulfilled. Her works are already familiar to you. I thought she would never marry ; but she did—a man who could not appreciate the noble being he had won ; self-opinionated, stern, dictatorial. How, with such a companion, could the child of genius be happy ? Her children were her only comfort. But, Marian, her own letter, while I read it to you, will reveal the closing drama of this episode :

“ ‘ **CHERISHED MAIDEE:** Now, in the gloaming of life—for it seems I have reached that twilight, verging still on greater darkness—my thoughts are busy with thee, my early confident.



“ My darling friend, they tell me I must die. Can it be, Maidee? Must I, indeed, leave this earthly tenement to grope my way into the great unknown! Will the spirit float immediately upward to nestle into the bosom of God, or where, where shall it go?

“ My home—the nucleus of all that is dear—will it be sacred from the intrusion of the stranger? or will another, ere the sod is green above my grave, fill the place vacated, nurture the flowers that I have planted as her own, and force the heartrending truth upon my motherless ones that they are unloved?

“ A lovely trio are near; their gay prattle seems a mockery, for they know not that I am dying. Claude, my beautiful child! my ideal of perfect loveliness! scintillations of genius sparkling from her dark eyes; a heart teeming with love for her friends. But ah! she will miss that reciprocity of feeling in life which is so essential to her happiness. O Maidee! were she only with you, to bear with her capricious moods, to cheer and guide her pathway, the parting pang would not then be so great. Sydney, my noble boy! possessed of an organization indicating great talent; each lineament presaging a brilliant future, and a genuine philanthropist; but with a mother's love withdrawn, left to battle alone in the cold, uncharitable world—who will guide him to the feet of his Maker?

“ The poor nursling—the wee one by my side; God grant it may go with me!

“ Maidee, you will visit my motherless ones sometimes? Take them to your kind, loving heart, if he will permit it; shield them from the chilling blast of life. I know,

if in your power, this last request will not be neglected. I can not wait to receive your promise now, Maidee—

“ ‘For, ere another day,  
The voice that now is speaking  
May be beyond the sun.’ ”

The letter dropped from Mrs. Lee's hand; tears coursed down Marian's cheeks.

“The little ones, mamma; you will take them?”

“I have written for them, Marian, but the father will never consent; I know him well. Alas! poor Lottie.”

Marian said no more. Her mother, as she then appeared, buried in thought, was inclosed within bulwarks of grief too sacred for intrusion.

## CHAPTER IX.

“It is said that love for the marvelous beauty of Campaspe inspired Apelles in his divine work of art, the ‘Venus Anadyomene,’ which even in its decadence unrivaled painters thought sacrilege to retouch, fearing, while brightening its original color, the ancient splendor and glorious beauty of the master-hand might be tarnished.

“Like Apelles, in humble adoration before his great prototype, I could remain spell-bound beneath the witchery of external loveliness for a brief time; but there must be other perfections of heart and mind which, in wooing, could alone enchain, and such a one I have recently found; but, like those artists whose pencils refused to remodel, I would tremblingly reproduce it on canvas; for it would be alone by the chisel of a Praxiteles, or the matchless pencil of an Apelles, that this, my ideal of perfect womanhood, could be justly delineated. Therefore, mother, you must wait and see.”

In his enthusiasm he arose, and, leaning against the marble mantel, toyed unconsciously with an exquisite statuette of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, resting there in their quiet beauty. The mother sighed heavily, and, looking up, he noticed tears resting upon her cheeks.

“What! in tears, mother?”

"Yes, Paul; when our conversation commenced, it was only in a spirit of badinage. I alluded to your visits to Louis Gardiner as possessing other attractions, little dreaming another had already usurped the place in your affections which I alone have hitherto occupied."

"Ah mother! how can you speak so? Do you not know

"True love's the gift which God has given  
To man alone beneath the heaven?"

I had so hoped for your earnest wishes as to my success! for as yet I know not how my suit will terminate. But I have been visiting her during the entire winter and spring, and, although no promise has been exacted, still my reliance in her magnanimity forces upon me the thought that, were the feeling not reciprocated, she would not continue a correspondence in which my feelings are so plainly portrayed. Mother, this statuette—the beautiful affections which it displays, the entreating countenance of Ruth, the trickling tear, breathing immaculateness; the soul-speaking words, 'Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me,' will not this plead for your son? Exerting its softening influence, will it not cause you to embrace with a heart replete with love any one whom I may bring to our home? Ah mother! you can not refuse me."

He advanced, and, seating himself on a low ottoman by her side, placed the hand which had so often soothed and comforted him upon his head, as if he would force the blessing and welcome he so longed to hear from her

loved voice. The hand was not withdrawn, but lingered caressingly amid the waves of glossy hair.

"True, Paul, Ruth 'clave unto her,' but Orpah returned unto 'her people and her gods;' and, O my only one! the last supporting pillar of our house, I could not renounce you willingly; you, the child of many prayers and many tears, whom, were it not for, life would be unendurable. No one can ever love you, my son, like your mother. It is

"The only love which on this teeming earth  
Asks no return for passion's wayward birth."

You will not leave me, Paul; you will not desert me in my declining years?"

"Never, mother! But did you know her, you would realize in a moment that such a thought would ever be foreign to Marian Lee's nature. Could you see her in her father's home, shedding gladness wherever she goes, you would no longer wonder at my devotion."

"Go, then, my son, and, if she is what you represent, God bless you in your wooing!"

Paul Mahon, springing up, threw his arms around his mother, kissing her repeatedly.

"Then you will spare me for a few days? Mrs. Gardiner intends giving a large entertainment, and I would reach there, if possible, that night."

The consent obtained, he hastened, with a lightened heart, to the train, hoping to surprise agreeably by his presence at least one, on the eve of the reception.

It was a balmy evening, and Poplar Grove, engirdled with beauty, impresses us, I fancy, while fascinated afresh

with its renewed charms, as did the Bruchion, the home of royalty and splendor, the wistful eye of the humble Alexandrene.

Here, playing hide and seek, perhaps, beneath the gracefully-swaying foliage, gambols the little squirrels, advancing out fearlessly amid their sports, for they have become long since emboldened by the non-appearance of the hunter; while in other haunts we find the mocking-bird, chanting with myriads of foresters either an epic lay, which speaks of their wondrous achievements, or, in softened tones, warbling some little madrigal which will entice from secret nooks, the loved mate.

Flitting here and there is a young girl, now pausing before beauteous espaliers, burdened beneath the weight of luscious fruit, over whose crimson hues even Pomona might condescend to smile triumphantly; then, like a startled fawn, glancing quickly around, as if she feared ingenious Vertumnus, lurking in the sylvan shades, endeavoring to seduce the Hamadryad from her duty. But, tossing such whims aside, we find her at length; amid the flowers, where her elfin charms present a welcome anti-thesis with the pets of nature; now singing some quaint air, now soliloquizing seemingly to the flowers most worthy to place in the bouquet for the queen of the evening.

“ Ah! I must have the most beautiful, and yet I can scarcely select. Little ones! little ones! why are you so lovely? Why drive your humble votaress to despair? Each peeping forth, to display its beauties first, and, as Miss Marian would say, you are

“ ‘Types of the beauty, that when youth is gone,  
Breathes from the soul whose brightness mocks decline.’ ”

This was uttered mechanically, and the hand was pressed to the forehead as though the very effort to invoke the muse was painful.

"Ah! here is my little violet. Miss Marian says I must strive to deserve the violet's emblem as mine, 'Modest worth.'"

Again the hands were clasped around the forehead, and the countenance displayed such an intense yearning to comprehend.

The looker-on is startled by the eye, in which mind seems but faintly represented; and yet a keen observer would find a slight semblance to the Maggie Dickson of old. The bewildered child, once roughened and unrefined by the asperities amid which her young life had dawned, now polished and changed, because inwreathed within an atmosphere whose vignettes are chiseled from refinement and kindness.

Happy Maggie! Happy? Yes; for to her the past is a blank; the remembrance of those

"Whose untimely tomb  
No human hands with pious reverence reared,  
But the charm eddies of autumnal winds  
Built o'er their mouldering bones a pyramid  
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness,"

is as a forgotten dream; she lives alone in the present—grateful to the kind hands who, with unflagging care, meet her daily wants, and expand by gentle means, a mind long neglected.

The flowers culled, she gazed with fond pride upon their varied charms; then weaving them into lovely clusters, such as her singular fancy dictated, turned joyfully

to the house, wondering if Marian would think them as fair as the donor felt they were.

A lovely vision met her in the long corridor, attired in white, with an exquisite coronal of pearls arranged tastily around a finely-moulded head, contrasting charmingly with the dark hair; the spiritual eye, now grayish in appearance, now softening into a cerulean hue; features not regular, yet stamped with both intellect and beauty.

"Why, Maggie!" she exclaimed, "I have been searching everywhere for you, and, as usual, you have anticipated my wishes. This grotesque grouping harmonizes with your own singular being."

"You think it very pretty, then?"

"'Pretty!' Pretty could not express my feelings, with regard to them."

"Then you will not discard it for Mr. Espinosa's, should he bring you a fairer?"

"Indeed I will not, dear child. Yours shall be the cherished one for the night; and my favorite heliotrope, you did not forget it, Maggie? Many thanks for your thoughtfulness; they shall all come back with me. Ah! how tenderly I will guard these jewels, until the last shall wither, as mementoes of your affection. Shall it not be?"

"Oh! yes; and upon your return I will rearrange them in the vases in your apartment."

A soft good-night uttered by Marian to the one whom her kind praises had made so happy, and she hastened to the carriage, where Mr. Espinosa and his sister were awaiting her.

The impatient horses dashed eagerly forward; the beauty of the evening, the exhilarating effect of the hesperian



breezes, were soon manifest upon the spirits of the party. All was joy; the distance, though long, was unheeded; the silver stream, in its mazy course, illumined by floods of moonlight which had penetrated through the small crevices in the dense foliage, burst upon their view at various turns of the road in all of its unparalleled splendor.

But suddenly, before they had deemed the journey half complete, the vehicle paused in front of the brilliantly illuminated home of Mr. Gardiner. Lights within globes of every color, emitting their varied shades, decked the pyramidal-shaped trees; while flowers which could not slumber interspersed this picturesque scene. The ivy, though not alone in its verdant glow—while apparently clinging to granulated walls—enhanced still more the witchery of the evening.

“Oh!” exclaimed Marian, “have you ever beheld any thing more exquisitely lovely? One could almost fancy the candelabra within the dwelling, in order to continue the magical effect, had severed temporarily their graceful pendants to cast their prismatic hues over this scene of enchantment—displaying to the bewildered eye beds of ‘mosaic flowers.’”

A form appeared quickly at the door of the carriage to assist them, which seemed strangely familiar.

“Mr. Mahon, is it possible? This is an unexpected pleasure,” said Mr. Espinosa. “When did you arrive?”

“Only an hour ago. You are late in coming, this evening.”

Marian’s heart beat wildly, and the eager grasp of his hand and its warm pressure assured her how welcome her presence was.

Mr. Espinosa conducted Marian to the house, while Paul Mahon, with a feeling of disappointment akin to pain, followed with Morella Espinosa. This was a dilemma which he had not anticipated; and precedent services might deprive him of much of Marian's society.

Most of the guests had already assembled, and gayety and mirth were visible. Terpsichorean chords fell cheerfully upon their ears; occasionally, couples were to be seen, withdrawn far from the festal throng, when Eros called forth charming blushes and loving words; while behind a trellis-work, over which the jessamine hung "like a green curtain embroidered with silver flowers," the little *peri* nestled, inhaling "that sweet perfumer of the night, which only throws out its full fragrance when its sister stars are keeping watch in the sky; as if, when the song of the nightingale no longer cheered the darkness, it sent forth its silent aroma upon the listening air."

They passed into a pentagonal boudoir, from which, when all wrappings were discarded, Marian and Morella Espinosa issued, swayed by far different emotions; the one,

"Eloquent in every look,

Through her expressive eyes her soul distinctly spoke;"

the other, with all of the fiery temperament of the Spaniard inherent in her nature, with its usual concomitant, jealousy.

Mr. Mahon watched eagerly for the coming of the former; but other hearts were equally as expectant, and when he saw her completely monopolized, he turned with a feeling of chagrin to his nearest companion. It was Morella Espinosa.

A crimson glow diffused her cheeks. Was it simply the pleasure evinced by one friend for another, or was it awakening love ?

Earnestly did she attempt to dissipate the gloom which her penetrating vision had detected, but the origin of which she had failed to discover ; her vivacious mood was contagious, and soon led into forgetfulness by the witchery of her manner, he found himself at one moment amid gay themes, the next grave ; one instant busily criticising the beings before them, which, Prometheus and Epimetheus like, either personified intellectual vigor or disgusting weakness ; the next, merry over some metempsychosial idea which the mediocre pamphlets of the day were parading before the public.

But a ringing, musical laugh fell upon his ear, one which palled upon his feelings. How could she be so happy ? Man like, he was reproachful for the moment, even though he had been equally as reprehensible. Conversation became distasteful to him ; fortunately, another now released him from his position by Morella, and he sought Gertrude Gardiner, feeling confident that she would appreciate his situation ; that taciturnity on his part while by her side would be venial, or any attempt to converse would not be considered melodramatic.

There was something revivifying in her presence, and when they arose and passed into the supper-room he felt more buoyant. The table groaned beneath a weight of luxuries which would have competed well with the tables of Rome in her pristine splendor, when the livers and brains of peacocks, and tongues of nightingales, were prepared to satisfy the cravings of fastidious epicureans—days

in which "even the august senate assembled to consult on the best mode of dressing a turbot."

Gertrude Gardiner, as if divining Paul Mahon's intense wish to be with Marian, sought her out, and, framing some trivial excuse, soon withdrew Mr. Espinosa from the side of her two friends.

Grateful for the offered opportunity of being alone, Mr. Mahon led Marian out amid parterres of flowers, where, secure from all interruptions, he could plead his cause. Utterly oblivious now were they of the gay crowd within; happy, truly happy in their reunion, even the quiet spots through which they promenaded, spoke of peace and contentment, and the moments sped rapidly by.

"We were speaking of the tulip during one of my visits," he said, "and finding this specimen a few days since amid my cherished *souvenirs* of the East, I thought of you and brought it, supposing it would not fail to interest."

Marian paused near one of the brilliant lights, examining it closely. She started with surprise and pleasure at its marvelous preservation; each delicate tint still giving a vivid impression of its original beauty.

"Believe me," he continued, "I had a double motive in invoking Chloris to my aid to-night, knowing full well that with one of her tenderly-guarded pets; I could the more readily express the feelings I long to utter. This flower, whose presentation in the East implies a declaration of love, must be with me, as with them, synonymous with happiness or misery. Miss Marian, will you not accept it emblematically?"

He stopped, and, taking her hand, bent low for his

answer. In vain were her efforts to speak. This abrupt avowal amid their calm conversation struck her with profound astonishment. Noting her confusion, he took the little bouquet, which Maggie had so carefully culled, and plucking the heliotrope from the group, pleaded earnestly that in its little emblem he might read his answer.

The faltering consent which rendered one heart so joyful, drew upon another misery; for in the midst of "the leaf-clad casement of the queenly moss-rose, which, creeping in and out like threads of a fanciful tapestry, shows its crimson face amid the embowered green," were a pair of large Spanish eyes watching and waiting.

## CHAPTER X.

"THE heliotrope! where is the heliotrope? Miss Marian, you promised me you would bring them all back."

The words were repeated slowly, but in tones manifesting keen disappointment.

Seated near a window, the party addressed leaned against the casement, gazing out, seeming anxiously expectant. The lips were slightly parted, and anon

"Smiled constantly, as if they had by fitness  
Won the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak."

The delightful reverie broken, she turned to the speaker, regarding her with a dubious expression; but the guilelessness of childhood, proved an amulet within which, dissimulation could not flourish.

"Maggie," she replied, "I confess I am culpable to some extent; but you will pardon me, I am confident, when you behold the rare flower for which it was exchanged."

Rising, she took from the mantel a little ebony casket, filigreed with chased gold, and there, tenderly guarded amid her jewels, nestled the tulip, emblem to her of unspeakable happiness. Withdrawing it from its hiding-place, she continued,

"Mr. Mahon brought this from the East, Maggie,

where, on account of its elegance of form and rare beauty, it is highly prized. Would you not prefer this to the heliotrope, which we can so readily replace?"

"Oh! yes, if Mr. Mahon gave it to you, I am satisfied. He is so kind, so gentle to me; but Mr. Espinosa—I do not like him."

"Why not, Maggie? It must be simply the prejudice of childhood; I am sure he is very gentlemanly and polite."

"Indeed, I can not tell; but nevertheless, I know you prefer Mr. Mahon."

Mrs. Lee, who had entered noiselessly and been an unseen listener, laughed immoderately.

"That is right, Maggie; probe the secret, if you possibly can. Banish those lambent blushes, my darling. Remember, it is only your mother and our little Maggie who are here, both devoted and inordinately proud of you."

Bending over Marian, Mrs. Lee whispered,

"Did my daughter accept the tulip emblematically?"

"Yes, mamma."

Pressing her lips upon Marian's brow, she proceeded, "I congratulate you, for your father as well as myself is delighted with your choice; but this visit, was it not unexpected?"

"Quite so. You spoke of papa; has he full cognizance of this matter?"

"Yes, Mr. Mahon spoke to your father some time since, telling him of his hopes and wishes for the future; but he requested that no promise should be exacted from you, pleading your limited acquaintance as an excuse—

promising Mr. Mahon at the same time, after a more continued intercourse, your own volition and judgment should be your guide; and bravely has he borne the test."

"Why, mamma! I thought that custom had grown obsolete."

"Perhaps it has with many, my child, and in this degenerate age, when so many trample upon the prerogatives of a parent; when even the sacredness of home is violated by scenes of contention and strife, we cannot wonder that it is so; but it is an old patriarchal custom to which all should pertinaciously cling. I regret that the would-be utilitarians of the present day are endeavoring to arrogate to themselves the right of abolishing it. But see, there is Mr. Mahon! If I mistake not, his looks are ominous. Surely there is a shade of gloom upon his countenance."

Marian bent eagerly forward, and, in response to their smiling good morning, the hat was raised gracefully, and a saddened smile alone was given.

"What can be the matter, mamma? I hope Gertrude Gardiner is not ill."

"Ill, Marian! Why should you be apprehensive? Did she complain of feeling unwell last night?"

"Yes, several times; and, as you know, her extreme amiability and total forgetfulness of self, renders her usually oblivious to her own sufferings. Mr. Ronald, the young pastor from New-Orleans to whom she is engaged, entreated her frequently not to exert herself so much. You know, they are to be married very soon."

"So Madam Rumor has long bade us believe; but I did not know whether the report contained one vestige



of truth. But hasten, Marian; I am so anxious to hear from Mr. Gardiner's family."

Paul Mahon met Marian as she descended the stairs.

"I am the bearer of mournful tidings this morning, Miss Marian; it is sad that the spiculæ of sorrow should lacerate hearts so recently made happy, inflicting at the same time incurable wounds. Your friend Gertrude Gardiner is very low, and wishes you."

It was spoken, oh! so tenderly; for he knew but too well the links which one by one, were cemented in childhood; the intense love existing between these two friends crushing out, by its refulgence, many a tie which the bands of consanguinity should have rendered stronger. Alas! how different must be the home of her friend, recently so joyous, now shrouded in an impenetrable mist.

The Parcæ were busy, the hum of the never-silent distaff rang in her ear; and could it be that Lachesis had completed the little thread, and Atropos would soon sever it? She shuddered.

"You are so pale and seem so cold, let me seek a slight wrapping for you, my darling."

"I am not chilly, Mr. Mahon; it is the heart that is aching. When I hear that a cherished one is sick, I feel like a poor shipwrecked mariner without one ray of hope; for have I not stood before in the garden of Gethsemane, laved by the surging billows of bitter grief, praying, oh! so earnestly, that the loved one might be spared? Yet not one prayer has ever been answered. Is it because I am so corrupt, so unworthy of the notice which is bestowed upon even a lily of the valley?"

"God's ways are indeed mysterious, Marian; but you

know in his holy word we are taught that he chasteneth those whom he loveth. Often, very often, we see the good withdrawn, the noble of earth who are never weary in burnishing its impurities, rendering it dazzlingly bright for their Father's kingdom, cut suddenly down in the midst of their labors. Silently they depart, but their memories still linger as bright landmarks to which all earnest spirits are ever turning as wistfully, perhaps, as did Elisha for the blessing which he hoped would descend with the falling mantle. It is not your evil which causes your prayers to remain unanswered, but the will of the Supreme Being to govern and rule in his own peculiar way and by his own peculiar methods. But let Spurgeon speak, in his own beautiful language, the thought that I would impress upon you now: 'If the grave were what it seems to be, the goal of all existence; if the black nails of the coffin were not bright with stars; if death were the end, and our lamps were quenched in darkness when it was said, "Dust to dust and earth to earth," yet 'twere worth while to be a child of God, only to live here.'

## CHAPTER XI.

“AH ! it is sad when one thus linked departs ;  
When death, that mighty sev’rer of true hearts,  
Sweeps through the halls so lately loud in mirth,  
And leaves pale sorrow weeping by the hearth.”

IN a darkened room lay Gertrude, her young spirit clinging tenaciously to earth, wrestling with the destroying angel, craving alone the sweet boon of life, tossing from side to side, frantic from pain, both physical and mental.

“Prayer, prayer ! O Mr. Ronald ! pray for me,” was the ceaseless moan. He pray ? Impossible ! Tremulous from suffering, even tears were denied him. Again and again he essayed to speak, but the words died upon his lips.

Marian and Mr. Mahon entered. Appealingly, he looked up to the latter. All knelt, and, in a voice whose silvery tones fell as a gentle anodyne upon the sufferer, Paul Mahon pleaded with his Maker, pleaded earnestly for the departing one ; but more especially that the hearts of the parents and friends, might receive a soothing balm which would assuage the bitterness of their grief. For the strong man who day by day would miss her sweet presence he prayed—prayed that now, that this human love had been denied him, he might be satisfied in a heavenly ; that the stricken man henceforth, while toiling in his Father’s vine-

yard, might yet reap in his noble mission a foretaste of the bliss prepared above for the seneschals of the great Prince and Ruler.

The keen pain of the tortured girl seemed mitigated, and with a strength and calmness almost supernatural she obeyed the summons. Her eyes lingered long and lovingly upon Marian, but rested last upon the silent sufferer by her side.

"You will not forget me?" she faintly articulated.

"Never!" he murmured; "and O Gertrude! if ultra-mundane influences are permissible, you will cheer my desolate existence sometimes; for henceforth my pathway in life must be trodden alone, utterly alone."

A radiant smile was her only answer.

"O God!" was the voiceless, despairing wail of the chafed spirit, while bending over the lifeless body of her whom he had hoped would be his guiding star through life. "Why is it that thou hast endowed frail nature with Titanic aspirations, which must only be quenched and paralyzed; insatiable loves, which are lost amid ebullitions of grief?"

All witnessed his agony, and trembled. They saw before them a being who had received a poisoned shaft within his bosom, one who had in early childhood mingled an orphan's moan with an orphan's intense longing for sympathy and love; and now, as the glittering chalice of happiness seemed placed to his lips, it suddenly fell, overthrowing in its flow all blissful dreams, and ah! the priceless gem which, in quaffing the pure atmosphere of a home—a home the future had pictured for him, and which he had hoped would be his—was shattered in this rapid

descent, and broken into a thousand atoms. Within the past few months,

“ He had ceased  
To live within himself ; she was his life,  
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,  
Which terminated all ; upon a tone,  
A touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,  
And his cheek change tempestuously.”

But now sunshine had darkened into a twilight of unutterable gloom.

All eyes were moistened—all, did I say? Alas! one remained unmoved. Noiselessly she had entered, and as noiselessly departed. Poor Morella!

“ It is jealousy’s peculiar nature  
To swell small things to great ; nay, out of naught  
To conjure much, and then to lose its reason  
Amid the hideous phantoms it has found.”

Pity, the unfortunate one, that some gentle mentor were not near to crush out by wholesome measures, this germ of evil—this occult guilt.

Is there naught in the adumbration of the morrow’s duties—its sad ceremonials—to bid thee weep? Behold your friends and her friends, the solemnized pall-bearers, with long streamers of tulle pendent from trembling arms, emblem, in its snowy whiteness, of her purity, tossed and toyed by the unfeeling winds!

Behold the young and old of your village, with their wreaths and bouquets of white buds, interspersed with emerald-tinted leaves, placing them in the new-made grave, garlanding this sacred crypt, endeavoring to make it typical of the happier rest above!

Pause and consider. How knowest thou but soon Azrael may spread his insatiable wings over thee, teaching thee in that lone home, where none can help thee, that the virulence of thy enemy is almost unpardonable? Unhappy one! list to the whisperings of conscience.

The beauties of nature, its *claire-obscure*, will be obliterated on the morrow by the entity of grief. Succumb, then, to the softening influences of the mournful picture, and read in it a lesson. Draw from the vision delineated pure draughts, by which thy spirit should be bedewed, and emulate, if thou canst, the example of one whom even now thy being loathes. But, ah shades of Gehenna! as well might we ask thee to disgorge, volcano-like, thy lava of impurity.

Passing swiftly out, Morella but stops a moment to bid the coachman drive on.

"I will walk home later," we hear gasped in almost incoherent language. Unquestioned, she enters a little path, not often trod except by the woodman or hunter. Rapidly she moves. At last, in the depths of the forest, a low growl arrests her attention. She pauses.

"Down, Pelham, down! For shame, sir! Of what are you thinking, to startle even for a moment one so fair?"

Morella gazed upon the herbalist. A benign expression transferred itself over each feature. Engaged daily amid nature's haunts, how could it be otherwise?

"Ah!" she said mournfully, "like 'Landseer's old shepherd,' you too will have your 'chief mourner' when the grave—unwelcome receptacle to us all—mantles you in night." And the first tear which she had shed that day gushed forth.

The herbalist stood by in amazement. What could there be in that old dog and himself to make her weep? Perhaps it was his gray hairs. But no; such reminders were daily with her. He would have spoken; but she passed on, more quickly, if possible, than she had come, leaving him alone in the dense solitude.

Arriving at length in front of a little cottage, profusely shaded with vines, Morella leaned heavily against the gate, arched so daintily with its myriad of blossoms. Not a believer herself in necromancy, why had she fled so rapidly to this spot above all others?—the home of the Pythoness of the village, whom the weak and feeble-minded of the neighborhood were ever consulting, but whose gifts as a prophetess she had so unrelentingly ridiculed. Alas! why had she come? Perhaps to still the great throbbings of a wounded, bleeding heart. Perhaps because she hoped that this being, with whom she had ever been an especial pet, might extricate her from a miserable dilemma; might prevent a marriage, which her frenzied fears prognosticated would soon be consummated.

“Morella, Morella!” exclaimed a sweet, persuasive voice by her side, “what on earth is the matter? Pale, haggard, wan, one might imagine you had been breathing an atmosphere whose humidity had completely prostrated you, when, if I had an endiometer, I could convince you in less than a second how sadly mistaken you are!”

“Eloise, you have often told me, when a midnight darkness intruded upon my dreams, to come to you, and I should alone behold a glorious aurora; when the heart was aching from despair, that the wound should be cica-

trized ; that the child of one at whose hands you had ever received kindness, must be a stranger to sorrow. I laughed at you then ; but, O Eloise, Eloise ! forgive me now, and cancel, if possible, my terrible sufferings. Oh ! I feel so isolated, so entirely void of affection. As to my brother, we have not one thought in common. My father, immersed in business, never realizes that poor Morella pines and pants for sympathy. But with you, Eloise, with your warm Spanish blood, I thought I could find a depth of feeling which might affiliate with my maddened, passionate nature ; for is it not so—a Spaniard, above all others, can appreciate an ardent attachment ? Therefore I have come—come alone, at your own bidding ; and you will help me—I know it ; I feel it.”

Morella, inspired temporarily by the presence before her, with her eyes dilated, her cheeks flushed for the moment at even the thought of success, seemed unnaturally beautiful.

The eyes of the pythoness flashed back lambent jets. “ Poor child ! ” she said hurriedly, “ who dares to cast aside such loveliness, such beauty ?—beauty of which even proud Spain might well be proud. Ah ! tell me. Who has dared to do it ? ”

“ Speak softly, Eloise ; and oh ! do not judge him too harshly ; for I love him—yes, love him ; and he shall be mine. Who yet has seen an Espinosa thwarted ? And am I indeed so beautiful, Eloise ? ”

“ Beautiful ! Truly you are. But tell me, who is it that has come between you and the object of your love ? ”

“ Marian Lee.”

“ Marian Lee ? Impossible ! But, nevertheless, cheer



up. We will soon crush her happiness; and when once entirely yours, this silly attachment of his will be forgotten."

"My brother, Eloise—you will conceal all from him; for he would reveal our plot, did he realize it for a moment."

"Say you so? Would he indeed prove a traitor to his father's house?"

"Yes; truly he would. Marian Lee is cherished by him far too tenderly for me to dream that it could be otherwise. I am confident, in fact, that he would not inflict even one pang willingly upon a being who is the bane of my existence; and, forsooth, he is what men call noble."

"Bah! I have no confidence in such. It is said 'the God of Israel was impiously represented by the Gnostics as a being liable to passion and to error; capricious in his favor; implacable in his resentment; meanly jealous of his superstitious worship, and confining his partial providence to a single people and to this transitory life.' In such a character, history tells us many could not discern any of the features of a wise and omnipotent Father of the universe. I confess at times I am like the Gnostic in belief."

"Ah Eloise!" said Morella in tremulous accents, "you must not blaspheme."

"Well, then, we will banish that subject; but you came to poor, forsaken Eloise in your difficulties. Yes, fair girl, and she will help you. Ah!" she said, raising her eyes devoutly upward, "they may speak derisively of Pythian sayings in their days of prosperity, but in the wee hours

of night, when an Egyptian cloud—impervious to the slightest ray of light—envelopes all things, our divine philosophy stands forth triumphant, like the patriarch's ladder, illuminated with beings who alone, can give comfort. It is the seer and seeress of the village to whom they then turn, and not their God. You shudder, child, and look pale; is this blasphemy? But come within, and perhaps with a more lengthy recital of your trials, we shall discover some marvelous panacea."

Awed into silence, Morella obeyed, almost reluctantly; but she knew the being before her, in her present mood, would not brook disobedience; and with their receding footsteps the door closed softly upon their necromantical rites.

## CHAPTER XII.

“I KNOW, could your heart be daguerrotyped before me at present, I would there find reflected laminations of chaste gems, ornate with beautiful thoughts—thoughts deeply sympathetic with those of Ruskin when he says ‘that the divine mind is as visible in its full energy of operation on every lowly bank and mouldering stone as in the lifting of the pillars of heaven and settling the foundation of the earth; and that to the rightly perceiving mind there is the same infinity, the same majesty, the same power, the same unity, and the same perfection manifested in the casting of the clay as in the scattering of the cloud, in the mouldering of the dust as in the kindling of the day-star.’ Feeling thus, knowing and constantly appreciating the illimitableness of your Spiritual Father, I sincerely hope you will soon banish your recent grief—grief erosive in its nature, when the mind is not restrained, and bent humbly beneath his will.”

“You would have me, I presume, Mr. Mahon, with waning hope, like David, don a new and gay attire.”

“Yes, Marian. It is said, you know, by a scientific mind, ‘that the gigantic appearance of the Brocken is simply an optical effect produced by a strongly illuminated body placed amid light clouds, reflected from a considerable distance, and magnified till it appears five or six

hundred feet in height.' So I have thought at times we magnify unnaturally our griefs, retiring into the strictest seclusion, refusing each fortuitous circumstance from which we might have drawn comfort, until the darkened page which our tenderly nursed feelings picture, becomes thickly annotated with rebellious thoughts; when we should have received these afflictions uncomplainingly, thereby mellowing their sepia tints into iridescent hues. Remember, these views are not empirical, as I fear my words have caused you to believe."

"Were they so, perhaps your modesty would prevent you from confessing it."

She smiled mischievously.

"What a consummate tease you are; but you will think seriously over our conversation, will you not?"

"Without jesting, I certainly shall. In fact, I will heed your admonitions, Mr. Mahon, and as far as I am capacitated to do so, obey. All repinings shall be cast off."

Obey! Paul Mahon looked with fond pride into her countenance.

"Those words fall sweetly from your lips; and how soon may I hope to assume a position which will permit me not to command obedience. Ah! no, I would not wish that; but to plead affectionately, when I would have my opinions adopted?"

Marian hesitated and answered timidly,

"You can claim the privilege now, can you not, of advancing your wishes and having them graciously received?"

"Not without a closer and dearer tie. My darling, you will not trifle with me. Remember, man is peculiarly

constituted; impatient at a delay which debars even for a moment the daily society of the loved one, and, like the unfortunately ostracized pariah from a land that he worships, he is ever turning thought and heart to the spot which shelters the being paramount in his affections."

Mr. and Mrs. Lee's entrance relieved Marian from a dilemma; a reply at that moment would necessarily have been waived.

"What potent spirit guides the raptured eye  
To pierce the shades of dim futurity?"

Hitherto each curvature in her young life had ushered in warmth and devotion. Would the future, conflicting doubts whispered, be the same? or would it end in sadness and neglect? Alas! why should such thoughts intrude? She had felt like bitterly upbraiding her mother in the past, for forebodings which the heart then silently condemned. Now, at the approximating hour, when each cavity of the heart must be exposed, each sacred echo with its ringing vibrations surrendered into the keeping of another, she shrank inwardly from the withdrawal from a protecting care which had been tried and not found wanting.

Yet to what earnest spirit, as the hour of parting from those who have hallowed the morn of their life approaches, does not all tender emotion seem temporarily palsied by the long separations which loom up threateningly before them?

Is the young being, in severing the golden links of a happy childhood, entering a "twilight gray"? or the Hybla of love's delineation, from which alone the honey of life, without any of its bitter, shall be sipped? Alas! but too

frequently a "twilight gray" is the portion of delicately organized, confiding woman. The hideous mask of dissimulation is withdrawn—a very Mezentius in cruelty comes forth; not murdering his victim in a moment, but by slow torture; pandering only to the taste of his amorphous whims, and when surfeited with the wild debauch, returning to his home with feelings ossified, to quench the remaining life of the one whom he had solemnly vowed to cherish.

Oh! who can wonder, then, that the young girl, ere she closes the portal behind which only happiness has bloomed, should stop and consider, fearing lest the roseate gleams which fancy has drawn might be too highly wrought, and end in appalling shadows?

"Your mother has almost persuaded me, Marian, to pursue a course, for which she comes now, hoping to add your entreaties, as well as Mr. Mahon's, to her own, in order that her planning may not be nugatory."

"I fancy our opinions or entreaties are scarcely necessary, papa; for, as usual, a face wreathed in smiles betrays the perfect harmony existing in your views with those advanced by mamma. But what is the proposition? Something I already divine coexistent with a benefit to me."

"You have spoken correctly, Marian. Your mother never forgets you in her little cogitations."

"Do not make the matter quite so personal, Leslie. Marian and yourself are representing me as far too unselfish, and fearing that you will lose sight of one object in your affection for the wife, I must take the matter entirely out of your hands, and relate it myself."

All smiled, and permitted her to proceed.

"The death of a friend, Mr. Mahon, several months since, in Vicksburg, and her dying request to me, renders a visit to that place obligatory. Her last prayer was, that her children might be committed to my charge. This, from some incomprehensible reason, the father persistently refuses to grant. I can not feel, however, that this denial on his part renders the responsibility imposed by the mother less great, and consequently can not be happy until I have seen the little ones, and persuaded the father to some course which will prove advantageous to them.

"I at first contemplated making the trip alone; but, under the present circumstances, feel that I can not leave Marian; therefore have persuaded her father to go with us, and, in order to augment the pleasure of the trip for her, go by way of Mobile and New-Orleans."

Marian clapped her hands gleefully.

"O mamma! how charming that would be."

"I think Miss Marian, by her very delight, has decided the important point—do you not think so, Mr. Lee?—leaving me no opening to confute, even were I so disposed?"

"Undoubtedly she has. Woman-like, Mr. Mahon, they are ever prisoning me within delicate meshes, binding me so closely with their silken threads of persuasion that I rest there a listless, inanimate victim, swayed by each new caprice. To confess the truth, however, I am always a willing indulger to their whims; for when can a genuine, earnest woman err?"

Marian shook her head archly.

"And, were you constantly within warring elements, papa, woman would teach you not to divulge the se-

cret, with her never exhausting lash; for remember, 'The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.' "

"Yes," laughed Mr. Lee, "and 'Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!' Our mood of banter has almost caused us to neglect the original topic. What of our little journey?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Lee; "you have already, in a spirit of raillery, admitted our power. We accept it only as a serious assertion on your part, leaving you no clue by which to escape; therefore we go."



### CHAPTER XIII.

“‘LET there be light!’ said God; ‘and there was light.’  
‘Let there be blood!’ says man; ‘and there’s a sea.’  
The fiat of this spoiled child of the night  
(For day ne’er saw his merits) could decree  
More evil in an hour than thirty bright  
Summers could renovate, though they should be  
Lovely as those which ripened Eden’s fruits;  
For war cuts up not only branch but roots.”

“THESE lines seem well refuted by the smiling appearance of each little village which greets the eye in our rapid course, Marian.”

“Yes, mamma; this instantaneous recuperation, as it were, in the very midst of such annihilation as the South has witnessed, seems almost incredible. I had expected to find monuments of past desolation on every hill-side, crowning each hearth with its gloom; but instead, are unique cottages, blotting out by their beauty the remembrance of the blackened, ruined homesteads, where, beneath their ashes it may be, still glitters a remnant of the past waste and luxury of their sybaritical owners.

“Indeed, a more complete renovation could not have existed, had the solemn mandate fallen from aulic lips, that each sylvan spot must again bud and bloom.”

“Truly, Marian, the South is impoverished; but in the present scenes we behold cheerfulness, indomitable energy, and a disposition to struggle bravely against indigence;

and woman, by her matchless powers, **must** aid in the noble work yet to be achieved; scorning as not an appropriate associate the fatuitous, giddy child of fashion, whose only aspirations are those for silks and velvets—whose thoughts reach no further than the present, caring not if a thoughtless, foolish extravagance plunge the now tottering mansion into inevitable spoliation.

“Never thinking of the toil-worn, starving girl who, in the still hours of night, finds no freedom from the eternal stitching which hope faintly whispers may release from penury, and which, when complete, plodding on wearily with the garments, hoping to receive the amount due, but meeting, in reply to her anxious pleadings for the money, a blank look of astonishment at the impertinent request, teaching the despairing girl that the golden rule, ‘Do unto others as you would be done by,’ has never been taught or understood in the home of that imbecile creature; that she, even in her poverty and rags, can look down upon that piece of tinsel and gauze—for she has at least honesty. Woman! Alas! that such as I have pictured should bear the name, should desecrate the noble escutcheon which is hers by inheritance.”

On and on, in its unmeasured course, sped the locomotive, carrying in its richly-freighted train intellects of every calibre; pleasure-seekers, too, were there, and Mammon-worshippers, who had placed the filthy lucre as sole occupant in

“Ambition’s airy hall;

The dome of thought, the palace of the soul.”

Twilight had overcanopied nature with her sombre shades as they approached Mobile. A multiplicity of

insects filled the woodlands, emitting at times lambent phosphorescent glows, which illuminated but a moment, rendering the scene wildly picturesque.

Marian fancied she could distinguish in the innumerable voices a sound like that of the cicada. There was a mesmeric influence in this wild chirping, a soothing balm in the dusky flakes of closing day which generated coruscations from the past; little jeweled thoughts, destined for no ear but hers, were withdrawing from the sacred depository where love had placed them, recalling so forcibly the absent one.

Forgotten now were doubts and fears. His last words, "God knows, my darling, I will make you happy if possible," were pleading tenderly for him. She thought of Ruskin's portraiture of what a genuine artist should be—'It is therefore that we pray him to utter nothing lightly, to do nothing regardlessly. He stands upon an eminence from which he looks back over the universe of God, and forward over the generations of men. Let every work of his hand be a history of the one and a lesson to the other. Let each exertion of a mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy—adoration to the Deity, revelation to mankind'—and exclaimed silently, "Oh! how like in reality to Mr. Mahon."

"Tracing love's hieroglyphics again, Marian?"

The words were spoken softly in her ear; but Marian recognized in the mischievous expression the tones, of her father. He had never before insinuated even, that love occupied a portion of her waking dreams, and her face burned and glowed from a feeling which she could scarcely define; not because she would not have spoken

openly upon the subject, had he so desired it; for in his nature there was far too much magnanimity, within his warm, throbbing heart far too much sympathy, for her to feel apprehension; but the brightened flush was instantly noticed by one ever watchful, and, with a gentle shake of the head toward Mr. Lee, Mrs. Lee quieted him by laughing remarks on his own past, and in the grateful look given by Marian, read her thanks.

They lingered but a short time in Mobile, exchanging greetings with friends, and then sped onward to the great Southern emporium, New-Orleans—a city opulent in entertainments of all descriptions; in whose labyrinths of pleasure Marian plunged eagerly, beholding in each sinuation renewed charms, of which for the moment, she felt she could never weary.

“And this is the spot,” she exclaimed, “that brilliant but unfortunate Aaron Burr, would have had as the great mart and centre, of the immense fabric which his busy brain longed to rear! And who can wonder? A spot inexhaustible in its resources, with so many facilities for both happiness and evil. But alas! his vaulting ambition, what did it accomplish? His daring schemes have crumbled with the decay of the body, while the great metropolis still takes its giant strides toward wealth and splendor. What a luxury, papa, it would be to dwell here always, at least in the suburbs of the city, reveling amid the spontaneous productions of this fertile soil, cheered daily by the sweetly-scented orange-groves and the rich and rare beauties of God’s creation, as well as man’s humble efforts at beautifying; with the atmosphere odorous with those flowers we so tenderly nurture, while here

they are indigenous, requiring not even man's careful culture to enhance their natural charms."

"I will give you but a few weeks, Marian, in which to weary of this bustle and confusion, and then I fancy you will sigh for the quietude of Poplar Grove."

"O papa! I would not willingly leave so sweet a home as ours; but for the moment I am intoxicated with the delight of a city life."

Mr. Ronald, whose arrival in the city had only preceded that of our little party a few days, called immediately. Channelings of grief were traceable upon his countenance, and Marian realized, while in his society, how impenetrable the umbrageous recesses underneath which he had been called to linger, would be to gleams of sunlight in the future.

At his suggestion, bonnet and mantle were sought, for a visit to the home of the city's dead—a cemetery with a "brick wall of arched cavities."

"The mode of sepulture here is strangely at variance with the abodes for the dead in other places, Miss Marian."

"Yes, Mr. Ronald, but strongly in unison with my own tastes. The prettily-graveled walks and neatly-kept plats, now flowery, now decked with evergreens, seem soothingly to silence the saddened reminiscences which the surroundings would otherwise engender, and which struggle so bravely for the mastery."

Constantly little love-offerings were to be seen upon the tombs, reminding the beholder how tenderly the departed were still cherished by the living.

"What to us the grave?  
 It brings no real homily; we sigh,  
 Pause for a while, and murmur, 'All must die!'  
 Then rush to pleasure, action, sin, once more,  
 Swell the loud tide and fret unto the shore!"

Those lines seem false to me now, Mr. Ronald."

"Oh! yes; they are untrue. Lurking in the chamber of each heart, within whose home death has entered, there are ever precious memories and wholesome lessons which the living would be loth to yield up. And such scenes as these should not be neglected; they are little mementoes to us of the fleeting breath, and it is God's wish that it should be so. Wedded only to the pleasures of the world, eternity would be forgotten were it not for such terrible visitations. But especially here is the vanity of earth best pictured. In these low, marshy spots, where even a covering of earth is oftentimes denied the humble plebeian, the upheaval of the coffin, the blue vault of heaven its only mantle; the dust of rich and poor soon mingling indiscriminately, and the smallness of the dwelling which the wealthy even are permitted to claim, causes us to cry, like Philip of Macedon on beholding his image on the sand, 'Oh! how little a parcel of earth will hold us when we are dead, who are ambitiously seeking after the whole world while we are living.' My heart now is stereotyped with gloom; but, 'Father, thy will be done!'"

Silently they wended their way back to the great thoroughfares. Well she knew where his thoughts were resting, and it would be sacrilege to disturb them; but her own, where were they? Busy, very busy with a

past conversation on a similar theme with a noble mentor by her side, delineating life's duties to her then sorrowing heart.

Many nights, during her stay, found Marian at the opera, indulging her musical tastes, listening to the charming strains of a cantatrice, the city's idol and pet, while daylight would find her with her friends, examining exquisite works of art, or visiting the various museums of interest. A connoisseur in all things which appertained to beauty, it was almost with feelings of regret that she turned to the great Father of Waters, which was to bear her onward, again to mingle amid new scenes and new pleasures.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ A NIGHT on the water, with moonlight caressing and peeping slyly into each bower of green, with which nature’s lavish hand has decked the shore—what can be more lovely, Maidee ?”

“ It is, indeed, lovely, Leslie; with the picturesque beauty of the little city already unfolding to our gaze, as we rapidly near the landing; its majestic hills and lowly valleys commingling in the wildest confusion, a domain, as it appears beneath the witchery of the present illumination, of perfect peace and contentment; and then I should fancy, antagonistic charms might be daily disinterred. But truly, when you spoke I had lost sight entirely of the surrounding beauties, and had commenced amusing myself with a concatenation of events, as I fancied they were transpiring on deck. If not out of harmony with your present feelings, Leslie, I will sketch the scene as it now appears to me.”

“ Go on, Maidee. What could be more gratefully received at this moment than one of your life-pictures ?”

“ Well, let the nearest group have precedency. In its midst, as centre of attraction, is a young and beautiful widow; the garb of mourning almost discarded for a gayer tint, and in the depletion of which sable wardrobe, the bright, sparkling eye would indicate a pang had scarcely



arisen. Suddenly the countenance assumes a sadness which is truly becoming. She is prating softly of 'heavenly recognitions,' breathing such wild laments over the departed, that involuntarily your own feelings blend with the mournful dirge. But see! A gentleman approaches, one whom I would describe, on first acquaintance, as did Gibbon, Augustus—'His virtues, and even his vices, are artificial.' Yet, O Leslie! behold our widow transformed as if by magic! He takes her hand, and bids her go with him to obtain a nearer view of Vicksburg. The happy expression playing over her features, indicates to all the proximity of a fortunate suitor; and our showers of sympathy are neutralized immediately. But, charity! it is a Christian virtue; and this seeming solecism on the part of our fair friend we cancel, and, with the receding forms, silently murmur,

" 'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart;  
'Tis woman's whole existence.'

" Contiguous to the group which the widow has so unceremoniously left are two gentlemen, greatly excited on some point of casuistry, scarcely worthy of our consideration; consequently, we leave them to adjust their difficulties between them, and dwell on new scenes.

" A party of epicureans next call upon us for a passing notice. Converting to swine, with them, would have been of minor consideration, had the great desideratum of life, a magnificent feast, been placed before them. The magic cup would have been quaffed eagerly, and Circe's potent spell acknowledged without one sigh of regret.

" There are other circles of interest, Leslie; but I must hasten on to the object of our love—Marian. For the

last hour she has been seated in yonder corner with one who seems to have forgotten—if he ever knew it—that

“ ‘Minds,

By nature great, are conscious of their greatness,  
And hold it mean to borrow aught from flattery.’

“He has surfeited her with encomiums, and now turns to a nobler theme—a theme far beyond his comprehension—that of love. Poor, satiated Marian! my heart yearns toward thee, my child; and I must relieve thee from the terrible dilemma.

“Listen, Leslie, listen; he is quoting poetry. His eyes are raised heavenward. His hands are cast up theatrically; and oh! the lover-like strain—

“ ‘May no dream of tenderness arise which earth may not fulfill,  
And no fountain open in thy heart which time hath power to chill.’

Quite sophomoric, think you not?”

Mr. Lee was laughing immoderately.

“O Maidee, Maidee!” he exclaimed, “what shall I do with you. Your love of the ridiculous will ruin you yet.”

“Not so, Leslie. Remember our conversation has been *sotto voce*, and intended alone for your ear; and you, I know, will not betray me.”

“Not even to Marian?”

“No, not by any means to Marian. It might prove embarrassing to her in the future, were she aware of my animadversions upon one of her would-be lovers.”

“Well, Maidee, as you wish in the matter; but here we are at Vicksburg, which relieves Marian, without your assistance, of her importunate suitor.”

"Really, Marian, you must cast off your phantasmal character for a while ; silence is irksome this dismal morning."

"I have been conjuring up pretty nothings, mamma, with the descending rain-drops, the occasional flashes of sunlight, amid the clear crystals, answering as a delicate foil, which adds the greater brilliancy to the illusions. And the thought occurred to me, if this scene is so beautiful, what bliss it would be to fathom

" 'Old ocean's gray and melancholy waste ;'

to roll back its tumultuous billows, and survey, if but for a moment, the sublimity of its unexplored depths! But, alas! our maddening impulses must be staid ; and submarine beauties, which would thrill and exult the heart, rest forever undisturbed in their richly-decorated cradles. Here comes papa, however, with letters."

"Yes, the very glimpse of which has already generated prelibations of happiness for you, Marian ; if not already, here is one that will do so." And he laughingly tossed a letter from Mr. Mahon, into her hand.

"Perhaps you intended this as a guerdon for my good behavior, papa," she slyly said as she retired to her room, buoyant and happy, anxious to receive tidings from the absent.

"Now, Maidee," he said, turning to Mrs. Lee, as his daughter withdrew, "I must make a disclosure to which I fear you will not listen kindly ; but remember, my wife,

" 'In such a time as this it is not meet  
That every nice offense should bear its comment.'"

Mr. Laselle, the husband of your lost friend, will be here as soon as the rain ceases, to invite us to his house."

"Well, Leslie, what is there disagreeable in that? Or perhaps your remarks as yet are not relevant, and you are still concealing something which will be exceedingly distasteful to me."

"Even so, Maidee; it will not only be distasteful, but painful. Mr. Laselle expects to be married in a few days."

"So soon? O Leslie! impossible."

Mrs. Lee was completely overwhelmed. The flowers had not even had time to bloom over the grave of Lottie Morgan, and yet her husband spoke of marriage.

Was there no sacredness in a tie which bound so closely two human beings, that it could be thus desecrated? Was life indeed a mockery, and love, of which man was forever prating, an idle dream alone to woman?

She arose and walked hurriedly up and down the room.

"Maidee," Mr. Lee spoke sadly, "you forget, while condemning all, that even you have always thought him incapable of appreciating his wife, and should you not conceal your feelings, it may prove detrimental to the interest of his children."

"Yes, yes, Leslie; life is full of duplicity, and I must, as you say, crush out all bitter pangs; but think not, my husband, that in condemning the false and untrue, all are under the same ban; remember, my love has placed you upon a pedestal far too lofty for censure, and now, while you are waiting for Mr. Laselle, I will go to my own apartment and quiet, if possible, my rebellious thoughts."

The meeting so much dreaded had taken place, and Mrs. Lee, the dignified, noble woman, had schooled herself into calmness. Not one look which would denote the wild, tumultuous outbursts through which she had passed, was given. The man of the world and the feeling woman met apparently on an equal footing; but between the two an immense gulf was fixed, which, had it not been for the sweet prattlers of her cherished friend, might have widened into a chasm which would have known no reuniting.

The carriage stopped in front of an elegant stone mansion, beautified with Doric columns. Near one of the windows sat a young child—a lovely picture—a beautiful countenance with a superscription of grief. It seemed almost Cowper's exquisite delineation of himself, when the piteous shafts of orphanage were first creeping into his young heart.

“ My mother ! when I learned that thou wast dead,  
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?  
Hovered thy spirit over thy sorrowing son,  
Wretch, even then, life's journey just begun ?  
Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss ;  
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.  
Ah that maternal smile ! it answers—Yes.  
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,  
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,  
And, turning from my nursery-window, drew  
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu !  
But was it such ? It was. Where thou art gone,  
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown,  
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,  
The parting word shall pass my lips no more !

Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,  
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.  
What ardently I wished, I long believed,  
And disappointed still, was still deceived,  
By expectation every day beguiled,  
Dupe of to-morrow even from a child."

And there she sat, the little Claude, the mother's pride, the impetuous child whom she had shrunk from leaving, waiting and hoping that the separation would not be eternal; all whispered in her little ear that at some future time she would be again united to the being she so idolized—and she believed it.

On entering the large hall, a little boy immediately engrossed Mrs. Lee's attention; he was busily engaged looking into a stereoscope, which he had, in the absence of the servant, purloined from the parlor-table.

"And this," said Mrs. Lee, "must be Sidney?"

Tears were flowing freely from her eyes; the mother's image, how plainly reflected to the loving friend! She clasped him to her heart, and Sidney resisted not. There was a warmth in the caress which the little one had not known since his mother died, and he clung to her passionately.

Marian passed silently up the stairway; there was a secret attraction above for her—a little sad face, which haunted her still.

Ah! ye, who have seen the coffin-lid shut forever from view, the mother who bore you, can ye wonder there was sympathy between these two who had sorrowed—the maiden and the little child?

Can ye wonder that the little face grew brighter when loving words were whispered and loving pressures given?

But O ye who have never known such misery! pity the orphan, and, pausing in your course, sometimes speak gently and kindly; thereby lightening its daily burden.

Mrs. Lee, leaving her husband and Mr. Laselle below, with Sidney in her arms, sought Marian. The door was a little ajar, and Marian seated upon a divan, with Claude's face pressed to her own, was speaking to the eager listener of the one who had assumed her mother's position in her father's home; who had caused to banish the thickening shadows, which were falling around her and rendered life so sweet and beautiful.

"And perhaps, Claude," she said happily, "God will thus bless you, and halcyon days may yet be in store for the little orphan."

Mrs. Lee raised her eyes upward.

"O our Father!" she silently murmured, "it is thus thou dost condescend sometimes to reward earnest, loving woman, while others, far more worthy than I am, are neglected and alone. Thou hast deigned to bless me, and I thank thee. Oh! teach me to be worthy of such kindness."

## CHAPTER XV.

“THE music, and the banquet, and the wine,  
The garlands, the rose-odors, and the flowers,  
The sparkling eyes and flashing ornaments,  
The white arms and the raven hair, the braids  
And bracelets—”

all were there, adding by their very presence, and their varied beauties, delight; breathing in each attitude and look, congratulations for Mr. and Mrs. Laselle. Congratulations received graciously, with numerous smiles and bows, by the former; but accepted simply as marks of respect, due her marvelous beauty by the bride.

Cassandra, for the wondrous gift of reading the pages of futurity, pledged her love; but when endowed with the wonderful largess of unfolding to man his happiness or misery, she perfidiously refused to fulfill the contract, thereby creating the terrible ire of Apollo.

Like Cassandra in one thing, Eva Sappington had crushed the nobler instincts of her nature to obtain a fatal gift—that of wealth. But, in fulfilling the marriage vow, she had been even more reprehensible; for love had been silently withheld and gentler emotions, in her opinion, were to be henceforth marbled. With the gem, so long coveted, in her possession, she felt, she knew that she could be happy, with the constant adulation of the gay



world she so loved. Their silent homage would be a sweet incense which would forever hush all other longings.

And the dear ones at home, they too must share in her boundless wealth—partly for them, the sacrifice had been made—and she read in the idolatry of her husband, that this wish of her heart would be easily granted; and her family would occupy henceforth the position to which they were entitled.

Mr. Lasalle's delight seemed limitless; it was so sweet to listen to the compliments bestowed upon the object of his choice, the proud, noble beauty he had won. He watched each step, as she passed through the dance, and thought he had never before beheld any thing more lovely.

What to him were the murmurs, borne maliciously from an envious world, of Eva Sappington's inability to love; and sometimes, too, he heard it silently whispered that a pure, noble woman would not listen to the outpourings of a heart so recently draped in mourning.

Pshaw! what nonsense! He, for one, would not let his "frail thoughts dally with a false surmise;" for he—did he not love that golden-haired girl, whose lips might dim the very brightness of the coral—whose carnation-tinged cheeks had caused many a smile to vanish from the reigning belle? Love her! Alas! the only love he had ever known, her loveliness had aroused into existence.

It was true, there was a latent pang, when he dwelt for a moment upon the mother of his children and his falseness to her. Her genius had dazzled him by its splendor and the world's eulogy upon the quiet, now voiceless one,

had rendered him proud and vain that Lottie Morgan bore his name. But within the grim chapel of his heart, a feeling had been long harbored, he dared not, even himself, analyze: it was the dread of an ignoble soul, of that very genius which the world worshiped, of that purity of soul which longed so earnestly, before her death, to bring him within its regenerating influences. But on meeting with Eva Sappington, he had resolved that all ghostly memories should be dissolved, that the world should read only inscribed upon his heart, in connection with Lottie Morgan,

"Thus peaceful rests, without a stone, a name  
That once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame."

Mrs. Lee sat in a remote corner of the room, in earnest conversation with one of the *savants* of the little city; not so remote, however, as to prevent a knowledge of the admiration which Marian's inimitable charms were eliciting. And then, too, Claude and Sidney were near, reminding her constantly, in their excited tones, of what was transpiring, even though she should have otherwise forgotten it.

"Surely, Mrs. Lee, yourself and companion must be engaged in some teleological discussion, so engrossing seems your theme; but what do you say to leaving that pretty daughter of yours in our midst? Truly I am afraid you will scarce have a choice in the matter, so determined are our young men to present their fascinations in the most favorable light."

"Believe me, my opacity is not as great as you may imagine with regard to the temptations which may be cast

around Marian ; but should the charms of Vicksburg detain her here, rest assured Mr. Lee and myself must be claimed also as citizens."

" Ah ! is it so ? Then we shall have a double motive for presenting the numerous charms of our city ; but now as to the bride—what do you think of her ?"

" She is surpassingly fair ; but, I fear, not adapted to the responsibility she has assumed of training motherless children."

" Ah ! well may you say so—

" So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,  
We start, for soul is wanting there."

Mrs. Lee shuddered. It was strange another should repeat the very thoughts, with which her mind was so deeply imbued.

Must one possessing a teemless, aimless life—a false fashionist—be the instiller of the principles which must guide the destinies of two young lives ? Impossible, Lottie Morgan's children must not be neglected : echoes from the early loved were pleading for them, even from the tomb ; and she must use every energy of her being, during her remaining stay, in the accomplishment of her mission.

O man ! thoughtless, careless, unfeeling being, why is it that, in the days of thy widowerhood, the past can be so easily canceled ?—the memory of the one whose life was a life of sacrifices to enhance thy comforts, so readily obliterated ! And thou, in thy weakness and in thy folly, can laugh and prate of another tie which will soon cicatrize the new-made wound ? How is it that thou canst force upon bleeding, sensitive hearts, mere butterflies, who

bask and flourish alone in the sunshine of prosperity, scarcely capacitated to guide their own fallen natures, much less, the noble existences with which God has intrusted thee?

Purblind one! not pausing to consider the step thou art taking—there will be moments in thy future, which will be bedewed with regrets—hours when thou wilt silently mourn for the clear, practical mind which cheered thy early wedded life; an earnest wish, it may be, for the sweet sympathy of the true woman, thy first choice, the very remembrance of which, will cause thy present joys to empale and vanish.

The morning after the party, all nature seemed flooded in golden beauty, so bright, so gloriously shone the sun.

Many of the wearied belles of the night before, still lounged indolently in their boudoirs, dreaming, it may be, of the tender thoughts spoken by loving eyes the evening previous; while the gentle sighs of others less fortunate, were floating noiselessly upon the sweetly-laden air.

Mrs. Lee and Marian having packed each trunk securely, preparatory to their departure, entered a carriage that Mr. Lee had in waiting, to pay a parting visit to Lottie Morgan's humble home.

Mrs. Laselle turned from the window with a sigh of relief, as the vehicle moved rapidly away.

"Gone, for a while at least!" she exclaimed, "and I can have a little quiet, without being continually tormented about those children. Dear me! I wish they were both in her safe-keeping. What can Mr. Laselle mean by

wishing them to remain? Children always were a nuisance, and go they shall."

After which peremptory declaration, she sank wearily into a *fauteuil*, assuming at the same time a flaccidity of manner not often hers. Nebules of anger were in the ascendancy on the lily-white face, that appeared so beautiful to the outward world.

"Why is it," we hear hissing through the pearly teeth, "that Mrs. Lee's penetrating eye should disturb me? Why is it her looks sink so deeply, reminding me—contrary to my own wishes—that my present life is a hideous mask; resuscitating anxious forebodings, which I had thought henceforth, it would be a light thing to embody?"

Mr. Laselle's quick step upon the stairway caused her to brush rapidly aside the tears of vexation which were falling, and with a cheerful smile, rising to meet him, she playfully said,

"One proof of your love I must have this morning, dear husband—only one."

"Only one, my darling? Then speak, for it is already granted."

"So easily? How kind you are!"

And the little hands passed caressingly over his brow.

"Mrs. Lee has just left me."

His face darkened.

"Is it of my children you would speak, Eva?"

"Yes; she wishes them for a short time, and I promised to plead with you on the subject."

"It can not be. My children shall not be separated from me."

The hands were thrown up deprecatingly.

"But, my husband, you forget your promise, and my poor self. Children are a great care; you would save me all trouble, if possible, would you not? You know I am so young."

"Eva, why was this matter not thought seriously upon, before our marriage?"

"My boundless love for you, my dear husband, caused me to lose sight of every thing else."

And the arms encircled him lovingly, and the pouting lips were raised for a kiss. The infatuated man in softened tones whispered, "You have conquered;" and pressed her to him warmly, as the only object then worthy of his love. Thus quietly a wish was granted, which had so sternly been denied the dying.

Utterly unconscious of the conversation, her anxiously-expressed thoughts to Mrs. Laselle had produced, Mrs. Lee was deeply engrossed near the grave of her friend, planting flowers—friendship's tribute—upon the mound.

"Mr. Laselle has erected a handsome monument, Maidiee."

"Yes, Leslie; but affection did not prompt it. It was reared to satisfy the cravings of a censorious world."

"Are you not unjust, my love?"

"No, no, I can not be. Every act of his life reveals the sad thought to me, of a noble wife unappreciated. And this monument, how forcibly it recalls a lonely promontory—gilded at eve by matchless Sicilian sunsets; a lofty statue, standing proudly defiant, glistening with the golden beams—a lesson to man in its drapery of beauty of the evil of hasty passions; and Hannibal, it seems to me, must have stood there in days gone by, gazing upon that

testimonial of his crime, envying Pelorus his calm sleep—surveying like some lone sentinel the tomb which his tumultuous grief had caused him to place there; feeling, alas! how sadly, his inability to blot out the memory of his rash deed. Like Hannibal, our munificence can ornament the abodes of the dead with costly tombs, but alas! the passionate words still linger; the unkind acts to the lost still haunt us, and we stand tremblingly by their graves, harrowed in thought—wishing in our sorrow the dead could be restored, and we, the living, might be able to eradicate from their minds, the fearful scenes that have fled. So, I fancy, Mr. Laselle may stand here, ere many months, with a heart teeming with bitter regrets—and Lottie Morgan will then be avenged.”

“Why, mamma! Mr. Laselle seems very happy.”

“That may be, Marian; but when the stern realities of life approach, Eva Sappington will be found wanting; and then he will turn in thought to this spot, which conceals virtues which he could not but respect, even though her superiority to himself prevented that reciprocity of feeling, which often produces warm attachments.”

“Maidee, your work of love is now complete; therefore we must hasten on, as our time is precious to-day; but there is still one sacred act unfulfilled.”

“And what is that, my husband?”

“The graves of the Confederate dead—we must seek them, my wife.”

Silently and solemnly they passed to where the soldiers rested. Over an immense space in the cemetery—a consecrated spot—were thickly strewn hundreds and hun-

dreds of noble Southern hearts. Bravely they had fought, side by side in life, and in death they were not divided.

A young girl bent near one of the slabs; her hands were clasped firmly as if in supplication. Tears fell thickly, but the peculiar expression of the countenance denoted more that a descending benediction was being implored, than that wails of grief were gushing forth from a surcharged heart.

Mr. Lee knelt by her side.

"Permit us," he said, "to mingle our tears with yours. This is not your grave alone, but one dear also to your countrymen. Remember.

"There is a tear for all who die,  
A mourner o'er the humblest grave;  
But nations swell the funeral cry,  
And Triumph weeps above the brave."

"O sir!" she said falteringly, "I believe you; for months I have longed for this hour—to press my cheeks against the sod which covered my brother's remains—and oh! believe me, he was one of nature's noblemen. To clear with my own hands the rubbish, I fancied that I might, alone, deck his grave and place a sister's humble offering upon the lowly mound. It seemed the absorbing thought of my life. Alas! I had dreamed that the spot we so loved, in our simple home, would rest here neglected; but ah! how different it seems; kindly tended by fair hands—wreaths withered it is true, yet showing to a sister's heart that woman has been here; and oh! can you blame me?—I had ceased weeping for the dead, and at your approach my feeble petitions were ascending in behalf



of the noble women of the South, imploring God to bless them—and He will bless them.”

Hushed and silent were the listeners—for her lips seemed still whispering the prayer—but all nature burst into song, and in chanting their sublime anthem, the chief refrain seemed to be “God bless them! God bless them!”

## CHAPTER XVI.

FAIRMOUNT Water-Works, presenting a sheen of bewildering beauty in its winter robes, looking amid its silvery habiliments like some rare haunt in whose formation nature and art had both vied in production, so as to perfect its gorgeous splendor—notwithstanding the bitter cold of the morning—failed not to attract its quota of admirers.

But it is ever thus with Philadelphia's boast and pride; a cornucopia in beauty, flooded with allurements which daily enchain esthetical tastes; and, too, so rich in utility that even the practical mind, while examining and re-examining, can find some food for thoughtful digestion.

Near this scene of loveliness, upon a glade of winter's moulding, frolicked some laughter-loving urchins—now skating, now pausing to evade the snow-balls which were being tossed quickly from a temporary *estrade*, reared by older companions, to impress upon the younger group “the proximity of dignity,” as they mirthfully termed it.

An old man, with locks so white that from them even the descending snow-flakes could scarcely be distinguished as they rested upon his aged head, crouched near by—cowering as if loth to meet the gaze of his fellow-man, yet eager to drink in this draught of happiness which was

portrayed so vividly before him ; watching with avidity the saltations of the boisterous party, and laughing heartily as some fantastic figure reminded him of whilom days when his own heart, exuberant with joy, mingled in similar scenes.

Day was waning, and the lookers-on, as well as actors, were one by one leaving the exciting sports, ere he, who had been so unmindful of the passing hours, arose, more proudly erect than the morning had found him, with some tokens of the delight he had received, still visible.

That day of cloudless splendor—what had it been to him ? It was the incantation of a golden echo—an echo from his childhood's home, which had long lain dormant, and whose resuscitation had rendered a total oblivion to his daily burden. With a smile playing upon his features, he moved rapidly along with the throng, cheered by the gentle musings of a happier heart.

Who knows but at that moment he felt the warm, lingering kiss, impressed upon willing lips by a mother's fondness, as he sprang eagerly forward to join the waiting group of his boyhood days ? Who knows but the same ambitious vibrations were reawakening into life, as had stirred the youthful blood when his own brilliant horoscope had been revealed to him by partial lips, and the same panting desires were springing up to carry out the predictions of the sage astrologer, who had foretold a career marked with nobleness and truth.

Pausing, at length, in front of a handsome dwelling, upon one of the most fashionable streets in the city, the massive door opened to his light touch, and he entered a large hall, decorated with choice engravings, and from

thence passed into an elegantly furnished apartment, where an apparently cheerful, happy trio were busily engaged in their evening amusements.

A beautiful, golden-haired child gamboled with a pet kitten upon the bright-hued rug, while two ladies, both young, sat near a table, discussing the merits of a handsomely bound volume which had just been purchased. The one, a genuine brunette—with a crimson japonica nestling lovingly amid her dark braids, and a unique set of coral as her sole ornaments, contrasting charmingly with her finely-tinted complexion—frowned perceptibly upon the opening of the door, feeling, without permitting herself even to gaze upon the intruder, the approach of a living incubus, which blighted her daily happiness.

"Your study has been ready, Mr. Swaby, for some time," she said indifferently.

"Is there a light there, Ida?"

"Yes."

He turned reluctantly to the door.

"Brother!" exclaimed a mellow, rich voice, springing to his side, "spend a few hours with us, will you not? Perhaps it will enhance the pleasure of your evening, and I am sure it will add much to ours."

The speaker was clad in deep mourning, and the saddened countenance betokened recent grief. She was tall, graceful in appearance, and, while examining her closely, we find our eye turning as if for the revelation of some hidden secret to the innocent, unconscious being who is with her kitten, luxuriating in the warmth of the evening fire.

He had brought some sunshine home in his heart for

the first time in many months, and the words fell as gently and soothingly upon his hungry, arid affections, as lights the descending dew on the parched, dying plant of southern summers. The same old pleasant smile which had vanished for a moment at his wife's reception, returned, and he looked pleadingly toward the seeming icicle, which obstinately refused to thaw.

"Ida wishes to read to-night, and I fear my presence would be objectionable."

The wife's lips moved not, and, with a disappointment he could not conceal, the isolated man withdrew to his solitude.

"O Ida, Ida! what have you done?" And the tall form bent tremblingly forward, as if swayed by uncontrollable emotions.

"Sister, I am wearied to death with these abnormal whims which you would fain make me believe are business habits."

"But O Ida! his face seemed so much brighter than it has of late, and you should not have frowned so coldly upon him."

"Marie, the approximation of one I so utterly abhor, arouses all the antagonism within my bosom. My entire being is metamorphosed, and I think, were I luxuriating amid supernal beauties, his presence would transform the vision, and I should sink to the very lowest depths of degradation. It is said, you know, 'that the Talipot palm-tree of the East, blooms not until the last year of its existence; the flower which is then produced is inclosed in a sheath, and when this explodes or expands, it is done with a loud noise, after which it becomes so offensive that it is

frequently cut down to get rid of it; and may it not be so with my liege lord? If your watchful eye has discovered any evidence of budding affection, or even of brightness upon his countenance, may I not flatter myself that I have room for freer breathing in the future; for perhaps, like the Talipot palm-tree, the flower of love, even though it should be disagreeable, will expand and bloom around our hearthstone during the last year of his existence, and, too, perhaps trumpet-tongued heralds will be employed to announce the bliss in store for your fortunate sister."

"O my God! what is it I hear? A sister whom I had deemed a very vestal of loveliness, thus speaking of one whom she has vowed before a sacred tribunal, to respect."

Appalled and heart-sick, Marie Toleman sank by the side of her child, as if, in that innocent presence, she could find a cloak which would forever conceal her sister's baseness.

"Marie, forgive me if I inflict pain; for ah! doubt not you are the sole tie which binds me to principle and honor, and your society for the past few days has been the only cup of joy which my lips have been permitted to quaff since my marriage. Yielding to his saturnine nature, has become irksome to me. What! dwell forever in the purlieu of his pleasure or displeasure? No! I can boast of some acumen, and thank God I intend to use it."

"Reflect, Ida!" And the mild eyes sought those of her sister with affection still beaming from them. "One of your impetuous, wayward temperament has been sorely tried, I admit; but tell me truly, is it not your old love for Lucien, which has thus banished your husband's image? Are *you* not culpable, my sister, instead of

the one you so deeply condemn? Have you tried by gentle means, to win and woo his heart back to his own fireside?"

Tears sprang quickly to the eyes of Ida, and Marie Toleman welcomed it as an omen of good.

"Marie," the tones were milder, "when I married Mr. Swaby, it was undoubtedly, as you afterward learned, to save my father in his old age, as I then thought, from indigence. It was a terrible sacrifice; for I loved Lucien Whitsell, alas! God alone knows how dearly. My father's fears were groundless; the crisis passed and his fortune was saved through the kindness and instrumentality of friends. The daughter's oblation, what did it accomplish? Naught. But, silencing all inward pangs, I determined courageously to face the ordeal, which my own folly and a father's sufferings mutually had brought upon me. I did not love Mr. Swaby, it was true; but with all of a mother's early lessons fresh upon my mind, I knew woman's duty, and neglected it not. Vainly Lucien Whitsell sought my side. I spurned him as I would the vilest reptile in my pathway. He upbraided me even in the society of others, when he found he could not meet me alone, with my perfidy; but I bore it all calmly, not allowing one word of explanation to escape my lips. O Marie! you know not how earnestly I longed in that bitter hour for your presence; but you were absent in Europe, and your letters were all so deeply perfumed with happiness, that I felt it would be selfish to obtrude my grief upon you and yours."

Marie Toleman was sobbing audibly; the recital was

even more painful than she had anticipated, though she had suspected much.

“ Hush, hush, my sister ! do not weep thus, for I am hardened to any thing now, and far from worthy of your pure sympathy. But to continue : I humored his chameleon moods. At times he was all gentleness to his wife ; at others, petulant, irascible, and overbearing ; but I wrestled with an inward tempter, and meekly bore his harshness. Day after day I remained in this house with no companion ; occasionally my father would steal a few moments from his business to devote to me, and when with him—whom it would have been martyrdom to have seen reduced to poverty—mine, scarcely seemed a sacrifice ; for the control of his fortune, and his repeated allusions to the strong arm—meaning Mr. Swaby—which he had now to lean upon, rendered him so inexpressibly happy that I partook of the contagion, and wildly dreamed that the immolation had not been too great. Company, after a while, became distasteful to me, and I refused to see any one, pleading indisposition as an excuse ; and truly it was sickness in the most agonizing form. Repeatedly the door-bell would ring, and my heart would bound with the wild, tumultuous pleadings for my only love—for it was Lucien Whitsell. He knew and felt that he had been wronged, and intensely desired to unravel the mystery ; but the same answer was ever given. O Marie ! I have domiciled within my bosom, thoughts as motley in their conception, as the human characters stored for the night in some caravansary in the East. But all my cheerfulness when with him, all of my attempts to gain his confidence, (for I cared not for his love,) all of my efforts to-



ward conversation were met with trenchant, sententious replies. At last poor lacerated nature sank under the blow inflicted, and, pierced by the withering feeling of neglect and mortified pride, I lingered for weeks upon a bed of pain, craving death. During the time, he seldom visited my apartment, but left me entirely to the care of hirelings. Ah! what woman, with the noble feelings which God has implanted within her, can brook such falseness in the common amenities of life, much less when bestowed upon kindred? Think you not we should loathe those of our race whose philanthropical emotions are so meagre, that even sickness and death are deemed an infringement upon their daily pleasures? You speak not, Marie; but your silence gives assent. You, who never slight the feeble of earth, must condemn an act which even the Romans, in their days of barbarism, regarded as criminal. A few of my old friends, whom my great unhappiness had caused to discard entirely, hearing of my critical condition accidentally, came and besought me to allow them the privilege of nursing one whom they esteemed so highly. I was too grateful to deny their request, and the recipient of so much unexpected kindness soon commenced convalescing.

“One day a charming bouquet was placed upon my pillow, and the delightful fragrance caused me languidly to ask to whom I was indebted for so beautiful a gift? Judge of my surprise when Lucien Whitsell was named as the donor. ‘And, Ida,’ whispered one of my early schoolmates, ‘you should have witnessed his grief during the time we all trembled for your life. I do not think a single day has passed in which he has not been the first

inquirer as to your condition.' Marie! Marie! God grant you may never realize what I then felt; the intense loathing which inundated my heart for the being I called husband; the tenderness which was coursing stealthily through my veins for one who, though so cruelly treated, still clung to his early passion with a tenacity which seemed almost unnatural. Can you wonder then, my sister," her words were scarce intelligible, "that in one respect Lucien Whitsell triumphed?" Marie Toleman turned deadly pale. "I agreed to see him, and all the past was unfolded."

"O Ida! tell me not that he has persuaded you to leave your husband."

"Not clandestinely, my sister; for Lucien Whitsell is noble and honorable; but——"

"But what, Ida? Speak out. I am prepared for any thing."

"He wishes me to obtain a divorce. I do not think he would have even suggested that, had my husband been kind to me; but O Marie! he says, which is true, 'that my vow was first given to him, and I had no right to disannul it.'

"You had no right, it is true, Ida; but remember there is a greater vow binding you now, which a higher Master bids you not sever; and have you never thought, in your intercourse with your husband, that his insane conduct, proceeds from some latent circumstances which perhaps—perhaps you may yet find extenuating ones?"

"Even so, Marie. But hist!" And she cast furtive glances around the room. All was peaceful, and her eye returned again to the fireside where the child and the kit-

ten, wearied with their play, slumbered side by side. "What you have said may be true ; for do you know at times I fancied, while struggling so hard for his confidence, that I was simply coquetting amid the cinders of a blackened, blasted, ruined life—a life in which happiness has been crushed by some foul crime which he fears to divulge?"

## CHAPTER XVII.

“DUROC!” replied Napoleon, with a voice choked with grief, “there is another life. There you will await me, and we shall meet again.” The book dropped from Marian’s nervous grasp, and, clasping her hands together, she looked up appealingly to a sweet, pensive face which, in its oval frame, seemed to smile a silent assent as the mournful eyes were raised so pleadingly and anxiously to hers.

“O mother, mother!” we hear in broken, heart-rending accents, “tell me, tell me, if this be true? Are the words of the great conqueror of earth truly the sealed fiat of time and eternity? or are they a mockery, and am I your only child? Am I to be eternally separated from the being to whom I owe every feeble, noble impulse of my nature? Within a year, how I have shuddered at the thought that perhaps an obelisk of beauty might be placed, with its heavy weight, above me! or that even—shrink not from me, dear mother—my cold form might be placed beside your own in the marble mausoleum, where even the little sunbeam dare not penetrate; but oh! within the few months that have fled over my heart, has been woven a shroud of such delicate shreds, that it is withering and blasting my life. The early lessons of piety impressed by your patient efforts are almost submerged by the bitter-

ness of my grief ; but to-night, my own unworthiness forgotten, I feel like casting myself within the witchery of the holy shrine which my love has erected for thee, sainted mother, the idol of my heart, which time even can not demolish, and then within that pure temple praying earnestly for death. Let them place a mocking epigram upon my tomb, if they wish ; an epigram which tells of sanguine hopes dissipated by the baseness of man, of a trust in his noble purity shaken by months of dreary neglect ; if I can but once feel the cooling spray of your sympathy, the libels of earth will be as naught. Have your lips forgotten, dear mother, the sweet lullaby which once soothed me into slumber ? Are your heavenly joys so great as to wreck the memory of your child ? The loving light of your eyes—eyes in which only scintillations of the soul's deep movings were perceptible—is quenched ; but O mother ! is it forever ?”

The face, with its piteous expression of woe, bore sorrow's monogram, and in gazing we are startled by the look of patient grief, the deep furrows of care which a few months have wrought. The candle flickered and waned as the restless breeze, unnoticed, passed quietly in through the blinds, encircling the lurid flame, and hastening the extinction of its feeble light.

A mocking-bird resting on a bough near Marian's window chanted carols, now low and plaintive, again wild and brilliant ; but for once its music passed unheeded.

The little flowers beneath the casement were sending up their fragrance as if in their very redolence the stricken one might be wooed into forgetfulness.

The cold moon, shining down from its sublime heights,

casting silver shadows o'er the burdened earth, weaves a halo of light around the grief-tossed girl, as if in these mimicries of beauty, saddened reminiscences would be dissolved.

The warm, listless, apathetic atmosphere of a Southern morning in summer had spread its baleful influences o'er the inmates of Poplar Grove, militating strongly against the naturally energetic temperaments with which they were blessed, rendering them almost indifferent to the luxurious breakfast to which their continued absence would necessarily prove detrimental.

Claude and Sidney only had risen with the soaring of the lark, mingling their own sweet voices with the weird music of a thousand songsters of the forest, and chasing the varied-hued butterflies, checking them in their eager efforts to sip the first sweets of the dew-capped flowers, or springing forward beneath the dark arches, lured by the sight of a stray sunbeam which had paused for a moment to light the dusky recesses; for why should it not gild and beautify nature's mouldings?

Ah! these little hearts were merry and happy; for daily within an atmosphere of love they too could chant their matin praises, and laugh gleefully when the answering echoes gave back their own glad notes.

Wearied and exhausted with the delay, frowning lest the dainties which she had so carefully prepared might not prove such to the epicurean lovers, who, notwithstanding her repeated appeals with the little silver bell, answered not, the supreme controller in the culinary department summoned Claude and Sidney from their sports, and bade them inform Mrs. Lee that breakfast had long been wait-

ing. She knew the love of the mistress of the mansion for these noisy, laughter-loving, frolicsome children, and felt that their presence would not be obnoxious, though they should disturb her morning's repose. Mrs. Lee, surprised at the lateness of the hour, rose quickly and hastened to the breakfast-room, where Claude and Sidney, seizing Mr. Lee immediately upon his entrance, were soon busily engaged in relating the marvelous scenes which had greeted their never-wearying eyes, during their morning rambles.

Mrs. Lee noted Marian's non-appearance with pain.

"Maggie," she said, "have you seen Marian this morning?"

"No, Mrs. Lee. I do not think she has as yet left her room."

"Well, go to her door quietly, and if she is still sleeping, do not disturb her. She has not seemed well of late, and I would have her rest as sweetly as possible."

Mr. Lee stopped the children amid their rambling talk, and inquired excitedly,

"What do you mean, Maidee? Do you think Marian is sick?"

"Not sick enough to cause any uneasiness, perhaps, Leslie; but we will speak more freely in the library after breakfast." And, noticing Mr. Lee's manifest alarm, she added carelessly, "This climate is so enervating during the summer months, my husband, that I do not know that any cause for apprehension is necessary."

But with the fears so suddenly awakened not even the gay prattle of the children could divert him, and, partaking of the remaining meal in silence, he waited with impa-

tience for Mrs. Lee, whom he felt had never before taken so long to attend to her domestic duties. Maggie, it was true, had said, upon her return, that she was still sleeping; yet how knew he, but at that very moment she required the care and aid of some skillful physician?

"My darling," he spoke tenderly, for with him the deep affection cherished for Maidee Chaworth, even from her very infancy, as he might say, was still true and fond, "did I not know the love you bear my child, I should almost accuse you of giving a thousand unnecessary orders." He had drawn her closely to him, and she raised her expressive eye to his. "The welfare of that child could not be more dear to you, Leslie, than it is to me; for did it not seem bordering on sacrilege to speak so, I should tell you that my love and sympathy for Marian are almost as great as that which her own mother could have felt."

"Believe me, Maidee, I do not doubt you. In your past intercourse with each other, I know an own mother's care could not have been more unwavering; and truly, my wife, if the idolatry of a father and child can ever repay you—" Mrs. Lee threw her hand playfully upon his lips, and stopped the closing remark.

"Hush! my husband," she said softly, as the library-door closed behind them. "We must not speak thus, but remember hereafter that she is mine as well as yours."

An hour after, Mrs. Lee emerged from the library, and, pausing to bid Maggie superintend the preparation of such delicacies as she thought Marian would relish, she passed quickly up the stairway and knocked gently at her door. No returning answer came, and on opening



it; she was shocked to find the bed untouched, not even a wrinkle upon its snowy covering. Upon a lounge near the window, where the soft winds were still wooing her to slumber by their mesmeric kisses, lay Marian. A loose wrapper, such as deck *la belle* Creoles in midsummer, had been thrown carelessly on the night previous; and the same languid, dreary air which had haunted her waking features were resting there, amid the calm repose which tired nature had so fortunately forced upon the young girl. Mrs. Lee bent tenderly over her, and looked long and wistfully upon the sweet face.

“ ‘ The beautiful are never desolate,  
But some one always loves them—God or man.  
If man abandons, God himself takes them.’ ”

How strangely the very tendrils of my heart seem linked with those of this child; and if she should waste away, what could fill the vacuum made in Leslie's heart and mine? But no; it can not, shall not be! Grief does not kill, except, weak natures. Hers is by far too strong. She will not succumb to the weakness and folly of man.” And speaking thus, Mrs. Lee, bending forward, imprinted a warm, loving kiss.

Marian sprang quickly up. “ O mamma! is that your caress ?”

“ Yes, my child; I felt jealous of the lulling breeze which alone seemed privileged, this morning, to greet you with a kiss.”

“ ‘ Striking the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound.’ ”

**Mamma, you have dispelled such a sweet vision. Must**

I tell you all?" And the head sank wearily upon the supporting arm.

"Yes, all, Marian. Had you been more confiding in the past, your sufferings might not have been so great. I do not mean to reproach you, and yet perhaps I should; for my love has not merited such treatment."

"I know it, I know it, mamma; but, oh! pity me. I could not help it." And rills of warm tears—tears which were soothing—gushed forth and fell quietly, bearing in their flow a deep, deep burden. "Oh!" she continued, "it was a vision of 'gladsome beauty.'" And a smile, even at the bare recollection, hovered for a few moments amid the tears. "Last night, mamma, I felt so desolate; I seemed wandering amid some 'leafless desert,' which was waste and barren of even the green spots of earth, which oft greet the exhausted traveler in similar scenes. I felt that I must die; that death alone could bring the relief which I so earnestly sought. Then, beneath my dear mother's portrait, I poured forth the grief that was oppressing me. Often, often I longed to throw myself upon your kindness, and receive the comfort which I knew you would not fail to give; but the thought of my desertion was too humiliating. I could not speak it; but, as you insinuated just now, my reticence gave not quietude."

"And did you think, Marian, that your gloom and its cause could escape me?"

"I hoped it would; but I knew not. I resolved that Paul Mahon's name, and the cruel estrangement, should never be breathed by me to earthly ears. And I thought, last night, if it were possible that spirits from another world could commune with the living, my own mother's

would answer to my agonizing wail ; and it did, mamma, but not in the way that I had anticipated. The early beams of the morning sun were penetrating within the blinds before my weary eyelids closed ; and then she sought my pillow. Her own lips pressed mine as in life ; her soft hand smoothed back the tresses which in my grief had escaped confinement ; the same arms were encircling me that awakened joyousness in childhood ; and beneath her thrilling touch I was again happy. O mamma, mamma ! can the motherless ever forget ?”

“ Never, never, Marian ! Alas ! it would be a sacrilege to do so. What ! tear the image of the one from your heart, who has given you birth ? Stain that holy shrine with a single blot of forgetfulness ? Marian, it is impossible ! The child that could do it, would be a mocking fiend. Oh ! I have thought if there was one thing that could inspire my pen, it would be the memory of my mother’s love ; it would be alone that intense yearning to place before the world, the worth of the blessing that I, in her death, had lost. It is not that you love me the less, my child, for I can appreciate the holiness, the sanctity of your affection ; but for your mother, there is a sacred pedestal erected, to which, even amid the golden hours of your happiness, you must ever turn. Child, our heavenly Father sanctions this intense devotion to your parents ; for has he not said, ‘ Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee ’ ?—blending with his solemn mandate a terrible curse upon the wayward child, who could, even in a moment of anger, prove recreant to one of his great commands.

“ Turn to the vilest malefactor, who is about to crimson with his blood the scaffold reared for his execution, and ask him what is it, that, second to the thought of being ushered into the presence of his Maker, so causes his cheek to blanch ; and he will tell you, if his feelings are not too vitiated to confess, that it is the memory of a sweet, pale face whose voice had ever quenched the gushing tear in childhood ; whose heart, even in days of terrible wickedness, had echoed only deep tones of sympathy for the tempest-tossed wreck of manhood. Or, bending with the silver-haired, faltering pilgrim above the grave which he finds opening to receive him, ask him what is it that brings up the smile to his wasted features ; and he will tell you that a pure, holy voice, whose whisperings he had ever heeded in the hour of temptation, still speaks in silent tones ; that her finger still guides him onward and upward. But, Marian, we have wandered far from our original theme—your closely-guarded sorrow—and this morning I would have you remember

“ ‘Tis murmur, discontent, distrust  
That makes you wretched. God is just.’

It is but natural that a finely ‘ wrought spirit ’ should be vulnerable to the keen shafts from the quiver of a cold and heartless world ; but within a home of love such as ours, Marian, where even the slightest sorrow need not be brooded over in secret, we should not shrink from that close communion which oft brings to the wearied one, peace. Believe me, if I have waited for your own lips to disclose Paul Mahon’s duplicity—as I knew you thought—it was only in the hope that some tidings might be

procured, which would exonerate him from the terrible suspicions created in your mind—but not in mine, Marian.”

“ You do not, then, believe him false, mamma ?” There was much of the sparkling animation of olden times about Marian as she uttered her last sentence.

“ I certainly do not, nor shall I, until I hear it from his own lips. Paul Mahon, in my opinion, is a noble, sincere Christian—one who would sacrifice his own happiness, rather than trifle with that of a woman, and such a one as Marian Lee.”

The old, glad smile again arose.

“ Your eulogies on both, are kind, dear mamma.”

“ Not kinder than you both deserve, my daughter. Did I not know him so well, perhaps I might doubt ; but I can not but feel that there is some foul plot in existence, of which we are wholly ignorant—which can only be explained in the future ; it may be dreary months of pain to both, before the mystery can be solved ; yet I would advise you, Marian, never, under any circumstances, to malign, even in thought, a genuine, noble type of man, unless you have irrefragable proof of guilt. Remember, however, my views are not infallible.”

“ You speak of a plot—why should suspicions arise in that form ?”

“ You are fascinating, as well as Paul Mahon ; may there not be another so strongly instigated by the powerful incentive of love, as to prevent your marriage, if possible ?” Mrs. Lee paused for an answer.

Marian mused long and deeply ; it was strange that

that thought had never occurred before, and it brought with it a healing balm.

“Mamma,” she said thoughtfully, “you are right. I will wait patiently, and see.”

“Paul Mahon is not one, I think, who would marry where he did not love devotedly; for do you remember Louis Gardiner spoke of him, upon your first acquaintance, as strangely indifferent to ladies’ society; but should he prove unworthy, yours is not the nature to grapple with gloomy memories. Earnest workers we must be. In your closing hour, dear Marian, as a just reproach, I would not have it written in letters of burnished gold, on the purplish-tinged sky, as it slowly recedes from your dying gaze—“Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“**BLESSED** is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted of God;’ for God can not be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Maggie paused; a bird of great beauty had lighted gently upon a feeble limb of the great oak, and its first note drew back to her mind her favorite theme — nature, and its enlivening little workers. She clapped her hands in wild glee, as in its busy warbling the limb swayed to and fro, as if about to yield up the light burden, and gratify the whim fluttering upon her lip.

“O papa, papa!” she exclaimed, “could I only secure it! See how beautiful it is! so gayly decked—each color of the rainbow is in its bright plumage! Oh! how sweet it would be for Miss Marian’s aviary. I wish it were safely domiciled there; and she must have it.”

Speaking thus, she arose slowly, forgetting in her delight the Bible which fell to her feet. But the gorgeous forester, ever on the alert, flew rapidly away; and she wildly excited at the thought of thus losing the prize, could only watch its glittering beauty as it soared higher and

higher, safely and rapidly retreating from one who could frame so cruel a wish.

The father seemed not to hear the remark thus addressed ; but seizing the book, he turned with apparent interest to the words which Maggie Dickson had just read. Alas ! how vividly it recalled to his mind days of yore—hours in the past in which a meek, pleading wife endeavored to woo him back to paths of happiness—maddening retorts, in which he had cast mockingly before her his atheistical views ; hurling from his then proud, blasphemous lips the falsehood, that the God of heaven, if such a one existed, led him on in his wicked, reckless course, bidding her, in his anger, digest his foul, malignant utterances. But ever gentle, even winning, seeking only to persuade and convince, she had, by a repetition of these very verses, endeavored to prove his error, words which sank only upon a heedless ear then, but strangely speaking to him now, through the thoughtless, careless voice of a daughter, toward whom he had long been singularly indifferent.

Utterly alone, with no one to supply his daily wants, as the toil-worn wife and daughter of the past had done, he had been suddenly checked in his mad career. Ceasing his wandering life, this man, who had not yet reached the number of allotted years, but whose hair was whitened by the scenes of dissipation and wretchedness through which he had passed, had returned once more to his former haunts, and, bending over God's holy word, he read and pondered silently. The same oak, which had spread its graceful foliage above his head, now shielded and protected him from the burning rays of the southern sun. Mag-



gie had wandered quietly away, leaving him alone with thoughts—yes with long-buried thoughts, and a trembling future.

She stopped at the open door of the hovel—his home—and entered, where an unusual mirth was soon visible within her weird nature, at the undignified stampede of the arachnida into whose gossamer receptacles she had plunged. A relentless demolisher, the nests of these busy laborers, which had so long been sole occupants, with the fungi, insects, and rubbish of all descriptions, were soon besomed from both within and around the cabin; when, delighted with her success, Maggie sang out cheerily,

“Papa, papa! do come and see how neat and cosy, I have made your gay establishment.”

But Dr. Dickson had passed dreamily within a sacred penetralia, christened with holier and purer thoughts; he heeded her not. Going to him, Maggie placed her arms carelessly around his neck and said petulantly,

“Mrs. Lee, always in connection with you, speaks of a labor of love which it is still mine to accomplish—what can it be, papa? I do try to love you, but you will not notice me; you think me weak and foolish, perhaps, and so I am; but Mrs. Lee says I can improve; and, indeed, I think I have already improved—what do you say?”

And walking erectly before him, she then stood smilingly, as if for inspection. Dr. Dickson gazed long and thoughtfully upon her. There was a brighter look in poor Maggie's face than he had anticipated. He had long thought his own wickedness had palsied and crushed the last remaining treasures; but here was one, bound by

strong ties, still claiming sympathy, to whom he might yet repay the fearful neglect of years.

"Come, Maggie," he said tenderly, and his arms were instantly extended toward her, "your father has not been faithful, I confess; but perhaps the future may yet atone for the frightful deficiency. And has Mrs. Lee indeed spoken often to you, Maggie, of your unregenerate parent and your duty to him?"

"Truly she has, papa. She spoke of days when, not an outcast, but respected, in a charming little home, you had been kindly affectionate to poor suffering mamma and Ida; but then, you know, I never knew those days."

The father shivered. The very simplicity and truthfulness of the child whom he had so long deemed almost idiotic, stunned him. Many moments elapsed before he could speak. At last he said mournfully, "Maggie, God has indeed blessed us in placing you under the guidance of such a being as Mrs. Lee, for she is one of the few, who feel deeply, the magnitude of the responsibility of training children. She is one of the few," and he spoke solemnly, "who realize in this degenerate age that 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: 'To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.'"

Tears fell thickly from the eyes of the truly penitent man. Maggie, then, had not been taught to hate this miserable apology of a father; and he, what had he not to hope for in this revelation? To walk proudly once more amid his fellow-men; to feel that this innocent, clinging child looked up to him alone, for protection. Ah! what happiness it would be. The glamour of a

peaceful existence was pulsating slowly through his wrecked frame; but he had long struggled in dangerous eddies, and the fallen man shuddered lest his dream of bliss might escape his grasp.

The resplendence of noontide glory, with its golden armory of beauty, had long dazzled Maggie by its glow; on disburdening her heavily laden basket of the luxuries which Mrs. Lee's thoughtfulness had prompted her to bring to her father, she sauntered slowly toward the grove. The shady walk back seemed very silent: all chirping and twittering was hushed, as if birds as well as man indulged in their noon siesta.

Naught indeed evoking echoes, save the occasional ringing laugh of Maggie as her approach dispersed some startled leveret from her pathway. Finally, the neat, snug cottage of Mrs. Lobeaux came in view, from which she distinctly heard low, mournful sounds; but pausing not to inquire the cause, she quickened, as rapidly her footsteps, as though some hideous basilisk had arisen before her, whose very hiss threatened annihilation; and welcome, very welcome seemed a glimpse of the ponderous gate of Poplar Grove, an ingress into which, she instinctively felt, would shield her from all further danger.

Maggie did not brood over troubles willingly; her childhood had been far from pleasant, and now in the sunny days of her existence she longed to thrust quickly from life each dawning sorrow. A mimosa within the hallowed inclosure of the only home she had ever truly loved, dispersed, by the beauty of its exquisitely airy flowerets, even the withering gleam of shade which by its temporary reminder had threatened to darken her

young heart, and soon she was encircled within a wreath of rare beauty which became well, her beaming face.

"Maggie and flowers, how charmingly they assimilate! Look, look, mamma! when have you seen any thing as bewitchingly lovely?—a very fairy draped in her genuine adornings."

"Indeed, they are synonymous; for when can we ever find Maggie without those golden showers of beauty, with which God blessed not only the maturity of southern summers, but our lovely springs and resplendent autumns. Marian, who could ever recognize in this dancing, gay little sprite the same being who, some time since, coming slowly up the avenue in her eccentric costume, excited so strongly our mirth?"

Mrs. Lee and Marian both laughed heartily at even the recollection, which did not fail to arrest Maggie's attention, by whom, hitherto, their approach had been unnoticed. She peeped shyly up, and, entering into their glee, cast at their feet her little pets.

"Maggie," said Mrs. Lee, "you have been absent a long time; you must have found your father exceedingly attractive this morning."

"Indeed, I did; he is very, very different since his return. But where are you all going?"

"To Mrs. Lobeaux's. Did you hear any thing from little Helen as you passed?"

"O Mrs. Lee! such gloomy moans issued from the cottage, that I did not stop one moment to ask how she was. I thought perhaps it was the chant of the frightful banshees, and fled."

"Maggie, Maggie, can I never eradicate from your

mind the foolish superstitions, you imbibed during your early wanderings?"

Maggie drooped her head. Adulation from the lips of Mrs. Lee or Marian was the sweetest boon her young heart craved, and their censure was positive pain.

Mrs. Lee, noticing Maggie's evident embarrassment, petted her cheek soothingly, and, bidding her be more thoughtful in the future, Marian and herself passed hurriedly on.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Marian, "I think the Egyptians, in the past, in some things displayed far more wisdom than we do. Could we only have an Acherusian lake, with the forty-two judges bearing their insignia of office, installed upon the shore at the hour of sepulture to deny transportation to our dead—unless rectitude and the strictest morality had marked their course in life—perhaps we should have less dissipation and vice, and more virtue; fewer children who bear upon their brows and in their conversation the stamp of early neglect, such as often poor Maggie displays; but which, fortunately for her, your untiring efforts may yet cancel, before she reaches maturity."

"True, Marian, public opinion ever bears weight; and I think, with you, the very thought of being thus dishonored in the midst of a world we have struggled to please, might oftentimes deter, even the purest, from many acts which they are daily committing. But, in relation to Dr. Dickson, I have great hopes of reformation yet. Your father tells me he is strangely changed. He has been compelled, through want of means, frequently since his wife's death, to forego free indulgence in drinks; consequent-

ly, in his lucid moments, an intense yearning has seized him for a better life; and may we not hope that even Maggie's influence may prove advantageous; for there is something strongly interesting about the child. Even now there are glances of intelligence visible, as her mind slowly expands, which can not but be pleasing to a parent."

On reaching Mrs. Lobeaux's, they found grief, deep grief, in her recently happy home, where the merry voice of a sprightly child had long gladdened the household. But now the joyous thrill was hushed, and imbedded amid the purest flowers which fond friends could procure. She seemed awaiting peacefully the removal to another home. Two simple verses, which had so struck little Claude Laselle's youthful fancy—plucked from a newspaper—in the memorizing of which she had enlisted Marian's assistance, and which she now daily repeated, as if death in thought were often with the child, arose instantly to Marian's mind, as her look dwelt upon the serene sleeper.

"Smooth the hair and close the eyelids,  
Let the window-curtain fall;  
With a smile upon her features,  
She hath answered to the call.

"Let the children kiss her gently,  
As she lies upon the bed.  
God hath called her to his bosom;  
And the little one is dead!"

So natural, so peaceful seemed the expression, that Marian could scarcely realize that she stood in the presence of death.

All were weeping around this beautiful image except the mother ; she, alone in her own apartment, knelt and prayed. The soft, liquid voice which had fallen so healingly upon saddened hearts amid the wild hamlet at the foot of Olives—which bade the buried Lazarus “come forth”—awakening glad music in Bethany—had sent its thrilling strains from holy Palestine to the wounded mother ; and, alone with her Maker, she was pleading that those same silvery accents which had breathed happiness in ages past, might again whisper to a bleeding heart that the dead was only sleeping.

To tell her that she was pleading an impossibility, would have been a mockery, and none could do it. He had bade her ask in faith ; and she believed she would not be denied. It was the only child of her bosom ; and humanity was weak. She was loth to yield it up. Suddenly, as all watched and wept, a slight quiver, a feeble pulsation, was visible ; and the bright eyes opened once more to the glad light of day. A wild cry of joy rang through the house, the glad echo reached the mother’s heart ; and, in the excess of her emotion, she became utterly unconscious. The intimation given had been too sudden ; the mother had fainted.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE golden orb of day, which had mantled nature for a while with its crimson blush, carried with its receding steps the weary sigh of the laborer, as it ushered in the hour of return to his humble though peaceful home; and the shades of evening were creeping rapidly in, mellowing the earth by their delicate, sombre touches, softening each dome and spire of the city.

Again we pause, spellbound, in front of the same elegant mansion in Philadelphia which has previously attracted us. Two forms were plainly visible, walking slowly amid the shrubbery, engaged in earnest conversation.

“Why is it, Ida,” speaks Lucien Whitsell in low tones, “that you cling so pertinaciously to this being,

“ ‘ Who loves no music but the dollar’s clink ’ ? ”

“Alone, from a sense of duty, and high-toned principle, Lucien. Would you have me a mark for ridicule and disgrace in the community, or a being to whom all must turn to pity, cringing beneath the blighting blasts of mortification? Alas! no. There should be a sacred adytum within each home, strictly veiled and guarded from the public eye, which is so eager to feast its hydra vision within the holy sanctum of others. Publicity, to some extent, my sad lot has already gained. But even



you, Lucien—loving me, as I am confident you do—would shield me from a prying world. Marie, I thought, had already convinced us both, of the fallacy and turpitude of your past argument.”

“O Ida! were your fate only different. To feel that you are forever bound to one who is incapable of appreciating your genuine worship; for

“ ‘The kindly throbs that other men control  
Ne'er melt the iron of the miser's soul;  
Through life's dark road his sordid way he wends,  
An incarnation of fat dividends.’

And such, alas! is the husband and protector of one, whom I have so earnestly longed to make mine own. And must this tie remain forever unbroken?”

“Forever—ha! ha! ha! The grave will soon claim its own; and then—but not till then—Ida will be free.”

Lucien Whitsell and Ida looked upon each other with amazement. It seemed so like a sibilation from another world. Alas! could it be that they were plunged within some deleterious malaria, where fiends incarnate lurked—where ghastly phantoms were assuming shapes which would soon poison them by their emanations?

A feeble man tottered forward. He had been concealed for some time, by the dense foliage and the thickening gloom of coming night. In his agony, the little currants near by, had been crushed within his tightly-clinched hands; and the pink liquid had oozed and trickled over his garments, presenting a strange contrast with his pallid complexion.

Ida fell insensible into the arms of Lucien, as she recognized the unearthly appearance and sepulchral tones

of her husband. But, unheeding her condition, he passed slowly on into the house, closing the door with his feeble, trembling hands, as if thereby he could shut out the sorrow which the words of his wife and her lover had inflicted.

Lucien Whitsell bent over the idol of his heart, bowed down with uncontrollable grief. He kissed her pallid lips repeatedly, beseeching her to speak only one word, to assure him that the feeble, flickering life, which had known so much gloom, would still pulsate and brighten beneath his burning love.

"Poor Ida!" he murmured, as he pressed her to his heart, "the unkindness of the past is withering your young life, and I, in my impotency, can not even shield you from the tortures inflicted."

Bearing her to the library, he placed her tenderly upon the sofa, and summoned Marie Toleman to his assistance. Long, they used restoratives; and the weary eyes at length opened upon the anxious watchers.

"Go, Lucien," she whispered, as soon as memory recalled the trying scene through which she had passed; "let me bear this effluence of unutterable woe which my own false step caused. I have been wrong in meeting you this evening. Forgive the pain which I necessarily inflict; but this must not occur again. Marie, Marie, be our guardian angel to-night, as you have been before, and induce Lucien to desist from pleadings which can only, if listened to, produce guilty consciences and stinging remorse; for indeed my own nature, I fear, is too weak to tread the path of duty without you, my pure sister, as a stay and support."

An hour later, Lucien Whitsell passed out of the front door, and paused not even to glance at a tall, elegant form which stood upon the marble steps, awaiting an answer to his own impatient ring.

"I would see Mr. Swaby immediately," he said, in an excited manner, as the servant took his card and conducted him to the parlor.

He gazed around the handsome, tastily arranged apartment with uncontrollable surprise. The delicately chiseled, bronzed lamps were casting their brilliant light over each exquisite work of art, displaying their peculiar charms to the bewildered eye of the stranger, under the most advantageous circumstances. It was a scene of loveliness over which the *dilettante* would have bowed in silent adoration; one, which had been undoubtedly alchemized by fairy fingers into that of beauty.

Three portraits invited his attention: the first was that of a young girl, with a clear, olive complexion, and cheeks and lips of vermilion dye; rich, purplish hair, soul-impasioned eyes; and one might fancy, a voice almost articulating from the slightly parted lips.

"A being born," the stranger slowly exclaimed, "for marvelous sacrifices—capable of silencing her own immaculate dreams of happiness, and laying them, withered and torn, at the feet of one idolized. God grant she may never have known the test of thus upheaving for another her own lofty aspirations—her own wild throbbings of love; for within those stirring depths, which the beaming eye unfolds, are prejudices wondrously dark to the deceiver, or he who is in the slightest degree unworthy of her esteem."

He turned with a painful sigh to another; it was the

softened lineaments of a blonde, and, in gazing on it, the delectable promise, fell in measured tones from his lips, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The very reiteration of these words, which had fallen from Him around whose brow a halo of light ever lingers, was soothing. To feel that one existed whose very countenance so plainly indexed the fact that she was fulfilling the destiny for which her life had been bestowed, was a pleasing contemplation rarely given, and he dwelt long and thoughtfully upon it.

"Oh!" he murmured, "to have such a sister—to unveil my wounded heart before those mild, sympathetic eyes! To list to the healing words, which, I am confident, she could utter, thereby mitigating the corroding pain by which I am daily and hourly pierced. What bliss it would be! But, sweet harbinger of peace, whoever you may be, I thank you for even the moment of tranquillity, which your pure face has reflected."

The next were the features of an aged man; but so noble, so indicative of calm, disinterested religion, that the heart of the looker-on, was filled with unutterable yearnings to meet so pure a type moulded in his Maker's image.

"Worthy, most worthy art thou," he said, "of the love which, I am persuaded, you have ever engendered within the heart of your fellow-man."

In another portion of the apartment hung an exquisite painting of the last days of Pompeii. How life-like, how real it seemed! All were hurrying from the doomed city, trembling lest the tufa and scorixæ might bury and overwhelm them, thereby rendering life extinct, save the beautiful, blind girl who, in her innocence and fearlessness,

had stooped to pluck a few stray flowers which had arrested her attention by the grateful fragrance with which they were thanking man for his past culture. Ah! what a surpassing vision of purity and truth. What a lesson to man of his own weakness; yet how thrilling the faith those sightless orbs display! What perfect confidence in her God! Bulwer, the artist has indeed by this exquisite delineation immortalized thy work, rich and independent though its own intrinsic worth is, in gems of beautiful thought and feeling.

Wherever he turned, little mementoes of foreign travel were visible: souvenirs from Herculaneum, which the numerous excavations had yielded up; shells marked from Como's lake, the very sight of which recalled once more the elegant villas, among which the Villa d'Este, which had so long sheltered England's queen, seemed most conspicuous. Once more he was intensely interested, fathoming with his eager eyes, the beauty of the clear basin of water, breathing the delicious atmosphere of Italy, wooed, as it were, into a dreamy forgetfulness of all but the pleasures which were then so eagerly courted.

Whisperings from Switzerland, too, lingered upon the *etagère*, a nucleus, as it were, in his own mind, where clustered rare views of lofty mountains, pearly cascades, shimmering beneath the noonday sun; where the eager mountaineer laved his lacerated feet, which the rugged, precipitous steeps had not spared; enormous glaciers, in whose rapid descent the huge boulders were hurled from their giddy heights, crushing, in their ponderous fall the unfortunate, whether he be man, beast, or insect, that came in the pathway.

Upon a table, inlaid with lovely mosaics, rested a paint-

ing of a dimpled, fair-haired child, so like the lovely blonde whose picture he had been loth to leave, that he felt like clasping it to his heart. She was dallying in her tiny, graceful hand a shell, unique in beauty, upon which was distinctly legible the prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." How quickly it reproduced before him the form of that widowed mother, by whose side he had first learned to lisp those holy words, now alone in her desolation, awaiting, in her luxurious home, the return of her idolized son.

His eye passed wearily from the little painting, which created, in the midst of its loveliness, a saddened reminiscence, and surveyed once more the entire apartment.

"Surely," he said, "I must be mistaken in the place of his abode; so much refinement and elegance are here displayed that it is impossible the foul originator of so baleful an imbroglio in the past, the fiendish homicide, could sully, even for a moment, so peaceful a scene with his presence. Ah! were it his, even the *cobra di capello* would have the power to arise and touch these emblems of beauty with its venomous sting, thereby tarnishing each sign of innocence into an object of hate and loathing."

Feeling in a side pocket, he drew a note slowly out, which seemed to have been written in much haste and in great excitement. Again he read,

"The vile instigator of the murder of Paul Mahon's father is dying a slow, torturous death, and implores him, if he would assist in alleviating to some extent the death-bed of a truly humble and repentant man, by lifting, as far as he is capable, the terrible burden which is sinking him into the tomb, that he will seek immediately his home, No. 120 — street, Philadelphia."

## CHAPTER XX.

"'Tis a fine thought, that some time, end we must.  
Then sets the sun of suns! dies in all fire,  
Like Asher's death—great monarch. God of might!  
We love and live on power. It is spirit's end.  
Mind must subdue. To conquer is its life.  
Why mad'st thou not our spirit, like the sun,  
To king the world? And oh! might I have been  
That sun-mind, how I would have warmed the world  
To love and worship and bright life!"

"YES, to be that one great 'sun-mind,' which should lead man into holiest temples; to teach him that by thwarting and trampling upon sacred rights, he but mars God's beauteous earth; that by crushing affection's ties, he alone makes himself a piteous wreck of folly and evil—what a privilege it would be; but alas! such is denied to human power. Man, and woman too, stand within the portal of the loved and loving, holding aloft their wands of evil; darkening the dazzling crystal light with which religion and love would fain drape their divine altars; blighting, by their vitiated, poisonous breaths, the germs of peace; and the world alone whispers in its onward course, 'Let them alone, we can not lessen the torrent.' When we, in our zeal, plead the power and strength of public opinion, if it would but rear citadels of good, which would not countenance a transgressor of those di-

vine laws which, in thunder tones, still speak from Sinai's heights, we are laughed at, and ridiculed for our ingenuousness. On all sides hearing the plea that the world is not responsible, and with their hands warmly clasped within that of the originators of evil, we see them pass smilingly on, still unchecked in their vileness, because, forsooth, others are not magnanimous enough to discountenance atrocities, in whatever form or shape they may appear; because, in fact, craven hearts fear to assert their abhorrence of baseness, lest their very assertion for good, should quench the current of their prosperity or pleasure!"

“Let each man think himself an act of God,  
His mind a thought, his life a breath of God;  
And let each try, by great thoughts and good deeds,  
To show the most of heaven he hath in him.”

“Pardon my interruption and repetition of an excerpt, which man but rarely reflects upon or realizes, I fancy. I have been an interested listener to the sentiments which you, in your soliloquy, little dreamed another would treasure up, and could not forego the pleasure of introducing myself to you in a similar strain.”

The words were uttered in a low, tremulous accent, as if almost fearful that her meaning might be misconstrued, and her manner deemed bold. Paul Mahon arose, and extended his hand to the speaker.

“Your pardon is already granted; and will I be asking too much when I inquire the name of a listener to thoughts of which I fear my own sad life has been, to a great extent, he originator?”

“Certainly not. It is Mrs. Toleman. Excuse my remissness in not mentioning it sooner.”



"Then, thank God, this semblance of truth and beauty is not unreal, and I am not in the home of a murderer."

"Murderer!" Marie Toleman grasped quickly the nearest chair for support; her look of intense agony would have softened feelings of granite.

"Murderer!" she almost shrieked; "oh! no, that can not, can not be. I know him to be guilty of some crime which has been the means of ruining not only his own happiness, but that of my noble, self-sacrificing sister; but do not tell me it is that of murder! Do not tell me that the escutcheons of our noble house are forever stained by so heinous an alliance!"

The words were spoken in piteous, plaintive tones; the pleading eye, which would not brook concealments now, pierced Paul Mahon to the heart. He placed her gently in a chair.

"Mrs. Toleman, forgive my hasty words; there may yet be some great mistake, and God grant that there is."

"No, no, your suspicions must be correct. I feel it, I know it; if not, why those maniacal ravings at times? why those intense longings to meet one whom he protests he has deeply wronged? And you, Mr. Mahon, must be the one. O my Father! in great mercy prepare my sister for this terrible blow."

For a few moments she ceased speaking; her whole attitude denoted that a silent prayer was still ascending upward to the Great Unseen; and Paul Mahon was in wonder and amazement that one so marvelously lovely and pure, could thus be linked with the murderer of his father. It seemed inexplicable. How he longed for a

solution of the mystery! But springing suddenly up, she looked imploringly toward him.

"Oh!" she exclaimed despairingly, "for the sake of my sister, for the sake of my aged mother, for my own and the reputation of my innocent child, you will not give publicity to this matter; you will not arrest him; O Mr. Mahon! tell me that you will not do it?"

In her misery she sank upon her knees before him.

"Calm yourself, dear Mrs. Toleman. I give you my sacred word as a gentleman that I will not. For years I sought him, vowing that the slayer of my father should not live. The dagger with which his heart had been pierced was sharpened afresh for his murderer; but ah my mother!—my peerless, suffering mother—pursued me with her prayers and entreaties; tearfully she reiterated, 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord At last the grim, stern chastisement of faith and discipline through which my young life had been strictly guided, together with her aged counsels, checked me in my maddened course, and when I tremblingly dedicated my remaining life to the service of my Maker, I promised there and then that the object of my just hatred should only, in eternity, find his punishment.'"

A deep sigh of relief escaped Marie Toleman.

"Come, then," she said mournfully, "a son raised by one who could give such advice in her own overwhelming grief is to be relied upon. Come, Mr. Swaby is waiting for you."

They ascended the stairs slowly. Years of sorrow seemed imprinted upon the face of the lovely guide. She paused at last in front of a door which was slightly

opened ; turning and looking earnestly upon Paul Mahon, she said with evident emotion,

“You are not deceiving me. You will do nothing harsh or unworthy of your early training?”

“A smile, a ghastly, withering smile,  
Convulsive o'er her features played.”

He witnessed her struggles for composure and betrayed confidence with pain, and his noble nature could not but pity.

“On, on,” he almost moaned; “let me hear the sequel of this terrible tragedy. Believe me, I can be trusted.” And they entered.

Resting upon a bed, supported by pillows, counting some gold, was the miserable object which for years Paul Mahon had sought vainly; but so interested seemed he in the treasure before him, that the presence of the two was unnoticed.

A perfect whirlwind of detestation and hatred leaped into Paul Mahon's dark, piercing eyes; but Marie Toleman, watchful of the slightest change upon his countenance, laid her soft hand upon his own, and in low, musical tones murmured,

“I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;

“That ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

The “lava flood”—seething in its fierce state—a flood

which he had so sincerely hoped had been mastered, was stilled and checked by the gentle touch and those magical words; a grateful pressure of her hand was his only response. Mr. Swaby, attracted by the words and voices, looked quickly up and extended his feeble, trembling arms, imploringly.

“Paul, Paul, have I not suffered enough? Marie is right. Let those holy words, which she has just repeated, plead for me. Ah! the grim, unrelenting storm. Devils have confronted me at every step since the fatal deed was committed—calling loudly upon the perjured, vile miscreant for a restitution of the filthy lucre which had damned and forever lost his miserable soul; and here is the glittering coin; it is all here. I have been long within a fiery abyss, in which not even a delicate tendril flourished which I could clutch; where not the smallest ray of happiness could penetrate which afforded the slightest relief; and at times in my madness I felt almost goaded on to the maniac’s refuge—suicide. But now, now I can die; not with the assurance of your pardon—that I could not hope for—but with the reflection, which bears a meagre comfort, that even at this late hour I have done all that I could.

“Your father’s dying image is every moment before me, coming around and stifling all of the ardent, enthusiastic dreams which in early manhood I had hoped would be realized. That one crime has proved a leprous spot, from which I intuitively fell even here; although I knew, in my lucid moments, the deed was still unknown. Both man and beast must inwardly shrink from me. This thought caused me to withdraw more and more

from association with my fellow-men; until finally, debarred from free communion with my race, to toy and fondle in seclusion the miser's passion seemed the only amusement left. But satiated and disgusted at length with the very coin for which I had buried my peace and honor, its very touch burning and scorching the fingers extended to grasp it; all fears subsiding, an eager, insatiable wish seized me to behold you once more; to restore to the rightful possessor, that which I knew to be his own. Your generous, magnanimous mother, whom I knew to be a very Alcestis in devotion—she whom I had so irretrievably wronged, whose happiness, my conscience told me I had forever destroyed—I could not meet; but hope whispered that the young could more readily forget. Therefore, knowing that Apollyon was fast snapping the life-current of my miserable existence, I wrote for you, Paul; scarcely hoping, yet oh! so sincerely praying—if the wretched and wicked can pray—that you would listen to my appeal and seek me immediately.”

Paul Mahon, with his face buried in his hands, was leaning heavily against the window for support. He raised his haggard face and looked upon Mr. Swaby with unmistakable loathing—a feeling which could not be concealed.

“Mark Swaby!”—the voice was calm, but stern and reproachful—“I knew and felt that you were my father's murderer; but I did not know the one half of your baseness. I dreamed not that it was for the sake of that filthy pile you could take the life of your fellow-man, and that man your benefactor; one who had raised you, as it were, from the very dregs of society. We thought

hat perhaps in a moment of passion hasty words had been exchanged, and that thus the act had been committed; but why should I have explained it in such a manner?

“Men say, as proud as Lucifer.

Pray, who would not be proud with such a train?

Hath he not all the honor of the earth?

Why Mammon sits before a million hearths,

When God is bolted out from every house.’

“You know I never liked you; I warned my father time after time; but he, in his blind fondness for you, deemed my words foolish. Would to God the film could have been withdrawn from his eyes, and perhaps we would not now have been deploring and mourning his terrible fate. From dreamy limnings of beauty, from floating reveries both sad and pleasing, his upright, manly features—features which were the rich heirlooms of noble ancestry—have never for one moment been withdrawn; and alas! by its side, another, hideous, distorted, the object of my greatest aversion, has, notwithstanding my earnest efforts to banish it, remained still, to tempt me to a deed from which my whole soul recoils: a deed which were I to commit would crimson my manhood with an ineffable stain, which not even years of repentance could obliterate. It is thus, Mark Swaby, I regard the murder of even a man who can be naught but a curse to the world; and yet you could with your own hand take the life of one who had been every thing to you—father, friend, and brother.”

“Oh! no, no; not with my own hands. I am wicked, it is true; deserving of every reproach which you may

lavish upon me; a being whom you can not more utterly abhor than I do; a poor miserable wreck, who has not felt the witchery and comfort of one word of love since he withdrew from your father's household; but oh! I did not commit the act, although equally as vile when I countenanced and instigated it."

"Ah! is that so? Then why is it that when I arrived upon the spot, after years of absence, when finding the form I had so idolized still deluged in his warm life-blood, that your image alone was reflected upon the retina?"

Mr. Swaby sprang wildly forward.

"Ha! is that true, Paul Mahon? Is that the reason you knew my guilt? I knew you were pursuing me with unrelenting hatred for years, but why you suspected me I could not divine. Alas! the fact that your father deemed me his sole murderer, has been one of the causes of my greatest grief: it has caused these locks to silver, long before their time. My accomplice was entirely concealed, and I, unfortunately, ushered into his presence before life became extinct. Oh! I can never forget that dying look; it will haunt me to the tomb. His own words of compassion and pity for me even then; for alas! he did not utter one word of censure—he pitied. And will you not too, Paul Mahon, emulate the nobility of your father's nature, and speak gently, even in the midst of your natural loathing, to one who now needs commiseration instead of taunts, to lighten the gloom into which he is hastening? fast, very fast? And there is still one request you will not deny me. Ida knows nothing of this; can not I hope that the terrible act may forever remain concealed? She suspects

much, but knows nothing positive. Marie, Paul, you will not reveal it? O my God! you will not do it? Promise me! Promise me!"

He glared wildly from one to another, and fell back insensible as the words "We promise" fell slowly from their lips.



## CHAPTER XXI.

“‘ALL things are calm, and fair, and passive ; earth  
Looks as if lulled upon an angel's lap,  
Into a breathless, dewy sleep so still.’

“ALAS! how little in harmony with my own conflicting, rebellious nature. The cabala of the past, within whose wiry woof I have become so singularly entangled—the penumbra of which has trammelled so mercilessly brave and buoyant hopes—when will its dark scroll be illuminated, and, by uplifting the concealing drapery, bid me float amid ambient clouds of bliss or woe? Any thing but this terrible suspense—this tainted garniture which, at times, bids me hope, at others weep.”

Marian was seated upon one of the metal chairs, ornaments of beauty which were so freely interspersed amid the lovely grounds where her childhood's happiness, blending with maidenly sorrow, had been quietly borne. The soft green turf yielded to the rapid pattering of the impatient foot, which seemed so deeply to sympathize with the moody, wondering fair one. But rising suddenly with a long-drawn sigh, she exclaimed weariedly,

“Must this fata morgana forever entice, alluring me into this dreamy, listless, inactive existence, even contrary to my own views of duty? No, no; it shall not be, but like the lakelet,

“ ‘No longer vexed with gusts,  
Replaces on her breast the pictured moon,  
Pearled round with stars,’

so shall my bosom, alone mirror sunlit beams, the emanations of a life strictly devoted to usefulness. Yes, mamma, yes; amid the golden creations which your loved voice is ever whispering and planning, in ameliorating as you are daily doing, the sufferings of others, I am confident this stifling miasma will vanish; and its mezzotint may yet mellow into pearly vapors of surpassing beauty. Little cloudlets beneath your guiding hand have been dispersed, and, while heeding your admonitions, a life of ineffable sweetness may yet be mine. Golden fruits matured, and ready for the reapers when the busy harvest-time approaches; for it would be indeed gloomy, at the twilight hour which none can escape, to find, as you already have admonitorily whispered, my diadem of brightness missing.

“ My noble, precious step-mother, thanks to your patient care, holy Cithara echoes are indeed reawakening me into existence; and even now the silent breathings of the sainted dead must be wafting around you gentle, loving words—words of untold gratitude that the motherless one, in her murmur and repining, has not been cast off, with no tone of sympathy or cheer to beckon her back to happiness and duty. Ah! your noble example, linked with all that is pure, what has it not been to me?

“ Hitherto, though longing to benefit my fellow-being, I shrank from it—fearing, like the incomparable horologist, the unfortunate Dasypodius, who dreamed, in his midnight creations, of bestowing upon his loved Strasbourg a memorial of taste, beauty, ingenuity, and highly-wrought me-

chanism, which should draw from far and wide the curiosity-loving traveler—I should reap for myself ingratitude and entire misconception. The jealous guarding magistrate of his city's boast would have blinded forever this genius who had grown so suddenly into fame, lest he might draw from his mechanical knowledge, his copious draughts, an object equally as beautiful in some sister city; and so in daily life the philanthropist is often checked and shackled; the defending cestus necessarily placed upon his hands, because he has frequently to overwhelm hideous burdens, when words of encouragement, only, should have cheered him on in his glorious work. But away with doubts and fears! Now—gloom, corroding gloom, let me henceforth banish, and upon the pages of the future alone read duty's stern, unwavering lessons!"

She paused for a moment to seek her hat, which the soft winds were unmercifully tossing from side to side, then stooped and petted a beautiful dog, which had long been casting its intelligent glances upon its fair mistress, as if in pity.

"Come, Macra, you must be my cicerone and protector this afternoon, in a tramp to the village. A long walk will do us both good. Brave, noble Macra, equally faithful in misfortune or prosperity—the worthy namesake of thy illustrious predecessor, whom, it may be, Erigone, in her loving moods oft fondled, as I have ever done you. But, like them, we must anticipate our garlands of bitterness as well as joy."

The beautiful hound, as if fully comprehending her words, arose at her bidding, walking, with head proudly erect, by her side.

"Whither so hastily, my daughter?"

"Only to the village. I require exercise, and am determined to cast off the lassitude which has for days oppressed me, and go for the mail."

"We are then exchanging places for the present, Marian; for, as you already must see, I am attending to a matter of yours, in which you have been strangely remiss of late."

"Poor bayas! I do plead guilty to your charge. They have not suffered though, papa, have they? Your quiet smile and well-known thoughtfulness betrays, however, without summoning to my aid magical arts. Indeed, now that I perceive my duty has not been unfulfilled, there appears but one cause for apprehension, and that is, that the vacillating creatures will withdraw their love, and place it in worthier hands."

But as she spoke, the innocent, happy ones fluttered excitedly around her, as if their ebullitions of joy would serve as a rebuke for seeming doubts; some, in their happiness, lighted gently upon her shoulder, while others vied in their efforts to receive the first caress which her loving hands were extended to give.

Her father approached closely to her, with a warm, loving light in his dark eye, and raising the wan face upward, as if he would there trace each tinge or shade which could be token of change, he remarked tenderly,

"You see, dear Marian, how entirely all hearts at the Grove beat in unison with your own; how entirely nature, both animate and inanimate, throbbingly responds to your joy and sorrow. The poet has truly said,

" 'The spider's most attenuated web  
Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie  
Of earthly bliss; it breaks at every breeze.' "

If applicable to man, how much more so to the most sensitive organization which God, in his wisdom, has ever produced, woman, with all of her eager cravings for love and tenderness, but alas! so seldom realized; for too often the doting, obsequious lover subsides into a cold, indifferent husband."

"But within our home, papa, I can find true happiness. Here, truly, genuine love, peace, and concord reign supreme."

"But will this satisfy, my darling? Could I but believe it, Marian; could I but know that the past was not too deeply mourned and deplored, it would relieve me from much anguish. But, Marian, within a father's heart the daughter is so sacredly cherished, so securely intrenched, that her heart-agony must, to some extent, be his own."

He had clasped her in his arms, and she felt his warm, affectionate presence; but eager to conceal the tears which she could not restrain, she sprang from his loving grasp, and saying, with an effort at gayety, "I will return to-night, for your sake, papa, with a lighter and happier heart," sped rapidly on.

It could have been only the wonderful gift of the all-seeing God—his unfathomable pity—which, while wishing to pour a dewy balm, an untold healing for the many sufferings that his prescience comprehended, prompted the surrender unto man of a temple so grandly beautiful, so sublime in its echoes and réechoes as nature's. Within this limitless domain of his power, Marian felt a soothing influence, and while imbibing its quietude and calm, realized the debt of gratitude which a world could never liquidate. Breathings of Festus fell softly from her lips.

“ ‘ This marble-walled immensity, o’er roofed  
With pendent mountains glittering, awes my soul.  
God’s hand hath scooped the hollow of this world ;  
Yea, none but his could ; and I stand in it  
Like a forgotten atom of the light  
Some star hath lost upon its lightning flight.’

“ Macra, let us rest here upon this lowly hillock for a short time—it is yet early ; and, while impressed with our own insignificance, appreciate the greatness of our Creator.”

It was a temple, within which she felt more would arise to aid in sustaining her new-formed plans—more arise, to banish a memory, in which gleamed the graves of past wishes and expectations—more arise, to cancel human passions, than aught else beside. The spot chosen was near a stream of water, whose quiet flow aided in the great handiwork of lulling and healing the bruised heart.

Near by, but on the glittering sand over which the cooling waters were constantly casting their ripples, frolicked a poor, deformed child, but with a countenance so inexpressibly beautiful that the disproportionateness of shape was soon lost sight of. Marian found her own thoughts of self dissipated while watching the gayety of this little being, which not even this stamp of early blight could sadden. The child’s mother seemed bending near, as if eager to catch the drops of brightness as they fell from her coral lips. The little one was very busy in pursuit of the sparkling bubbles, which the motion of her tiny hands was constantly producing.

Marian’s approach had been unnoticed by the two, and she hailed it as an omen of still greater enjoyment for the evening, fancying the little one, in her child-like amuse-

ments, one of nature's miniature creations, which could, by its witchery of movement, enhance still more the loveliness of a scene, which had wooed her into a momentary repose. But, while pondering upon the unrivaled picture, her glance at one moment resting near the stream, at another, spanning the sublime canopy above, a low, piercing voice arrested her attention.

With a sudden bound Macra plunged into the water, and grasped clothing which Marian readily recognized as that of the unfortunate semblance of childhood which had so interested her. The mother groped about from spot to spot, as if, in her despair, she had lost thought and action. Marian, ever composed in times of danger, descended as rapidly as she could the curve of the bank which had concealed her from view, thereby reaching the water just in time to relieve the noble dog of his heavy burden.

"Thanks, thanks, kind Macra! You have done well, and your mistress must reward you for your faithfulness."

"Is she safe?"

It was like the mournful echo from the spirit world. Marian turned and beheld the trembling mother, every movement denoting an uncertainty which could only accompany the blind.

"O my God! is she safe?"

"Yes, yes, be calm; the little one has been sadly frightened, but we can soon restore her."

The hand of the stranger grasped Marian with an intensity which vibrated through her whole frame.

"Restore her to my arms," the lips quiveringly faltered,

“and God shall bless you; he only could have brought you to our assistance. He knew my irrevocable darkness, and his holy love did not desert me. Oh! how kind, how great is this Being who has brought us into existence.”

Marian was bending with earnestness over the child, chafing her delicately-formed hands, and recalling her back to life. But the words of the blind mother were burning deeply; for she felt, oh! how truly, that she needed the rebuke: she, from whose sight nature and art had never been withdrawn; with whom the most delicate mechanism of bud or bloom had never known concealment; from whom the loved lineaments of parents and friends had never been clouded by a disk of impenetrable gloom; and yet she had shuddered, wept, and murmured, while this stranger, to whom the beauty of summer, or the cheerless, leafless winter, were equally as dear; whose sightless eyes, it may be, had never gazed upon the form so frightfully marred, but whose countenance of matchless, transcendent loveliness, would have warmed and satisfied the mother's cravings; from whom vernal beauties and rose-tinted gleams were forever withdrawn—could clasp her hands with unfeigned thankfulness, and thank her Maker for his continued mercies. Strange, incomprehensible mystery!

“You are right, dear mamma,” Marian quietly murmured. “It is only while mitigating the sufferings of others that we can realize our own happy state, and kiss the beneficent hand which has gently showered it upon us.”

The child opened her eyes, and looked languidly around, and, upon seeing her mother, a gleam of joy passed, meteor-like, over the pale face.



“Mamma, mamma, I went too far for one of the bubbles, and fell in; but see, I am not hurt.”

The mother’s hand passed gently over the features of her child.

“Thank God and the stranger, Netta, that I have not been made childless.”

“O mamma! believe me, I do, I do.”

“Your child speaks hardly like one of her years,” said Marian.

“Perhaps she is older than you imagine; and then, too, the care that has been imposed upon her, renders her prematurely old. Her father thinks her different from most children; and, indeed, she must be unlike, for she is far more loving.”

Netta smiled again, as if gratified at her mother’s praises; then turning to Marian, said softly, as if she were loth to have her mother hear,

“You see, we are all in all to each other. My mother is blind, and I—but it is not necessary to tell you what I am. Father, mother, and myself live alone; we never mingle with strangers, for he says that others, more fortunate, might wound my feelings. But still we are so happy! Mother and I, during the day, after every thing is carefully arranged, wander out into the woods, to listen to the wild chirping of the birds, or spend hours here, watching the little fish, and playing in this clear, crystal stream; and mamma seems very happy while listening to my idle talk. Then in the evening, papa, relieved from his daily toil, renders us so joyous by reading and talking to us!”

“You can not have lived here long?”

“Only for a few months. Papa found business in the

village, and bought a home out here, because we preferred living in the country."

Netta then pointed to a little dwelling near by as their place of abode. This was almost concealed by the dense growth, and Marian had thought it long uninhabited.

"Netta, what is your father's name?"

"Wilson."

"Ah! I have heard papa speak of him. Mrs. Wilson, we must become better friends. Mamma and myself will come over some afternoon. I wonder we had not known of your proximity before."

"It is owing to the secluded life we lead, I presume; for we never seek society."

"But you will come?" said Netta, eagerly.

"O yes! I certainly shall, and bring one with me, Netta, who in her planning for the happiness of others will not forget you, but make your life far more pleasant, I fancy."

"Poor Netta has a lonely time," said Mrs. Wilson; "and I have often wished her task were less burdensome."

"Oh! do not speak so, mamma. It is one of which I will never, never weary."

"Never, Netta? I have feared at times you might."

"Mamma does not know of my affliction, and can not imagine why I am so content with our recluse life," she said, almost in a whisper.

When Marian parted from them, she felt indeed that the Marah of her life had again been sweetened—sweetened, too, by those for whom at first she had only felt compassion. The blind and the dwarfed child were truly her teachers. Silently she mused on the benefits to be

conferred upon the uncomplaining solitary. "What happiness it would be to devise some new attire which, in concealing the frightful shape, might allow her to mingle more freely, without a fear of ridicule, with companionable children! Yes, this must be. I shall discuss the point with mamma," exclaimed Marian; "and perhaps the combination of thought may produce something which will prove acceptable to Netta."

Her step was lighter and happier than it had been for weeks. Marian was fast blotting out her own grief, while rearing charming images for others.

The cemetery, which had caught the sparkling light of the sun, and was decked in a light of unutterable beauty, with its costly monuments and humble, heart-speaking slabs, now arose before her.

"Dear Gertrude, silent sleeper, how peaceful and quiet art thou, resting in this village graveyard; torn so suddenly from hearts that loved thee, yet thou in thy solitude are not forgotten."

She opened the iron gate, but stopped suddenly; for, with his arms encircling the beautiful obelisk of her friend, and renewing in this lonely spot his past vows of unwavering devotion, stood Mr. Ronald, the inconsolable mourner. There was a quiet solemnity in this continued protestation of love so rare in man, and Marian, with her own heart aching afresh, closed the gate quietly and passed on to the village. She knew he would seek her home on his return to the city; but she could not intrude upon him at a moment when he was communing with his dead. How glad she felt that the spot had been so carefully tended; that odorous flowers had smiled sweetly where

the iron key unlocked the lovely entrance to Gertrude's rest ; that no poisonous weeds arose to embitter and teach the lone man that his dead had been sacred, alone to him.

The postmaster smiled mischievously, as he placed several letters of a dubious character in her hands. She glanced eagerly over the number, but the handwriting so long expected was still missing, and, with a half-suppressed sigh, she turned again homeward.

Letters of all descriptions were before her ; some gay, some solemn, many replete with love's mementoes, and whose earnestness she could not doubt. Would that they had not come ! The infliction of pain she involuntarily shrank from, and her own feelings whispered that her replies must be disappointments. One heart only was coveted. Was it still hers ? Alas ! the future, only, could decide.

## CHAPTER XXII.

“O MRS. LEE! I can not, I can not leave you. My whole nature recoils from it.”

“Maggie, among my cherished memories dwells a face which still haunts by its delicious beauty. Ah! the angelic purity of the countenance can never be erased. It is one of those countenances so rare on earth which thought constantly whispers has been surely borrowed from a heavenly home. It was my privilege to call her friend. I can see her now as she bent fondly over her first-born, feverish from gloomy presentiments which not even the gentle cooing of the innocent being by her side could quell. Sad forebodings of an early death with singular tenacity consumed each glimpse of joy as it struggled wistfully for preëminence, and the thought that her child would pass through the world a stranger to all loving benedictions was maddening.

“‘Oh!’ she exclaimed, ‘Maidee, when I look upon the many ignoble faces of earth, the thousand soulless mothers who can never realize the responsibility of their positions—mothers who daily pass before my vision, frittering away in folly and fashion lives which are destined for woe or bliss in eternity, I bow cringingly before my Maker, and plead for life—plead that this precious soul which he has surrendered into my keeping, her

holy childhood may never sink in the slough of sin and guilt from an unholy association with such beings."

" ' He who hath most of heart  
Knows most of sorrow.' "

" It was but the natural prayer of a thinking mother ; and I could not wonder that she shrank so shudderingly from death. But with me her words left an impress, and from that moment to this, the motherless have ever been regarded as sacred cares which woman should fondly rear and caress ; therefore come to me, Maggie, at any time, unshrinkingly, with every trouble, for I will not cast you off, nor will I deem you annoying.

" Think not, if we consider it your duty to listen to your father in his repeated solicitations that you should live with him, that we imagine for one moment that a withdrawal of our love and tenderness is necessary. On the contrary, your little cottage is so near that we can see and advise with you daily. Mr. Lee built this house for your father, to be paid for at his leisure, which I am confident his profession will soon enable him to do, and then, Maggie, how happy you will be as mistress of this snug room !"

Maggie gazed with a bewildered look around the apartment, which spoke so plainly of the loving hands which had arranged it. The neat bed with its snowy covering, the windows concealed by a drapery of equal whiteness—every thing, in fact, betokening an air of comfort and care which betrayed the planners, who, while rigidly studying Maggie's convenience, did not lose sight of what could minister to her taste for the beautiful. There was a book-case filled with choice volumes, tendered by Mr. Lee, with the hope accompanying the gift that at some future

time her more matured mind would derive a signal benefit from it.

A neat writing-desk, placed there by Marian, with a loving note within, traced by the same kind hand, where lingered words of encouragement and cheer, was left for Maggie—and whom they would gladly have retained, were it not for the paramount claim upon her time and attention—and they drew many tears at the moment of its perusal from poor Maggie.

But Mrs. Lee, dear, kind, thoughtful Mrs. Lee, with her warm, loving heart, ever in sympathy with the orphan, where could her eye rest that some little memento did not peer cheerfully up, telling the tried spirit that, though the sacrifice would be so great, still she was not alone? Mrs. Lee's soft hand caressed by its gentle touch the anxious brow.

"Brighten up, Maggie!" she said gayly, "here in these woodlands, amid such pageantry of beauty as nature paints, you can not be gloomy. It will prove a glowing carnival, fringed round with crimson flowers, from which our Maggie can daily sip happiness."

The thought was a happy one; for nature, with its gems of unvarnished hues, was truly to Maggie an unwearied source of delight. Her father entered as the darkening cloud was passing from her countenance, and pressing her closely to him, he said with much emotion,

"Maggie, it shall be my greatest aim in life now to make you happy. Your mother's love I forfeited by my weakness and folly; I lost her respect when I lost sight of my manhood so far as to violate and cancel the solemn vows of reformation, which I had poured into her believ-

ing ear. Woman must, with her trusting nature, be able to regard as her superior, at least in firmness and strength of character, the man whom she calls 'husband.' If incapacitated to do this, there is necessarily an estrangement, even while from a sense of duty she still clings to the fallen."

There was a sacredness to Mrs. Lee in this communion between father and child—a holiness in touching upon their dead, to which she instinctively felt her presence might prove an intrusion, and she stole softly from the room, leaving the two, within whose hearts new and sweeter emotions were springing up, alone.

With eyes glistening with pleasure, Marian held a tastily arranged garment up upon her mother's entrance, and asked eagerly,

"What do you think of my work, mamma?"

"It is truly beautiful, Marian. Now Netta can join your class at Sunday-school, without feeling that her deformity will be so greatly noticed."

"I have thought of that, and indeed it has been the one great incentive in hastening the task. Poor child, she will be so much happier while mingling with loving and refined children of her own age, such as Helen Lo-beaux, mamma; and I am confident they will soon be good friends."

"Yes, gentle little Helen will know how to feel and sympathize with so great an affliction."

"But what say you, mamma, to visiting Mrs. Wilson? I am so delighted with my work, that I long to see if the feeling of pleasure will be equally shared by Netta. Yet



I must not forget Maggie in my new labors. Does she seem reconciled to the change?"

"Not entirely. Still I hope she will soon become so. Your father desired, if I mistake not, to join us in our visit to the cottage. Do you know where he is, Marian?"

"Here, to speak for himself," said Mr. Lee. And with one of his genial, heart-speaking smiles, he came quickly forward, bearing an open letter in his hand.

"A letter which has brought good news, my husband, is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, Maidee. It is from Heywood; and I felt while perusing it that we were once more as of old, without one shade to darken our love."

"Dear Mr. Heywood! O papa! have you really received tidings from one who has so long voluntarily ostracized himself from the presence of those who loved him so devotedly?"

"And what does he say, Leslie?" were the eager, questioning words of Mrs. Lee.

"Stop, stop, not too many at once. Verily, I believe you both are as much delighted as I am. And must I not be a little jealous, Maidee, at that look of joy?" laughed Mr. Lee mischievously.

"Papa, papa, how cruel to answer our anxious inquiries in such a manner!"

"Yes, Leslie, do proceed, or Marian and myself will soon be aware of the contents without your permission."

"Well, well, an exordium of such length must be pardonable, as mother and daughter would have been quite as reprehensible under similar circumstances."

"Indeed, papa, you are mistaken; woman is far more considerate."

"Before I commence reading, let me assure you of one thing—that as usual you may expect to find Heywood's various compartments, where nestle his quotations, his sentiments and his humor."

"Papa, I protest against such criticisms. Are we never to judge for ourselves?"

"Never, until you learn to control your unruly member, daughter."

"O mamma!" sighed Marian wearily, "will you not act as umpire in this matter, and urge papa on?"

Mr. and Mrs. Lee laughed heartily over Marian's tone of despair.

"Tell your father, Marian, he should not trifle with an eager, enthusiastic temperament, when his own bears kindred to it."

Forgive me, daughter. I am wrong, I admit; but, indeed, your love for Heywood is so pleasing to my feelings, that such demonstrations to me are necessary to satisfy the earnest cravings of my nature for a friend so loved; have you never?"

"Indeed, Leslie, I protest."

"And you too in rebellion, Maidee? Then, truly, I must read it."

"Are you prepared, dear Leslie, for a *morceau* of foreign travel, or may I flatter myself that the verbiage of your friend, when pertaining strictly to his own welfare, will prove the one theme of greatest interest?"

"Alas! a self-imposed exile so long from the land of kindred and loved, resurrected memories have assumed

their sway to-night, and are bidding me use the ties of consanguinity and friendship. Little wavelets from home are gushing over my heart, subduing its obdurateness, softening and calming its bitterness, and speaking in its distant delicious ocean-babble of a friend still dear; one who, its low, musical tone murmurs, has never willingly wronged in thought or deed, but who had alone placed his heart, before the first impulses, the soul-stirring enthusiasms of youth were singed by baleful surroundings, upon the only being whom my long latent affections had ever madly, wildly loved. Nor even in this nadir hour can I blame him, or deem him culpable for an act in which my own seared feelings were equally guilty.

“ And now I fancy, as these words are fondly read, your dear group in an eager questioning tone repeating the lines,

“ ‘ But loved he never after ?

Comes there none to roll the stone from his sepulchral heart,  
And sit in it an angel ?’

“ None, Leslie, none; and yet to-night I am longing for you and yours; and if you will not come to me in this soul-enrapturing land, then must I listen to the silent pleadings of emotions long dormant, and turn back to the dearest spot to me of earth.

“ I have schooled myself to love Maidee Chaworth as the wife of one who has been my boon companion in childhood and early manhood, and to whom I still cling in the meridian of life. Feeling thus, knowing and fully appreciating the stamp of genuine worth and nobleness, which first marked you as my friend, we need not then fear

“ ‘The green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on ;’

but let us both earnestly long for some *contretemps*, which, though at first it may jeopardize and disintegrate noble resolutions, will end in the soothing of a wearied, care-worn traveler.

“ And yet, and yet in our first meeting, in the dreamy hour of noontide, when we imagine not a leaf of discord stirring, but in its place,

“ ‘The thoughts of other joyous days,  
Perchance, if such may be, of happier times,  
Are falling gently on the memory,  
Like autumn leaves distained with dusky gold,  
Yet softly as a snow-flake ; and the smile  
Of kindness, like them, is beaming on me ;’

you will, Leslie,

“ ‘pardon, if I lose myself, nor know  
Whether I be with heaven or thee.’

“ I am writing to-night from Venice, the magnificent, the unique metropolis, afloat on the sea,

“ ‘With glistening spires and pinnacles adorned.’

“ Mrs. Jamieson said, ‘that Venice always reminded her of a beautiful courtesan, repenting in sackcloth and ashes, and mingling the ragged remnants of her former splendor with the emblem of present misery, degradation, and mourning.’ But with me, how different ! Every thing is dazzlingly beautiful. I dwell, as it were, on the margin of a glorious past—from whose purlieus alone I obtain glimpses of grandeur and splendor, allowing naught of a

meretricious nature to arise and disgust. As my gondola glides slowly through the serpentine windings of the canals, my inimitable dreamings soon weave a gorgeous canopy, fringed with speaking pictures, whose figures become animated, living forms, breathing in the low melodies of Italy such songs of peace and beauty as the happy, thoughtless, noble, or gay gondolier once chanted, when their hearts were teeming with love for St. Mark's.

"Oh! it is indeed a luxury, in which your imaginative temperament can readily sympathize, Leslie. When, wearied with the Piazza di San Marco, its charming arcades, its shops and cafés, with their great varieties, have ceased to interest; when the magnificent churches of Venice, with their dazzling columns of *verd-antique*, bronze and alabaster, no longer excite your curiosity; when the glorious paintings and frescoes of such artists as Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto, have been again and again feasted upon; to float quietly upon the waters of the grand canal, and under the Rialto, a thing of beauty, as its white marble shimmers in the noonday sun, indulging in delicious reveries—reveries in which the bucentaur, arranged in its rich paraphernalia, stands proudly conspicuous; where fancy soon placed the doge and senators of old, treading majestically upon its deck, feeling, while performing the customs and ceremonies of their country, that an unsurpassed bravery entitled them to those joyful festas, in which even the alien united.

"Ah! even now, those of us who have not been dwarfed in feeling, who have not unfortunately inherited phlegmatic temperaments, can enter wildly and enthusiastically into their gala days. What matters it if, at

times, our dreamings prove only Icarian flights? Have we not clapped our hands gleefully, and been for a moment eager participants in a delirious joy, in which icicled natures could never revel?

"But I would not weary you with such rhapsodies, Leslie. On the contrary, should urge your charming circle to join me as speedily as possible, when I can pledge them rare and exquisite beauties, in whose admiration my delineatory efforts would be powerless: consequently I shall not attempt them.

"Oh! I would behold my little pet—with her fresh, untarnished nature, with her high appreciation of all that is beautiful, with her intense love for the intellectual—amid the grandeurs of the old world. You have not spoiled her, Leslie? But why do I ask you? That would be impossible! And I know Maidee and yourself will bring her to me, the same sparkling, animated little creature which once charmed my idle moments.

"O child of beauty! still thou art  
A sunbeam in this lonely heart."

And Maidee, Leslie, has been faithful to your motherless one? I knew she would be; and, even in my sufferings, felt truly an emotion of thankfulness that one so noble, so unselfish, would be the guide and counselor of Marian's youth."

"O mamma, mamma!" she exclaimed amid her tears, "could he only know what you have been to me, the sacrifice made would be no longer regretted."

"My darling," said Mrs. Lee—and her voice quivered—"you are bestowing more praise upon your mother, than

is her due. You forget that it is the noble child, generally, which enchains the stepmother in the path of duty."

Mr. Lee arose and walked hurriedly to the window. He felt that he could not continue the letter now, without too great a betrayal to wife and child of his own heartfelt emotions.

Ah! what cause did he not have for gratitude! What love welled up within his overflowing heart as he thought of the self-imposed exile who had given up friends, kindred, and home that he might be happy.

He thought of Maidee, the noble, self-sacrificing wife—what would his home have been without her? What would his child have been? Ah! had she not with genuine, womanly devotion and tenderness studied alone the interest of that child in her daily life? Had she not completely monopolized the care, shielding him from all anxiety as to the future of one so cherished?

A flood of light—a soft, balmy air—passed quietly in, bathing his brow with its deliciousness, every thing bespeaking happiness for him; while the wanderer, still isolated, sought it only amid memories.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

“‘ALONE she dwelt, solitary as a star  
Unsphered.’

And such, my brother, appears to me your model—your paragon—the one you would have imitated.”

“‘Yet she knew no scorn.’ Morella, you should complete the quotation ; otherwise you do the party great injustice. It is true that even now you have altered the lines slightly, as well as myself, to suit your purposes.

“‘For me, I'd rather live  
With this weak human heart and yearning blood,  
Lonely as God, than mate with barren souls ;  
More brave, more beautiful, than myself must be  
The man whom truly I can call my friend.  
He must be an inspirer, who can draw  
To higher heights of being, and ever stand  
O'er me in unmatched beauty like the moon.  
Soon as he fail in this, the crest and crown  
Of noble friendship, he is naught to me.’

And such, too, may be the feelings and sentiment of Marian. How could you expect a spirit so deeply imbued with high-toned principles—one with such strong poetical genius, whose little world is an ideal of beauty, to mingle with the common mass, who are oftentimes idealess ? whose obscurity, if not expressed in the low, vulgar jargon of the day, betrays itself in each look and act of their life,



in which association she could find nothing that would not prove hideously repulsive. And, Morella, would that I could say the same of you! Marian would shrink shudderingly from an intimacy with such a character as Eloise; yet, where duty calls, you must yourself admit she is never negligent."

The words were spoken in a painfully mournful manner. The cheek of Morella blanched, then crimsoned with indignation.

"Marian certainly possesses a noble vindicator. Would that I were as fortunate! But her encyclopedic learning has not blinded me; and it would be a fairer dialectician by far who could convince me of that immaculateness, of which you unceasingly prate."

"My sister, your infancy, as I might truly say, was cradled in my arms. Our mother, in dying, gave you to me—to me, the poor, trembling, shrinking boy who stood aghast before the pallid hue of death; whose heart seemed ready to break at a separation which he in his weakness could not avert; and yet, even in that hour, I lived years. Manhood seemed forced upon me; and I took my little charge within my arms, pressing it closely to the warm heart that alone I felt must beat for you in the future; and smiling, even in my misery, as you returned the caress. How my poor, bruised, suffering heart softened in its rebellion, as the winning ways of childhood, one by one, unfolded! How rapidly murmurs were replaced by thoughts of thankfulness, as each feature bore the unmistakable similitude to those of our mother; and, until recently, I had hoped a semblance too, in the virtues still so fondly remembered.

“Those were happy years, Morella—years in which I deemed my sister’s love the *sine qua non* to pleasure. You know not, Morella, how strenuously I avoided unholy associations, fearing in my zeal a stigma might be cast upon your name.

“I knew that any overtures of affection you might make toward our laborious, care-worn father would be repulsed; consequently in my ardor I zealously guarded each tender bud of feeling from blight by keeping you from his presence; for he, toiling for wealth, had forgotten us both. Alas! I did not stop at any task, no matter how onerous, that might conduce to your happiness. I endeavored to discharge my duty as a brother should; but this envelope, dropped by you, Morella, causes me to fear that in some point, I have signally failed. Morella, Morella! how did you obtain it? Why is it in your possession?”

There were evidences of relenting. Her brother’s manifest feeling had completely banished the boldened manner with which she had endeavored to cloak her wickedness; yet how could she confess her duplicity? Would he not reveal it, and that, too, to a rival whom she detested?

“Why should you suspect me of wrong?” she said, with a strong effort at composure. “I am sure I could have received such a trifle from Marian at any time.”

“No, your reply will not satisfy. Your intimacy does not justify you in such an assertion; but, on the contrary, I know that for months you have studiously avoided her; for what reason I know not. Morella, perhaps even now our mother is bending near, waiting to pronounce a benediction. Let it not be a curse!”

She cowered beneath his glance; it was so stern, and

yet, too, so full of pity. Passion, grief, and terror were strongly depicted, marring the beauty he had so often praised. Could the holy, pure spirit his devotion so taught her to love, curse? No, that was impossible! It was but the idea of an excited brain. Her brother would not have framed his language so harshly in a calmer moment; but ah! could they not weep? And, too, had he not spoken truly? had her life not been, until within the past few dreary months, a perpetual summer, which his warm, loving nature had so readily gladdened? To pour forth her troubles and cares now, might it not relieve her of untold pangs in the future? Might they not prove transient clouds which required only his willing hand, his genial love as dispellers?

Spectres of evil stalked defiantly at her side; but might she not bid them avaunt, and shield herself within her brother's strong, protecting arms once more? Even the contemplation for a moment was sweet; for she had so suffered in departing from duty's path.

She peered wistfully around, but each little bush and shrub seemed stilled—not even a breath to disturb them; and yet the woods were not voiceless. Voices, unmistakable voices, were approaching, disemboved, as it were, from the very earth, which the poor writhing, sensitive, reawakened girl, wished earnestly might open its dark bosom to receive her, in the more ennobling thoughts which were now wooing her onward were dismembered. One voice—oh! might she not be mistaken?—whose echo caused the passions, temporarily quelled, to leap wildly back, and with a cry in which hatred and sorrow were equally blended, she sprang forward in her homeward path,

forgetful of the wronged, deeply-wronged brother; while he, in the midst of a tortuous present, struggled fearfully. He seemed drifting upon a wildered sea whose strand was desolate.

He cast a tearful eye backward; for with the future, he dare not cope. Thought paused! Rimmed with busy, active agents, a beauteous picture seemed instantly disinterred; a picture strangely enticing, where feasted, in maddened revelry, unconscious of their God, a licentious, pleasure-loving court. Yet even there, amid those sparkling gleams, amid bright and glittering jewels, were gleanings rich in warnings; words of crushing import came forth, "*Mene, mene, tekel upharsin*," traced in glowing letters upon pearly walls, silencing the scoffer's triumphant shout, causing the atheistical mocker of Israel's God, to pale.

The ashes of cherished plans lay at his feet; but the ascending fumes from those ruined hopes still refused, utterly refused, with their vapory cloudlets, to blot out the fearful handwriting; and "*Tekel*"—thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting—still glared and shone, far too brightly, upon the wearied, overtaxed eye.

"O God!" he gasped, "must this indeed be Morella's fate and mine! Alas my sister! have I been irretrievably unfaithful to my trust?"

"God! what a light has passed away from earth  
Since my last look! How hideous this night!  
How beautiful the yesterday that stood  
Over me like a rainbow! I am alone.  
The past is past. I see the future stretch  
All dark and barren as a rainy sea."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

“ ‘LET him go

Alone upon his waste and dreary road ;  
He will return to the old faith he learned  
Beside his mother's knee. That memory  
That haunts, as the sweet and gracious moon  
Haunts the poor outcast earth, will lead him back  
To happiness and God.’

“ **THEY** told me this ; vainly did I attempt to believe it. I repeated it mournfully by the silver brooklet, hoping its onward stream might bear the burden of my thoughts far, far out into a distant channel whose little murmur, sad and gloomy though it be, would rise and fall quiveringly to his feet ; but, alas ! alas ! it plunged along into a blackened maelstrom, which refused to yield it up at the mute appeal.”

“ But you forget, Eloise, that

“ ‘Love is a sanctifier ; ’tis a moon,  
Turning each dusk to silver ; a pure light,  
Redeemer of all errors.’ ”

“ Sayest so ? It is false ! Ah ! I had sworn to blister and blast his feelings as he had mercilessly blasted mine. Spain ! land of beauty and of song, every portion of whose surface I still sacredly revere ; amid whose chestnut groves the wild, joyous laughter of my innocent childhood

gushed forth ; by the side of whose dates and bananas I frolicked, pausing not even in my glee to pluck the golden fruit as its seductive charms peeped forth, unconscious, utterly unconscious, of the ghastly future whose prestige alone dazzled my artless, guileless vision.

“Spain ! my idolized country ! thou wert deserted ; thy beauteous plateaus, smiling valleys, and enchanting mountains, for the land of the stranger. I thought to entice him back, to bask once more in the sunshine of his love. Hopes futile, barren, long since dissolved to mingle with the ‘ethereal messengers’ of evil. But hist ! They were borne back again and again, and baleful sounds came with them, claiming admittance into the lacerated precincts, from which my unnerved, blighted being had not the power to exclude them.”

She tossed her arms up wildly. A maniacal stare for a moment rested upon the haggard features, and then gradually softened into an impassioned, fervid, soul-lit gleam. A sweet lyric burst forth from the slightly-parted lips, entrancing by its beauty even the woodland dwellers.

Mr. Espinosa, in his ecstasy, gazed until his eyes grew dim ; until each pulsation madly throbbled in unison with that of the slighted and deeply interesting sibyl.

It was the same old story, the one which had palsied so many heart-strings ; and he inwardly loathed the man, even though he were his own father, who had thus wrecked the happiness of one so fitted to adorn society. She was no longer to him the seeress of the village ; the temptress who, by her piteous tales of necromancy, had hurried on his sister’s downfall ; the one whom he in his misery came to upbraid, but a poor shipwrecked, suffering woman—one

demanding not only his sympathy, but, by her shattered hopes, his soothing.

The songstress ceased. Vainly he waited, hoping that some sound would issue from her lips; but poor Eloise seemed luxuriating in a world of matchless beauty—perhaps in the sunny land she so loved, beneath the olive, pressing its cherished emblem, peace, within her bleeding bosom.

“Eloise!”

“Ha! who speaks? 'Tis the voice of the dead I hear. I never knew but one like it, so full of sweet compassion,” and she turned her undimmed eyes upon him. “Yes, yet, I remember, but in tears. Ah! thou art thy mother's own child, thy holy, incorruptible mother, and came to upbraid, to speak to me of my perfidy to your sister? But alas! I did not mean it as such; for thy mother's sake it should have been different. I meant by my feeble powers to aid and contribute to her happiness.”

“But O Eloise! in your mistaken kindness you have caused, perhaps to perish, the noblest principles of fallen humanity.”

The head of Eloise drooped gloomily.

“Perhaps I have,” she murmured in a weary tone; “but believe me, I did not mean it. I could have seen thy father's children wither beneath contempt, and the woods would have rung with my shouts of triumph; but thy mother saved me, and when she died I vowed forever to renounce all ideas of revenge. Your father, Midas-like, has prayed that all he touches, may turn to gold. His cravings are about to be realized; but let him beware lest the golden sand with which he so insanely dallies

prove the quicksand which is to engulf and destroy. And now go, for I would be alone."

"But, Eloise, tell me—oh! you dare not refuse to unfold the plottings of the past months—the dark designs in which my sister has become entangled."

"Yes, I have said it, and I will not retract. Let your sister make the disclosure, if she will; I can not betray her. And now farewell; but remember my solemn assertion. I did not mean to wrong thee or thine. It is the same that you will hear when the startling melody of Israfeel's voice shall fall upon our trembling ear on the resurrection morn, when the trumpet blast must reawaken us all into life."

Forgotten now the malfeasance which had so grieved and humiliated his own pride and affections. The malison had died upon her lips, as the low, wailing confession burst forth—she, the heart-broken one—and why should it not upon his?

He watched the once proudly erect form as it now passed slowly into the cottage, bent and writhing beneath the suffering which recollections, long pent up, long bravely wrestled with, had generated.

He pondered sadly upon the sinful life—a life which all whose opinions one so cultivated would have prized, must condemn; a life which at best must have been isolated, repulsive, and so little in harmony with her better nature, and a sigh of pity escaped him.

The face of his father—hardened, it is true, now, for it bore the miser's unmistakable mask—a face which, from boyhood up, though he had never ardently loved, like that of his mother, yet still had by its classic form, command-



ed his admiration, arose before him ; but ah ! it was a Janus face, devoid of beauty now, and a low groan, a violent shudder, dismissed the hideous lineaments.

The feeling man, in thought, turned sadly toward the one who, by her withdrawal, had refused his sympathy. Unkindness had alienated her from mankind.

Touched, it is true, by the charity which had been tremblingly tendered her by the wayside ; by the soft music of a voice which had bade her " Go and sin no more," she had lingered, though not redeemed, within the shadowy foot-prints of a purer spirit, and felt soothed by the gentle censure of her sister woman.

Did the holy influences which had so biased his own childhood nestle still around the humble cottage, and mayhap within it refusing fiercely the expulsion which demon spirits were so eager to effect ? Ah ! could it be ? And if so, if around the fallen one mastering spirits still pursued, through her entreaties, their daily labors of love, would they not cling to one over whom the dead in dying had so yearned ? How his troubled, aching heart reveled in such hopes !

The birds chirped so sweetly upon the cottage, trellised over with luxuriant vines ; the little insects were fluttering from leaf to leaf ; the little squirrels, gentled by the hand of the seeress, ran to his feet, with their soft eyes gazing pleadingly upward ; for the hour was approaching in which they daily received her loving care, and they were startled at even a moment's neglect.

The theatre of her daily life lay spread out before him ; but as its centre-piece arose a *fac-simile* of the Egyptian statue Memnon. His mother had breathed life in it, and

he feared not but that each brilliant sunrising, and each cold, gray, dusky one too, would find her still faithful, striking thrilling chords from the unseen harp, a diapason so sweet that always he fancied it the precursor of a nobler life—such a life as fallen manhood had temporarily crushed, but into which nobler womanhood would again infuse loveliness.

“Sincerity,  
Thou first of virtues ! let no mortal leave  
Thy onward path.”

One painful task still remains : Marian, his own Marian, was she indeed a sufferer like himself? Did her heart cling to the one who had so long absented himself, as he greatly feared, through his sister's instrumentality? Absented himself though still loving, as he had done, this being, whose image he could not expel.

It had been torture to withdraw from the friendly greetings, the charming hospitality of Poplar Grove ; it had been torture to deny himself the daily association with a being so worshiped ; but, in justice to his own affections, he felt that it must be done. Paul Mahon was a competitor with whom he dared not cope. His own penetration had again and again reiterated that he would not be successful ; but this long separation, what did it mean? Might he not be mistaken in regard to his sister's conduct? She had given him no clue ; Eloise had not : suspicions, foul suspicions were like the hideous vampire laying open wounds, and slowly sucking his life-blood. Hope with its soft wings, silvered and glistening, tapped gently but pleadingly for ingress. Its bewildering beauty could not be re-

sisted, and he plunged into a by-path which led to Poplar Grove. Two hours had passed, and still he lingered.

“It is as I feared; you love Paul Mahon. Marian, dear Marian, tell me that this is not so, and you lift a weight from my heart which has oppressed it for months. But I am not selfish in it; your happiness alone is the object desired.

“‘Love, pure love, the last  
Of mortal things that nestles in the heart.’

O Marian! give me this, or I could not be satisfied.”

“The life of a coquette is very like that of a drunkard or an opium-eater, and its end is the same. The utter extinction of all good, of cheerfulness, of generous feeling, and of self-respect.” Such were the thoughts of another, and her own feelings reëchoed them. She would not, if she could, take the heart of this noble being, placing it within her pallid hands to toy with and then crush. But why, oh! why could she not love him? so magnanimous, so gifted! Why must the startling “No” arise? the vesper knell of long-cherished throbbings.

“Mr. Espinosa,

“‘A man can brook  
A world’s contempt, when he has that within  
Which say he’s worthy.’

I am not afraid that you will misconstrue my refusal; it is not that I deem you unworthy; it is not that I ever expect to meet one more noble; but simply, dear friend, that I am not the moulder, chiseler, or entire controller of my feelings. I do not know, in fact, that I shall ever marry; but were I to

marry, I must earnestly love, and such love as you demand I can not give you!"

Never before had she seemed so beautiful to him—so intensely dear. He had asked her for pure love, telling her that nothing else would satisfy; but oh! how greatly had he been mistaken. The hand, without the heart, he pleaded for now. Affection so disinterested as his own would, he felt confident, produce its counterpart, and they might yet be happy; but she shook her head mournfully and the coldly rigid features taught him that his doom was sealed.

How sweet, how calm the hour when the great sun, sinking behind the hills which its glittering rays have kissed, seems no longer visible! When the russet hues, now golden, now ruddy, are madly chased by the flickering shadows—precursor of night's mantle

Alone and desolate in the vast solitude, with nature his only sympathizer, Mr. Espinosa raised his clasped hands, and looked sadly toward the humble home of the sibyl.

"Eloise, Eloise! thou art not the only grief-tossed being; thy heart has been rudely shattered; but above the ruin others are ready to be placed, quivering, sensitive from the fearful throes of expiring passion."

A fierce flame, as if in answer to his sad soliloquy, awakened the forest dwellers, emblazoning the dark, impenetrable recesses. A fearful suspicion darted through his mind. Might it not be a maniacal act, and the poor unfortunate perish within the flames which her own hands had kindled? He sprang wildly forward,

"Eloise! Eloise!"

He called fearfully, but the echoes alone gave back their ringing sounds.

“O Eloise! let my hand save you.”

He rushed within the crumbling dwelling, little realizing his own danger; but the rooms were deserted. Again and again he shouted her name. She answered not.

The home it was impossible to save—her home—the poor forsaken one; what intense agony must have instigated the dire act!

How dismal seemed the cry of the owlet; how plaintive the low notes of the birdlings as they fluttered in their terror around him! The dog she had left, a lone sentinel, moaned and whined piteously.

How his own heart ached! Marian and sibly both sufferers; and father and sister, were they not cruelly guilty? Wearied and dispirited, he sank down by a shrub, away from the scorching heat which his efforts to rescue Eloise had already caused him sensibly to feel. A small paper which lay concealed within the leaves of the shrub fell fluttering upon the ground. He seized it, and by the light from the cottage traced slowly his own name. It was, then, addressed to him. Perhaps the mystery might yet be unraveled. The words were scarcely intelligible; but, panting from delight and surprise, he deciphered greedily,

“You gave me a tear; believe me, I bless you. Your mother gave one; she has been already blessed.

“I am determined to be good again.

Again? When was I otherwise than ill?

Does not sin pour from my soul, like dew from earth,

And vaporing up before the face of God,

Congregate there in clouds between heaven and me?

But there I am not so entirely forgotten as here;

There the sainted dead plead for the erring; and  
There your mother's voice, hope whispers, is not silent.'

Fostered by her gentle hand in life, why should I not be  
after death ?

"Amid the ruins, it may be—for I am confident your  
deep feeling will force you to seek me once more—these  
lines will be read. If so, do not mourn over the wreck  
your father has made; but remember alone that the lim-  
nings of one we both loved, her pictures of holiness and  
truth, have at last brought poor Eloise back in wisdom's  
paths; have caused her to resolve that the eye of a pro-  
phetess shall no longer dupe the credulous, but that in a  
nobler life she will yet endeavor to accomplish the mis-  
sion destined by her Maker."

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening  
withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether  
shall prosper either this or that, or whether they both  
shall be alike good.'

"Mother, mother! thou hast heeded this admonition,  
and to-night, after the lapse of years, a little germ has  
drifted safely to my feet; the beauteous bloom has by de-  
grees expanded, and I breathe its fragrance; but side by  
side with its dewy petals are the comforting words, 'Well  
done, thou good and faithful servant,' first greeting which  
welcomed thy upward flight in years long gone, and thy  
son—thy loved one in life—while listening to the peaceful  
chime, inhales a serene bliss; for have we not the blessed  
assurance that the holy mantle of the departed oftentimes  
causes our heavenly Father to list to the wild imploring  
cry of the living ?"

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE dun of twilight had stolen so imperceptibly upon the eager, anxious little flower-girl, that she had scarcely noted the shadows of coming night, from which she now shrank shiveringly back.

The lamp-lighters were busy upon the streets, and the muffled hum of the homeward bound fell with pall-like gloom upon a heart which struggled bravely to be buoyant. All day long, her wearied feet had trodden the different thoroughfares, offering, in a suppliant, modest manner the bouquets which the glorious sunrise, had found tastily arranged in her basket.

The sales of the day previous had made her so sanguine and happy; but to-night she drew languidly around her the worn though neatly-mended shawl, which concealed but slightly her gracile, elegant figure. Unfettered now, the thoughts of cheer which had through the long day buoyed her up. Tears, hot, scalding tears, were coursing rapidly down the soft cheeks, which not even the labors imposed by poverty could sully.

Heart-agonies, heart-throbbings, and heart-yearnings had all been tenderly borne with, hitherto; for through the grayish mist were angel whispers wooing her on. From thought's darkened laboratory still stole softly out sweet comforters, whose egress could not be debarred;

but to-night they failed to soothe, for combating fiercely and sternly with these airy figures, was the piteous picture of a sick, and perhaps dying father, to whom not even her little earnings of the day would bring the necessary nourishment.

How ghastly seems the pageant of real life when its death-like tread grates upon our ear! How cruel the review while destroying the *verve* and enthusiasm of youth!

Eunice, poor trembling, quivering Eunice! Earth, water, air, with their myriad of graces, their winsome ways, their eidolons of beauty, smile not for the city's bare foot. To behold germination—to bend her longing ear to catch the rills of forest music—to gladden her own ideals of beauty, which the dust and smoke of a cramped city were fast stifling—to indulge her spirit of levity in maddening pranks, her sportive humors lost sight of in the long, wavy grass of the enticing meadows, the living greens of nature, where bloomed the delicate wild flower,

“Who, light and lowly as a little glow-worm,  
Sheddeth her beauty round her like a rose,  
Sweet smelling dew upon the ground it grows;”

these joys, these pleasures, were not for Eunice. No, no! her elysian islets were far off amid the offing, as she thought now, and no pilot were needful to steer her to the wished-for home; for had she not seen those fairy haunts submerged one by one, inundated by the crest and foam of the ever-moving waves?

Quaking still, she clung nervously to the inner path, and scarcely raised her sad eyes to the passer. Malevolence



smiled at the thinly clad figure; but the feeling philanthropist paused, and would have staid the little creature, had she not strenuously opposed it.

Lulled into a momentary repose by the glimpse of a large Gothic church in a retired portion of the city, Eunice stopped on reaching the gloom cast by the gothicized building, and peered quickly around. The rapid flight had caused the little heart to flutter wildly, and she felt that she needed rest. How quiet and peaceful it seemed after leaving the heart of the great city, where the bustle and noise had so inturbidated, yet how much greater the fear at an approximation to the musty garret she called home! The dreary attic rooms, where dwelt the *canaille* of the city—where nightly, amid those uncongenial spirits, she must listen to naught save oaths and jeers.

Eunice had never known brighter days, and yet an in-born feeling daily whispered that such should not have been her destiny, and she loathed this mingling of stray lights and constant shadows.

Long did Eunice pause; in fact, she did not note time. This rest, ah! it was a gentle balsam—no turmoil, no turpitude; such quietude failed not to have its happy effect.

“But my father needs me,” she said half reluctantly, as she turned to go; but ere she had withdrawn from the shade which had concealed her, the stopping of a vehicle almost immediately in her front, startled and agitated Eunice deeply. Some men issued forth bearing a coffin.

A burial by moonlight. Eunice had never seen one. Would it be wrong for her to stay and witness the ceremony? Forgotten now her many tears. Curiosity conquered, and the child glided noiselessly after the group.

But woman! where was she?

"Surely," murmured Eunice, "this man must have lived and died alone. Where is his wife? Where is his child? I would not have treated father so."

And yet, Eunice, all day long your father has been alone. You would not neglect the dead, and yet the living needs your care far more. Alas! unconscious childhood, seeking refuge amid the cavilings which a thoughtless, gay world are daily muttering.

Slowly and with much gravity the corpse was borne forward. Some one, then, must have loved it, or they would not be so tender. A family mausoleum; ah! how elaborate the finish of the costly receptacle. Never before had Eunice seen any thing more lovely; it dazzled the eye of this miniature warbler of life's beauties, and she held her breath, fearing lest the least noise would dispel the vision.

How she wished one of the last homes of the pampered children of the wealthy might be hers! She thought her eternal sleep would be sweeter if the hard, rough clods of clay were not allowed to fall upon her little wooden coffin; but then the thought of the beauteous flowers, so loved and fondled, would intrude—when would they bloom in such a home as this? It is true, still, drooping, mourning ones might here bring their fresh buds daily; but there would be no one to eradicate the churlish weeds—to embellish and beautify as the hand of art might dictate for poverty-stricken Eunice. Yet her hopeful feelings uttered softly that even nature's diadems might wave their little tresses above her mound of soft, mellow earth spontaneously—even the green grass would be preferable.

Eunice was dreaming! Yes; it was her privilege to dream. She could not smell the freshly-mown hay, and, amid the luxury of country feasts, bring back once more the bloom upon her little cheek. Yet Eunice could dwell amid fairy gleamings, unshackled by mundane happenings, free from the low jest and silent sneer; and in these dream-lets, it may be, she was happy. Can we doubt it?

A harsh, grating noise awoke Eunice from her trance-like state. She had stood by the dead, and had not been chilled; but the turning of a key had caused her to spring tremblingly up. But where were the group? All gone! No, not all. A form was resting wearily upon the gateway. Surely he would not shut her up in the gloomy churchyard! Must she approach him? Ominous were these vestiges of mortality. Almost stupefied from terror at the possibility of a night to be spent with the dead—ghastly associations—Eunice went timidly forward.

“Buy my flowers?”

She was the simple flower-girl once more. The daily salutation came forth mechanically. But, gazing fixedly upon a large, brilliant star, the stranger did not answer her. His look of calm, dignified sorrow appalled Eunice.

“Father,” he said sadly, “God, veiled in clouded majesty, has spoken, bidding the criminal execrations, the vile animosities, the fearful reckonings which I have for years secretly enrolled against thy murderers, disperse.

“By the babbling brook, in the wee hours of night, I have started, as the rustling leaves, the agitated waters, bore back the words, ‘Vengeance is mine.’ In the hall of gayety and mirth their solemnity could not be stilled. The grandeur of their import still overpowered; and to-

night, I have borne back to the last home of your ancestors, that which I had sworn in my wrath should never leave my keeping, until the vile accomplice, as well as the more guilty instigator, were lifeless. The latter already bends before an offended Judge. The accomplice—where is he?

“It was an idolatrous love. The ceremonies even, which have infolded it for dreary years have been sacred. I could not part with you—with thy body, embalmed, not only with its aromatic oils and spices, but with my tears. It has remained concealed where my daily vision might be daily reminded of the terrible vow of dire revenge for many sad and desolate years; and I blessed the hand which had thus taught me the art of preservation.

“‘Nothing remains out love; the world’s round mass  
It doth pervade, all forms of life it shares.’

“It is the guerdon for which we hourly toil and struggle, the focus around which clusters each shade, each sorrow, and each bliss. How closely we pursue it! But, alas! it is a phantom which vanishes, while our very existence seems dependent upon its stay. We imparadise our frail tenements, and clutch and defiantly brave the receding forms which our loving natures had impaneled; we wrestle, pray, entreat, that they may forever remain with us; but either malevolence denies, or—what is far more solemn—death enters, and leaves us quivering beneath the lash, until in our humility—as I am doing to-night—we murmur, ‘Not my will, but thine, O God! be done.’”

There was a light touch on his arm. A tear shaded

beneath the long, dark lashes, and when the violet eyes were raised to his own, he felt that he was not alone.

“Eunice, dear child, what has brought you here at this hour of the night?”

Paul Mahon looked kindly, but in amazement upon her. He recognized the gentle girl whose voice, sweet and thrilling, had so often tempted him to linger for a while on the corner of Willow street, and choose some of her inimitable bouquets.

Indeed, so frequent were these little talks, that the face and comportment of the child had grown strangely familiar. Suspicion then, of wrong in connection with Eunice, could not enter his mind.

“Father is sick, and I have not sold my flowers to-day as usual. I remained quite late, hoping to make enough money to carry him something that he could relish. Sometimes I can sell them to those going to the opera; but to-night I failed, and I became so terrified that I almost ran away from the crowd.”

“But you must not rest here any longer. Eunice, come, shall we not purchase some food? Then I can go with you to your father.”

How her little heart bounded with joy to be under his protection; the one whose playful words had so often cheered her drooping spirits; who in buying her bouquets had so often placed the food within her reach for which intense hunger had caused her to long.

Yes, she would go with him anywhere, anywhere in the wide world.

“Has your father been sick long, Eunice?”

“Not long ; but then he is so cross, and sometimes strikes me when I bring him nothing.”

“And your mother, Eunice ?”

“Dead !”

Ah ! he had touched the chord of sorrow at last. Motherless ! No wonder her little bare feet day by day trod the streets of the busy city in search of food. No wonder the little form bent forward at his question and sobbed audibly. Eunice motherless ! There was a new tie now to bind him to the delicate, sensitive flower-girl, and he pressed the cold though passive hand still more tenderly.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

“ ‘**LIKE** a long-legged grasshopper in the garden,  
Forever on the wing, and hops and sings  
The same old song, as in the grass he springs ;  
Would he but stay there ! No, he needs must muddle  
His prying nose in every puddle.’

“ **HEIGH-HO !** would that I could do the same. Another night, and my gains all to be lost by this uncomfortable position—this virtually chaining-down of my poor limbs and body—in fact, this Procrustean torture. Yet how fortunate, as Pandora opened her flood-tide of evils, that hope should have been severed from the gladsome train ; otherwise this miserable apology of a tripod, for the bed gives me hourly unmistakable evidence of the absence of one of its rickety limbs, could scarce detain me. Eunice, Eunice ! you silly child, if I could place my hands upon your lithe figure again, à vigorous shake, believe me, would relax your fine constitution. I would throttle—”

“ Father,” said Eunice, with the submissive voice of a deprecator, “ indeed, I have done my best ; but the stranger accomplished far more for me, than my wilting flowers would have done in days.”

“ Stranger, Eunice ! You have not been so suicidal as to bring any one into my very sanctum—indeed, my only place of refuge ; do you not know ?”

“ Hush !”

The finger was extended warningly.

"Father, you forget the partition is thin. Your harsh language will be heard."

And Eunice, without further ceremony, opened the door and bade Paul Mahon enter. The room, a low, untidy apartment, strongly impregnated with the occupant's vile taste, was indeed appalling to the cultivated, luxurious philanthropist. Accustomed to heed the slightest behest of his fellow-man, when groaning beneath the weight of misfortunes, he often entered the abodes of the indigent; but rarely did a shock so repellent ensue: every murder which had occurred during the past half-century within the man's knowledge seemed there paneled—glaring upon the walls, frightfully lurid.

He had compassionated, sorrowed for Eunice before; but how much more now?—Naught, in fact, appearing, which could at all harmonize with the glimpses of pathos and sentiment, which even he had seen revealed in his own limited acquaintance with the winning, impassioned child; a child upon whose fair brow a strangely weird idyl seemed written, but marvelously polished, firmly finished, and mayhap—thought whispered—it was her own daily dreamings there traced.

Yet the uncouth, filthy apartment seemed not more repulsive than the beastly, sensual, depraved man before him. And this, Eunice's father? Incredible beyond degree—agonizing, loathsome to every refined emotion.

"You are mystified, sir? Undoubtedly, undoubtedly; but walk in. My little angel of mercy but poorly prepares others for her father's appearance; but she's a genuine example of the sex. In fact, your proximity caused me to pause somewhat in reflections which were



not without interest, and also, I trust, without profit. At times, when alone, I love to indulge in past reminiscences; to reproduce knowledge which might otherwise grow rusty; for notwithstanding the fact that my surroundings may have caused you to anticipate nothing but degradation, I went through a thorough curriculum in my younger days—a course of study which for want of time has scarcely benefited Eunice; but that is of no consequence, for what a trifle a woman's life amounts to! The introducer of evil—one of the fairest—created, in fact, in a rage by Jupiter—her deceptive form of loveliness alone concealing the artful, plotting, gossip-loving creature; so enough of her.

“Take a seat, sir. We lead an inane life at present; but you will certainly find us the very quintessence of politeness—unless, to my disgrace be it said, ebriosity causes me to lose sight of urbanity. I know that I am not addressing an abominable gudgeon, but Mr. Paul Mahon, sir—the true type of a gentleman—as his father was before him.”

The *nonchalant*, bombastic manner in which the whole was uttered disgusted as well as surprised Paul Mahon. How could this nefarious schemer, this infamous emissary of another's iniquitous designs—for his physiognomy plainly indicated his real character and his daily pursuits—this man whose impecuniosity, as stated by his child, had aroused his sympathies, causing him at the same time to seek him out, have ever known him? He did not remember ever to have met him, and stood like one petrified.

“Icicled, crystallized into a statue, cast into a form so

dazzling, that I look and wonder. Do not writhe beneath my fulsome compliments. In fact they serve, when pronounced gracefully, as sweetness amid the ups and downs of life. You came to relieve my exchequer—which I admit is frightfully low—for which accept warm thanks, not cold ones. In fact, did I not, like Mephistopheles, know

“‘My pathos certainly would stir thy laughter,  
Hadst thou not laughter long since quite forsworn,’

I might divert you for an hour while giving vent to mournful ditties—pleasantries to me, you know, over which I could secretly laugh; but we will dispense with the farce. This morning I lay here sadly soliloquizing over my fate, and the lines from Goethe's *Faust*,

“‘And ere one yet has half the journey sped,  
The poor fool dies. O sad disaster!’

arose, strangely to fascinate. But to-night, illuminated with a gleam of health, dark thoughts are banished, and I am, as ever, an humble admirer of Mephistopheles, whom, let me inform you, I have selected from demonology as a model. The second archangel, it is true; but as it has generally been my fate in life to be second in all things, the choice, I think, is quite appropriate; and truly the mocking, relentless fiend pleases me. I would not wish to exculpate——”

“Miscreant, your exculpation is unnecessary. Any thing from you fails to interest. My tongue has been silent, it is true; but only from the amazement felt at your depravity. Could you realize the infinitesimal part of my contempt, you would perhaps laugh at your desultory,

nonsensical communication. But Eunice, poor, humiliated little one, do not fall with the fallen. Dear child! how I wish I had the power to dry forever these tears of mortification; yet should you ever need my aid, come where this card directs, and I will not repulse you."

He pressed the still, cold hand within his own warm one, and then nervously closing his ear to exclude the spasmodic chuckle, the ribald laugh with which the room resounded, he passed down the broken stair-step.

"What say you to taking the frail one, eh? Your Bible bids you return good for evil, you know."

The words were borne distinctly to him as he reached the pavement and breathed the cold, bracing night-air.

Goaded on to madness, clutch fiercely with the thirsting demons, Paul Mahon; for the suspicions generated by those mocking words are true. Stifle the malady which has so long rankled in thy breast. Upheave those wicked thoughts; replace them by purer. Remember, He who dwells among the "just made perfect," forgave, and shall not thy God, the Holiest of the Holy, be thine avenger?

The tempest quelled, how beautiful the home of his aged parent, as he approached, seemed to his aching heart! Home! sweet haven of hallowed joys; even though thy fireside be desolate—even though a mourning heart alone beat within its precincts, still thou art sweet. How benignant, how gentle the greetings of that mother. He could not dispel the calm, quiet joy which his presence had diffused by one word of sorrow; he could not revivify the scene through which he had just passed, although she fondly pressed him to do so.

She would know what had detained her noble son to so late an hour, for it was not his wont; but his face dropped gloomily upon the upraised hand, and he quietly waived the question. With a delicacy ever the concomitant of love, the mother desisted from any comments on his depression, and silently handed him some letters, which, arriving the week previous, during his absence from the city, she had neglected hitherto to give him.

Withdrawing his arm slowly from the mantel, he proceeded, with little manifest interest, to the examination. But one letter arrested his attention at last. Ah! why had his mother detained them so long? Not from Marian, it is true; but the handwriting undoubtedly was that of one living near her home, and in whose society he could not doubt she had been constantly thrown. Might there not be some word—some little word kindly and gently spoken within of the one she had so long, cruelly expelled from her mind?—a tracery, it may be, of softened chidings; but remembrance was what he craved, even though the foliations were unnaturally pungent and bitter. A wild, fearful palpitation ensued from the heart, which so long marveled at the impossibility of a sedative that could tranquillize the acute pain which had so long suffered in unison with the tortured mind, at the thought of its attic nobleness being doubted.

What though her ways seemed coquettish in the past? Might he not yet, in the genuine purity and truth of which he knew her to be the possessor, find a revelation, startling even though it be, still accompanied by an explanation more than satisfactory to the long-famished heart? The seal was quickly and tremblingly broken.

“Oh! the joyous, hopeful words,  
The happy thoughts from which I've been estranged,  
Again come round me.’

“Mother, gone now are my gloomy musings. Marian is still faithful; rejoice, and bless again thy son, as he extends his proudly confident hopes once more toward happiness and Marian.”

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE pensile tendrils of the ivy, and its gorgeous festoons, contrasted beautifully with the glintings of white marble. The efflorescence of the plants her own hands had placed there, had, year by year, charmed by their daily perfume; but at length, with their leaves sere, the beauty of their tinge dimmed, the varied-hued flowerets would, one by one, while receiving their blight, drop; and she had, in her own peculiarly fascinating manner, craved the sweet boon of being the one permitted to remove them.

How oft had her heart, while deluged afresh in gloom, compared the refulgence of the ivied green with her own idolatrous love—softened, it is true, by the unwavering kindness of the living, yet still like the graceful, clinging vine whose original brightness mildew, decay, and multifarious changes had failed to extinguish.

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter had still listened to the low, plaintive wail of the orphaned heart. The ever-varying cloudlets—now magenta gildings, now pearl-like edges—could not still the pang, even though she momentarily paid them silent homage.

The kind hand of the step-mother whom she adored, who had so often dwindled her wildering, scorching thoughts into shape and beauty—whose ubiquitous sympathy had so gladdened desolate lives which, indurated by unkindness, might otherwise have fallen—whose grave yet benignant reprovals had oft strangled and ex-

punged the thick undergrowth of error which battled for existence—and while pointing the rebellious hearts to a transparent path which led upward, far beyond the amber-stippled clouds, away from the dusky hues of sorrow, mellowed and softened the darkened drapery into an inimitable whiteness, within whose silvery sheen she sometimes lingered. Still there were hours even then—though it seemed ungrateful—when the listless, sadly-drooping form withdrew quietly within the cold tomb, and beside the chilled figure, sought its comfort.

Ah! the dreary, desolate, motherless children of earth—for are they not the orphaned indeed?—who can number their unwept miseries? who can solace their untold griefs? Who can withhold pity, when their unearthly calls for the love are heard which rendered their childhood one vast panorama of beryl beauty, in whose delectable green they sported, beneath the gentle guardianship of their immaculate, never-tiring All-Father?

How could Marian bid adieu to a spot which she had regarded with such an absorbing idolatry? One long year to ensue ere it must again be revisited? and must the quivering link be broken—the low farewell, uttered?

Maggie in her quiet home, happy once more in her father's love, surrounded by much to gladden, had caused her for a moment to forget in her light blithesomeness, the parting.

Netta Wilson, with her warm, gushing love, almost undated her with praises, dictated by gratitude, as the new-found joy of companionship, which Marian's thoughtfulness had upheaved, arose before the gleesome prattler, causing the rending tie to be still the more pain-

ful; and in her efforts to comfort the little one, she had again forgotten all thoughts of selfish sorrow.

The loved Sunday-school class, whom the kind instructress had so long led by holy utterances and teachings from the book she loved, did not divine the depths of sorrow with which the moonlit streams would sport coldly before the peaceful speaker they were reluctantly yielding up might return to the shades of Poplar Grove.

And the friends and whilom lovers, whose egress and ingress during the whole day, had awakened both gleeful and sad thoughts as their farewells and congratulations were spoken, little dreamed of the despairing moans which the lonely spot, long baptized by a daughter's tears, must again witness.

It was a wild, passionate, panting groan, and the severing word uttered so low that its dreary note was echoless.

The old gardener, who had loved dearly his gentle mistress, stood ready, with head uncovered and tears coursing down his withered cheek, to grasp the hand which had so long aided him, and the old man could not forget.

"Tom, I confide my mother's tomb to your keeping. Remember, not a weed must cumber the hallowed ground."

"Ay, trust me, trust me, missy; trust the old man for once with the spot. 'Twill be sacred, not only for your sake, but hers." He gasped, and pointed the trembling finger upward.

The old man was choking with the excess of his emo-



tion. The past, with its long silent, weird notes, had been reproduced, and he wept aloud.

Marian passed quietly on. The hour for their departure she knew was nigh, and the low, piteous wail must, she instinctively felt, float quietly by her side, even amid the novelty of foreign travel.

Mrs. Lee was standing beneath the glare of a brilliant hall lamp, with her exquisitely moulded, delicately tapering fingers pressed lightly against the large, dark eyes, to shield them from the light, awaiting Marian's presence, the face glowing with a glad, joyous radiance; for had not the tidings just reached her that Claude and Sidney henceforth were to be under her entire control?—that the step-mother felt loth to assume the responsibility of their guidance and training—and she coveted it. That noble, gifted being, with whom the sour, snarling pessimist could not find a sympathizer; who turned weariedly from the silly persiflage of the voluble, flippant, false woman—the forgetter of the priceless talent with which God had intrusted her; upon whose hungry, sparkling intellect she had inscribed “deleble”—triumphantly. With such, although suavity and grace of manner uniformly marked her bearing, little congeniality reigned; yet her liberal views, divested of all egotism; her noble eclecticism enabling her to penetrate, and enfold within her large heart, the pure, the beautiful, the suffering wherever found—no matter how loathsome the outward garb.

Can we wonder, then, that the marbleized brow, the crystal drops which hung from the long lashes, told the secret of her absence, as Marian slowly appeared? That the mesmeric chain which bound these two matchless na-

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tures—that its riveted links spoke of a terrible shock; whispering that the little talisman, which had extinguished evil by binding the perturbed heart with a heavenly light, had been rudely electrified, and that gentle words were now necessary to ignite the cresset which henceforth must illuminate her daily pathway. She pressed her quivering lips to the cold cheek, and spoke such words of comfort as only woman can.

“ Ah mamma! if you would only upbraid me when I thus indulge my traitorous thoughts, my resisting nature perhaps —perhaps——”

“ No, no, my daughter, I do not regard them as such; it is your holy memory of the dead which renders the love for the living the more to be prized; yet more of this anon. Your father is waiting, and, as you know, we can not stay the flight of the ponderous locomotive.”

Marian pressed on hurriedly to her own precious room—doubly precious on the eve of parting; so many bosom thoughts to be now hushed of which it had unceasingly warbled. And the little *escritoire*—ah! did it not even in its quietude speak volumes? It was sadly and reluctantly opened, and there lay the package; those fond letters, whose transcripts were engraven upon a costly velum which knew no erasing; those tender letters which spoke only of love and their future, divided, fearfully severed now.

Ah! it was a grand, majestic Acropolis she had reared; but a terrible *kamsin*, the obliterator of her hopes, had scorched, had blighted sadly the limpid future in which her past happy dreamings had placed *one* darkened spot—her mother's tomb.

Was he indeed false? Yet, alas! she was not the wily casuist to delve the mystery. But

“Love is poesy; it doth create,  
From fading features, dim soul, doubtful heart,  
And this world's wretched happiness, a life—  
A life which is as near to heaven as are the stars.”

Its gorgeous incantations had made her until now the trembling pyrrhonist as to his guilt, his want of truth to her. What had seemed insuperable difficulties, she had by seeking refuge in rationalism subdued; but his continued silence compelled her to do so no longer, and mocking realism laughed to scorn her hopeless efforts at an explanation. With Tom the package must be intrusted—his hand must place it in the office, hers could not do it—and then, *en passant*, a soft good-by would mournfully escape from lips, long pale through suffering, for Paul Mahon. It would laden the air but for a moment, reverberating amid the pure ether, to be wafted, alas! whitherward?

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SCENES long couchant, with their proud crests alone peering curiously across the vast waters, which she had hitherto compulsively sipped through other eyes—apparently defying her approach—now in all their matchless grandeur had been enchantingly vitrified, and the transparency was pleasing.

The castellated homes, bearing the marked impress of antiquity—their mullioned windows, lofty turrets, buttresses, and gable roofs—possessed a façade rich in interest to Marian. The ligatures within which she had been incased—those hazy, misty impressions from some, though startlingly life-like ones from others—were slowly dissolving to give place to her own thoughts engendered after a careful survey.

She stood within the halls of Penshurst—the home of the Sidneys—and, while leaning against a *vert antique* column, reanimated imaginarily the vast rooms, where rustling silks and soft velvets passed and repassed, without its being necessary to summon to her aid the painter's wand, to render the effect of past loveliness perpetual.

Combe Abbey was not forgotten, where the manes of the unfortunate Stuarts assailed her on every side, and babbled sadly of by-gones. Elizabeth's shade evoked the memories, and the thought, dreamily, of the "crown of thorns" which had pierced the fair brow of the sparkling,

queenly Mary, and the doom which its pressure had brought both to her and her descendants.

The blooming ground of Flodden, and Culloden's no less "desolate heath," were all lively with the piercing shrieks of the maddened wraiths, who had vainly followed the ill-fated line, and still implored for their idols the softened benison.

Where once could be seen the simple cross of "Sibyl Grey," she had lingered to obliterate by the cooling "springlet"—the sweetened waters—the recollections of the subtle logic which had trampled upon and desecrated holiest memories—memories which, had it not been for the charming spell woven by Scott's immortal pen, might have swept and destroyed, by such rigid cultivation, the battle-field upon whose fatal spot so many noble and loving hearts had fallen, and above which miseries untold still fluttered.

She paused upon the banks of the Avon, where upland and dale spoke admiringly of the massive Shakespearian intellect; but the musing averter looked quietly and more enthusiastically into the placid waters, which gossiped incessantly of Anne Hathaway and the gentle wooing.

The straths and greenswards of England, the glens and recesses of the Highlands, this fair girl, upon whose brow *furor poeticus* had been stamped, kindled afresh with rare and costly gems of unfading witchery. She had placed in nature's *corbeilles* frightful gnomes, whose eldritch shrieks oft startled her own fancy creations; and when, wearied with the magic spell, she would wander far from supernatural gleanings, away to the soft woodland, where amid a humid soil, reaching forth to catch the sway-

ing ferns, "and the delicately-veined flowers," she would meditate on the sunny reminiscences with the metrical beauties, of which her note-book would be replete, and of which its musical cadence would prattle in coming years when the loved retreat—the Southern home—had been again sought.

The summer was passing rapidly away; a summer brimming over with delicious recollections. In the joyous passage from spot to spot the

"hands that penned  
And tongues that uttered wisdom,"

had been silently clasped. Friendships had been formed, liberal ideas garnered for future usefulness; and now, on the eve of their departure from bonnie Scotland, they had drifted to the island castle, the once quiet nook which had witnessed the incarceration and gloom of the Scottish queen—the Loch Levin home which had, alas! cast an indelible stain upon those indurated steel-clad warriors, who had pronounced the mournful fiat that imprisoned and sealed for a while, the sanguine hopes of Mary.

Unclasping some of the ivy, whose tendrils seemed loth to leave the mildewed walls, and tossing them carelessly around her, Marian, preferring solitude while brooding over the sad fate of one who, even though she could not inclose within a confident faith, seemed still draped in mysterious loveliness, wandered from the group of excited speakers, with whom Mr. and Mrs. Lee were temporarily engrossed, and rested not until she had reached a mossy bank, where in silence, crowned by the vagaries

into which she often abstractedly glided, she gazed earnestly into the shimmering water.

“Then playfully the chaplet wild  
She wreathed in her dark locks and smiled.”

What wonder a reflection so dazzling should have caused a blush of pride to mantle Marian's cheek. A few flowers she had gathered were mingling with the glossy leaves.

“And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace  
A nymph, a naiad, or a Grace,  
Of finer form or lovelier face!”

Marian was indeed beautiful, and the clear, glossy mirror whose diaphanous glimpses had suffused cheek and lip with crimson, had caused also the truant imagination to float wildly forward, far away amid loved scenes—countercurrent with the sufferings of the lovely queen, at whose feet she had truly intended to offer up sympathy. Thought, suspended for a while above the white mausoleum, cast a momentary tinge over the beauteous features, but lingered not long, for happier reverberations refused to be silent.

“The true nobility with which I have ever invested him, the protector and shielder of woman, has not proven a misnomer,” she said thoughtfully, as she drew forth a concealed letter which indicated by the interlacing folds that its perusal had been oft repeated. The hopeless, dreary expression, which casting its shadow the moment before, entirely disappeared as a glad sunbeam poised over the page inundating, and with its slanting rays, ejecting darkness. The tinge of happiness was coloring again her existence, and

symmetry and beauty, harmony and peace, were commingling.

"He has evoked the aid of Harpocrates," she said pensively, "and simply in the elucidation of the past writes,

" 'Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman;'

woman, then, has been the cause of our long estrangement; and yet how tenderly he touches upon it—not even her name is given. Who could it have been? Surely not Morella? Sometimes I have suspected her, since the arrival of this letter; her conduct was inexplicable for months before I left home; but yet—ah! I will not believe it; her brother is so unselfish in nature, she could not be entirely different. This letter speaks of his being soon with me, and a gladdened presentiment fills my heart that it will not be long. Oh! if it could be."

" Dreams are mind-clouds ; high and unshapen beauties,  
Or but God-shaped, like mountains which contain  
Much and rich matter, often not for us,  
But for another. Dreams are rudiments  
Of the great state to come. We dream what is  
About to happen to us."

Preoccupied, Marian did not notice the quick, happy step by her side.

"Marian!"

The voice, ah! the same manly accents she had so loved; his letter lay spread out before her. It was an auspicious moment, and a joyous, ringing laugh escaped him. An hour had sped by—an hour replete with explanations and gorgeous plannings for the future—to only



one of which Marian slightly demurred, but in which Paul Mahon's reasoning and earnest, heartfelt pleadings at last induced her to coincide, when Mr. and Mrs. Lee, sincerely sympathizing in the joy of their daughter and Mr. Mahon, advanced to warn them that the moment had arrived when they must leave the little island, of which Mr. Lee slyly whispered he feared his daughter would scarcely entertain a remembrance.

The sedate, peace-loving portion of the inhabitants of Kinross were somewhat astonished at the announcement of a marriage ceremony to be performed at the cathedral three days after, at ten o'clock in the morning. It was the plan to which Marian had at first so seriously objected, but which Paul Mahon's love had overruled. The gossiping, vivacious groups, who had rushed eagerly to see the beautiful bride whose charming *pleasance*, and brilliant, lofty bearing, had so completely captivated, marveled much that the handsome young American could have lost sight so long of his winsome lassie, and found her at last to wed and woo amid the quietude of Kinross.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

TEN gladsome, yes, golden years have flitted by since the delicate tracery of existences, the shadow and sunshine of each foliation, so marvelously enchained us.

We withdrew for a while from the purlieus of Poplar Grove, but return to it once more, like the wearied, famished exile, to gaze with him either upon its rich sepia pictures, or upon those where the pigment fascinates by its gay, ruby glow. Time has dealt kindly and leniently with its inmates; we would not intimate that the wary, untiring vicegerent, in his appalling vicissitudes and heinous mutations, has left them entirely unscathed; but so gentle has been the touch, so much of peace devoid of discord, that sighs have rarely escaped their imprisonment.

Clarence Heywood, with whom

“passions were all living serpents, and  
Twined like the gorgons round”

him, forcing the film of jealousy to fall from his long-tarnished vision, returned many years since with his true friends to their home, leaving it only for an occasional visit to his niece Lilian Gardiner, or, as he laughingly tells Mr. and Mrs. Lee, to fluctuate between Paul Mahon's city mansion and Poplar Grove, where a handsomely furnished studio awaits, in each home, his presence, and where he never fails to find every thing that can contribute to the whims of bachelordom cheerfully acceded to.

His lucubrations are incessantly of humanitarianism, and he also contends that

“The world hath made such comet-like advances  
Lately in science, we may almost hope,  
Before we die of sheer decay, to learn”

the genuine explanations of the various “isms” which have so long baffled the brightest intellects. Nothing is permitted to deter him in his investigations, save the gentle wishes and happiness of those kind spirits whose overflowing hearts of love and affection have gradually taught him to forget the bitterness of the past.

Maggie Dickson, who still resuscitates the olden link which bound her to the Grove, though Marian happily turns often her footsteps thitherward, to bask once more in the same counsels and advice by which her young life had been biased, and in her father scarce recognizes the harsh, cruel man for whom she once uttered the name of parent, vacantly.

And the orphaned children, for whom the parting, panting cry had been such excruciating torture to Mrs. Lee, had never known the dreariness of neglect; but with the fondness of an own mother she had ever turned to minister to their slightest wants, physically, morally, and intellectually. Her home they still claim generally as theirs, although occasionally absenting themselves to cheer the saddened life of their father, for whom the gay step-mother manifests a singular indifference. The silver threads have thickened much his dark hair since we first met him, and his favorite seat in his magnificent home is one by a large window which looks forward, over the vast

hills, out upon a gentle declivity, where rests in silvery shimmer Lottie Morgan's polished marble.

But alone, in their sublimated sorrow, dwell Mr. Espinosa and Mr. Ronald, each true to their first and only love ; but above all true to their God. Now strangely conscious of the claims of their fellow-man upon them, duty sternly tramples upon pleasure's enticements. Save a visit to his sister, who has long since ceased to exhume the falseness and baseness of her former life, quenching gloom while luxuriating in the fascinations of a foreign court, where a French nobleman daily eulogizes the beauty of his Southern bride, Mr. Espinosa rarely leaves his home, but, in his reawakened consciousness of a Christian's mission, sees, in the reformation of his father and Eloise, objects for sincere prayer.

Poor Eloise is still reticent as to her retreat, yet he feels assured that her promise has been kept.

The clouds seem threatening above. A tempestuous night broods over us, and nature is about to revel, I fear, in one of those darkened pageantries in which she often madly delights. Yet it may be simply an imagery of its fearful power, and gladdened sunlight may frolic and dance at morning's peep over woodland and dale ; and our hearts, untrue to their owners, have stolen softly away and are resting quietly within the cheerful library at "the Grove." They must be reclaimed ; therefore we unbar the massive entrance, and laugh defiantly at the terrific thunder peals and pelting hail, as a sweet, peaceful picture greets us.

Wouldst peer with us through lens, long partial ? A young boy, bright and sparkling, with his head resting

upon the herculean body of a noble Newfoundland, who lounges indolently upon the soft rug, has been for some time philosophically considering the possible frustration of the morrow's sports. He has a broad, high, matchless forehead—a handsome youth—one we would don with the epithet "magnanimous." We look eagerly into the fiery eye, and tremble lest the future should have many quaint impulses to combat with. A softened, winning smile finally neutralizes the conflicting elements, and we incoherently exclaim, "Behold Marian's first-born! for from no other could he have inherited so dangerous a fascination."

Mrs. Lee, with a lovely cherub cradled in her arms, now and then presses the downy cheek to her own, as she sweetly sings in the softened lullaby which mesmerizes infantile slumber. A reflection as of an idolatrous love meets our anxious, inquiring gaze. The musical names of mother and step-mother had been blended at the baptismal font by Marian's loving heart for the nursling. Each had crowned her young life with happiness when her helplessness pleaded for care, and while commingling even in thought for her own daughter the precious names of two so cherished, she had instinctively felt that the same paladia which shielded and guarded her own young life, now silently clasped hands warmly and affectionately above the innocent brow of infancy. The thoughtful act had caused tears of joy to spring into the dark eyes of Mrs. Lee, and she often pondered on the future of her wee-  
some granddaughter, who had already planted herself within her affections, and wondered if she would be rewarded with a love as true and ardent, as that which

glowed within the pure nature of Marian for the step-mother. She had never exacted worshiping love, such as had draped the silent sleeper, yet instinctively felt that the fond attachment for father and step-mother could not be silenced.

Marian and Paul Mahon are busily engaged rendering comfortable in the large arm-chair by the fire, the latter's own mother, who, no longer a stranger to the marvelous attractions of her kind daughter-in-law, refuses to be left in the city during the visits of Marian to the home of her parents, where they are all ever more than welcome.

Mr. Lee is busily engaged in reading; while Mr. Heywood, with his bachelor heart incalescing beneath such scenes of love, peeps pensively, although unconsciously, to the group over his book; yet a softened sigh is his only monologue.

Marian is happy. Happy! a word far too trite, too meaningless, to express her emotions. The dreams of her youth had not been rudely canceled by the fell swoop of bitter disappointment. The entire loss of respect for the one who had so faithfully promised protection; the mournful, pleading cry for companionship and sympathy; the shattering of her once etherealized love, had never been her doom—the sad doom which broods so often over the constant, madly-loving wife, rendering her existence desolate, inane, and miserable. On the contrary, bathed in the omnipotence of a love which could know no variation, her smiling, sparkling face, while upturned to receive the gentle, fond caress, murmurs proudly and triumphantly to the world, "This is my husband."

Hand in hand with Paul Mahon, who proves a noble

coadjutor, she performs the amenities and charities of life, with a willing heart. And when the gleaming marble flashes back upon the throbbing heart its glittering rays, when the tenacious grief refuses to be hushed, the quivering nerves are lulled by a nepenthe of loving and sagacious reasoning; the morbidity of the sorrow, although not entirely obliterated, still its pungency yielding beneath the potency and witchery of the husband's untiring devotion and living piety.