Marguerite Verne

Agatha Armour

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MARGUERITE VERNE;
OR:
SCENES FROM CANADIAN LIFE.
BY
RE. AGATHA ARMOUR.

CHAPTER I. NEW YEAR'S EVE.

"Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold, my friend,
And the New Year blithe and bold, my friend
Comes up to take his own."—*Tennyson*.

New Year's Eve in the fair city of St. John, that queenly little city which sits upon her rocky throne overlooking the broad expanse of bay at her feet.

Reader, we do not wish to weary you with the known, but love for our own dear New Brunswick is surely sufficient apology.

It is one of the feelings of human nature to be possessed with a desire to worship the great and titled, to become enamoured with those appendages, which are the symbols of social distinction. Let us consider how we, as a people, are privileged. Is there any grander title this side of Heaven than found in these words, "I am a British subject," and next "I am a New Brunswicker"? You who have travelled have often felt your hearts rebound when listening to the eulogiums passed upon our country and its gifted sons through the medium of the pulpit, the platform and the press. "He is a New Brunswick boy." Ah, those words are sufficient to inspire us with thoughts ennobling, grand and elevating. There are to be found growlers in every clime, and it is only such that will desert their fatherland and seek refuge under foreign skies. We have liberty, right, education, refinement and culture in our midst; we have a good government, noble reforms, and all advantages to make us good and happy. Then let us cherish every right and institution which makes our beloved New Brunswick the pride of its loyal people. It is such feeling which prompts this work, and if the different scenes throughout the province which we will endeavor to portray, the usages of society, custom, &c., and the few characters introduced from real life, meet your approbation, our highest expectation will be realized.

Now back to our fair city.

On this New Year's Eve the moon was holding high carnival. Wrapped in a costume of silvery radiance, she was displaying her charms to the busy throng beneath with all the coquetry she could summon, to her aid, darting quick glances at youths and maidens, and by covert smiles bringing even the middle−aged man of business to her feet. The air is also influenced by her wooing, and is inclined to be less severe than some hours earlier. Floods of light are radiating King Square, giving even to its leafless trees a charm of softness and effect. Pedestrians are going to and fro, while several halt in the vicinity of the fountain to smoke their pipes and discuss the news of the day. Presently a quick step is heard approaching, and a trim little figure greets us, wrapped in a fur−lined cloak, which, despite its ungainliness, cannot conceal the grace of the wearer. As the maiden casts a passing glance we are impressed by the sweet purity of her face—a face that will stamp its image upon more than one heart, and leave memories that cannot be forgotten.

Such was Marguerite Verne as we now attempt to introduce her in the fond hope that others will see her as we do.

"Marguerite," exclaimed the child who had overtaken her as she reached the pavement in front of the Royal Hotel, "Marguerite I am tired running, I thought I never would get up to you. Golly, how you do streak along!"

"Charlie Verne, you naughty boy," returned the girl as she confronted her pet brother, his childish face aglow with the late exercise, "I thought you were going to keep house with Winnie?'

"So I was," said the boy, eyeing his sister closely to watch the effect of his speech, "but the Listers have arrived and I had to run and tell you."

At this announcement Marguerite Verne could scarce repress a hearty laugh and her large, deep violet eyes sparkled, and from their changing expressions exhibited such variety of shade that one would scarce venture to say which was the original one.

A deeper tinge now rested upon the purely oval cheek as the girl returned the recognition of a thoughtful−looking young man who had the air and manner of one possessed with more common sense than generally falls to the lot of the young men courted by the *creme de la creme*.

“Miss Verne, I see that you too are bent upon enjoying this glorious evening; the old year is going out in all its serenity.”

“Yes indeed, Mr. Lawson; the old year is dying with all the true greatness that characterizes its life; it has left nothing undone, and if we have failed to garner up its hours sacredly, to us—not it—we lay the blame.”

“True indeed; but how little do we think of those lessons until they are beyond reach. We make grand resolutions on each New Year, but how often do they go to the winds ere the first week has passed around.”

Phillip Lawson's words took an earnest tone and his manner was earnest also. His rich, deep voice found its way far down in the maiden's heart; but she would not allow herself to think so. She would not acknowledge to herself that the restless emotions within her heart were other than a passing thought to a very dear friend! She must not see that Phillip Lawson, in his gifted, manly character, was her hero of all that was good and true, and that his was the nature by which she tested others.

As the foregoing remarks turned into a lengthy conversation Marguerite scarcely heeded that Trinity chimed out the hour of nine when the trio turned their steps homeward, Master Charlie forming an advance guard, and making the air resound with all the hilarity at his command when he came in friendly contact with some of his “fellers” as he expressed himself.

When Marguerite bade good night to her companion and stood for a moment in the hallway watching the retreating figure, we will not disclose her thoughts, but will follow her to the drawing−room, where “the Listers” are marshalled *en masse* awaiting her return.

“Marguerite, you darling!” exclaimed the eldest Miss Lister rushing forward and embracing the former in a manner that was more demonstrative than conventional, but was accepted with the best of grace, notwithstanding there was to be a repetition four times in succession.

Mrs. Lister was a distant cousin of Mr. Verne, and having six marriageable daughters on hand, had recourse to much diplomacy in the way of matrimonial speculations. For several years she had been in the habit of spending the New Year with the Verne family, each year adding one more eligible, until she has now the happy six.

It had ever been the boast of Mrs. Lister that she had attended boarding school, and carried off several prizes for her classic ability; and in order to establish the fact, had named her six daughters after six of the Muses. Clio, the eldest, inherited the largest part of her mother's ability.

The former often regretted that three unruly boys came to interrupt the succession of the classic nine.

But all this addition of inspiration at this festive season did not *inspire* the Verne family with any such high−toned sentiments as might have been expected.

“Marguerite Verne,” explained the haughty Evelyn, the imperious first−born of the family, “you are enough to drive anyone distracted! How can you submit so tamely to being bored to death by such pests? Indeed, Aunt Hester with all her wisdom is preferable to that empty headed woman and her muses.”

Marguerite had retired to her own room. She was sitting at a small ebony writing desk, jotting down a few thoughts in her diary When her sister entered, but now arose and drew forth a luxurious arm−chair for the imperious beauty to recline in.

“If worrying myself to death would do me any good, I might try it too, Evelyn; but as it does not, I try to make the best of it.”

“There you are again, with your philosophical ideas. I must expect nothing else from one who cares so little for the opinions of others, and lives only in sight of all the old half−crazed poets and fanatics of the Dark Ages.”

Marguerite durst not look toward the speaker, lest her quizzical expression might heap further assault upon her; so she sat quietly regarding a favorite print that hung over the mantelshelf. After a few moments silence, Evelyn drew herself up haughtily and arose to go, when Marguerite felt a rising sensation in her throat, and instantly rushed into her sister's arms. “Eve, dearest, I know you are disappointed in not going out this evening, and I am sorry; can you not believe me?”

Evelyn Verne was a beauty—beautiful as an houri, imperial as Cleopatra, but merciless as a De Medicis. She was a true woman of the world; self was the only shrine at which she worshipped; and if indeed she could feel a momentary sympathetic chord, surely Marguerite was the cause. The piercing black eyes send forth a flash that is electrifying, then fix themselves upon her companion. She is perhaps struggling between pride and duty, and it costs her a heavy sacrifice. As she gazes upon that sweet, soulful face she is almost tempted to become a nobler and better being; but the world has too heavy a hold upon her, and slightly pressing a kiss upon Marguerite's

cheek, she takes leave without saying another word. As the latter listens to the rustle of the silken train through the spacious hall and stairway, she heaves a deep sigh, and once more seats herself beside her desk. On the pages of the little book she pens thoughts worthy of such a soul, and worthy of the memorable eve—worthy of the dying moments of the year which had been her friend, her comforter and her hope. She could look back without many regrets. The hours had not been misspent, and she could say: “Old Year, I used you well. Now that you are nearly gone I will not regret, but try, with God's help, to welcome in your child.”

Marguerite sat thus while the clock struck twelve, when she buried her face in her hands and remained in thoughtful silence—a feeling too reverential for words, as something too sacred for intruding upon.

And now the New Year had been welcomed in. The moon, in all her majesty, witnessed the solemn pageant; and unseen choristers wafted the tidings from pole to pole.

“Another year,” murmured Marguerite, as she gently raised the casement and looked out upon the beauty of the scene. Queen Square, studded with tributes to the Loyalists, was peaceful as the grave. Beyond was the calm, blue water of the harbor; while here and there a white sail upon its bosom added to the effect. Peace reigns over the city, and the lights have at last disappeared from the Verne mansion. Let us take the liberty to mention a few facts that may be necessary ere we proceed further.

The Vernes belonged to a genteel and respectable family. They did not lay claim to an aristocratic ancestry, but for generations could reckon on a spirit of proud independence and honest worth. Mr. Verne was a man of honor and sound principles in every sense of the word; and he always tried to inculcate those principles in the minds of his children. If he daily saw in his first−born traits of character which he openly condemned and censured, there stood in bold relief upon his heart the pure, high and noble character of his delicate Marguerite. Nor was he to be disappointed in the younger scions of the family. Fred. Verne was a noble, manly boy of fifteen, and gave promise of being a good and upright citizen; while the precocious Charlie, despite the daily amount of spoiling received in the domestic circle, was a clever little fellow, as ready with an answer as he was ready for his daily supply of chocolate caramels.

Mr. Verne had married when very young, and was still in the prime of manhood. He was not handsome; but an intelligent, open countenance was the most pleasing attraction in his face. One could look upon him the second time without a feeling of dislike or even indifference.

But there is another important personage of whom we must make mention—the mistress of the Verne mansion. She is, to say it in as few words as possible, an out−and−out woman of the world—one who never says or does anything without considering what will be the world's opinion of her, and one who never says or does anything unless there be some selfish motive at the bottom of it; one who lives only for the gratification of her own selfish ends, so far as her friends and family are concerned, and whose chief delight is show, display and social greatness.

It may be said that when Mr. Verne married his child−wife, who had been petted and spoiled by her elders, he made much allowance for her daily short−comings, and fondly hoped that he might bend the impulsive nature to his will; but when he saw the great mistake he had made, he calmly bowed his head in submission to the decrees of fate, and labored more diligently to set a good example before his children. When vainly remonstrating with his wife, upon the increasing gaiety into which she plunged so wildly, he always found encouragement from the sympathetic Marguerite; and when retired from the noise and din of the drawing−room, his favorite amusement was a game of chess, with the latter for partner. It was then that Marguerite's deep violet eyes would sparkle and her face glow with enthusiasm, as she followed her father through the mazes of the game, and her clear silvery laughter had more charm than the ravishing strains of the most brilliant fantasia.

Surrounded by the *elite* of the city of St. John, Evelyn Verne was courted by the rich, the gay and the distinguished. It was the sole end of Mrs. Verne's existence that her daughters should make grand matches. For this purpose she entered upon a career which we intend to pursue through all its straight and crooked paths, hoping in the sequel to impart the sad but profitable lesson!

CHAPTER II. SUNNYBANK.

Sunnybank, the stately residence of the Vernes, is indeed an imposing structure. Its towering form and massive appearance mark it as one of the noblest piles in St. John. Its costly windows, reflecting all the colors of the rainbow; its solid brick walls, stone pillars and grand entrance, bespeak it the home of wealth and affluence. Even the solid brick pavement leading from the main gateway to the terrace marks the substantial tone of the edifice, and impresses one with the stability of its owner. And the statuary, seen from the highway, denotes the taste displayed in the vestibule, with its floor of tesselated pavement, echoing to the tread of footsteps as the corridors of some grand old cathedral.

It is now our privilege to be introduced to the interior, and we make good use of our opportunity while mingling with its guests.

On this clear wintry evening as we are ushered into the Verne drawing−room with its beautifully−frescoed wall and rare painting a pretty sight is presented to our view. Seated at the piano is Marguerite, who is singing a quaint little ballad for the benefit of a company of children gathered at her feet. She is evidently their queen, as the sly glances at the happy−faced maiden are ever increasing to be repaid by the sweetest of smiles. Evelyn Verne appeared in a heavy garnet silk with bodice and draperies of the same shade in velvet. Her elbow sleeves reveal arms that would rival in miniature those of the master−piece of Phidias—the Pallas Athena—which graced the Parthenon in by−gone ages. Her hair, of purplish blackness, gives effect to the creamy tints of her complexion, and heightens the damask tinge of the beautifully−rounded cheeks. One glance at this magnificent looking form and you are victimized by her charms; you cast a side glance towards the childish−looking girl at the piano, and you will only pronounce her passing fair. Beauty is beauty, and will charm while the world goes on, and while we are endowed with that sense which, in general, has outweighed all others; but in most cases we are, in the end, taught that the beauty of the soul will wear until time is no more, and the beauty that fades is a thing of the past!

“Evelyn, dearest, if Paris had now to decide between the goddesses, he certainly would have awarded you the golden apple,” exclaimed the first muse, who never let an opportunity slip to display her knowledge of mythology.

“What nonsense you talk, Clio!” returned Evelyn, whose heightened color betrayed the insincerity of her speech.

Urania Lister, “the Fifth Muse,” as Fred. Verne had dubbed her, now entered from the conservatory, and throwing aside a scarlet wrap, also joined in the conversation. She was a slight creature, with some pretension to good looks; but there was a sort of languor in her manner that disappointed one ere she had uttered half a dozen sentences. In order to sustain the character her name suggested, she was continually soaring into immensity of space and deducing celestial problems for the uninitiated *habitant* of this lower sphere. It was when Urania had taken one of her upper flights into empyrean air that the fond mother would exclaim: “If Galileo were alive to−day I believe he could get ideas from my dear Urania.”

But to return to the drawing−room.

The children have been dismissed to their homes, and Charlie consigned to the limits of his own apartments. A slight bustle is heard in the hall, and presently two visitors are duly announced by a servant in waiting. A smile of satisfaction beamed on the countenance of the anxious Mrs. Lister as she eyed the two young gentlemen on their being introduced to her three daughters, and in less time than it would be possible to conceive, she was consummating two brilliant matches for the ancient−looking Clio and the celestial Urania.

Be it said for this lady's benefit, and by way of explanation, she had consigned three of the muses to “dear papa,” and kept the three most eligible under the shadow of her wing.

While the devoted parent is weaving all manner of bright visions, she resolves that practice be not sacrificed to theory, and commences by a skilful contrivance to expatiate upon the ability and goodness of her offspring.

Montague Arnold is indeed an expert in all that concerns society through its labyrinthine phases. Not a look or tone but he has thoroughly studied, and ere he is many moments in an individual's society can accommodate his pliable nature to every demand. His physique is striking, his face handsome, his manner engaging, and he is reputed to be wealthy. His family connections are desirable, and he has education, accomplishment, and the

benefit of a lengthened tour on the continent.

What then is to debar such an one from entry into the best social circle the city affords?

Will we overstep the bounds of charity and describe a scene in which Montague Arnold and his companion, Hubert Tracy, played a conspicuous part a few hours previous? Ah, no! “Tell it not in Gath!” Let them be happy while they may.

Of Hubert Tracy we might have a more favorable opinion. There is still upon his broad, fair forehead a trace of manliness and honor, but there is about the lower part of his youthful looking face a lack of determination that threatens to mark him as a victim for the wary and dissipated man of the world.

Conversation had now become general, while music and games filled up the intervals.

Evelyn Verne was indeed the object upon whom Mr. Arnold lavished his attentions—a fact not overlooked by Mrs. Lister. Hubert Tracy was devoting himself to the Muses, and occasionally venturing a glance at Marguerite, who took much interest in the younger members of the circle, and seemed happy in her devotedness to brother Fred, and his chum, silently engaged over a game of chess. Mrs. Verne smiled, chatted and listened to each as opportunity served, and looked with fond delight upon the imperious Evelyn, who, by a series of coquettish manoeuvres, held her admirer in chains apparently ready to be put to any test for her sake.

“This new beau of Eve's is in earnest, and there is no chance for my dear Urania. Well, well! men do not appreciate a girl of such heavenly ideas as my celestial−minded daughter, and they throw themselves away upon a pretty face without an ounce of brains.” Poor Mrs. Lister had murmured these sentences after the events of the evening had transpired and she was enjoying the privacy of her own room. She always expressed her thoughts to herself, as she judged best never to let her dear girls know that she felt anxious for their settlement in life.

A few mornings later while the family lingered over the late breakfast in the handsomely−furnished morning−room, with its delicate tints of mauve and gold, the conversation turned upon the gossip of the preceding days. Miss Verne had not sufficiently recruited from the dissipation attendant upon a large assemblage, given by a lady friend in honor of some relative who had arrived from Ottawa. She was inclined to be resentful and petulant, and found fault with everything, from the delicious hot coffee and tempting rolls to the generous sunbeam that danced in at the opposite window, and it increased her anger so that she could scarcely restrain herself in the presence of her guests.

“You are somewhat uncharitable this morning, my dear,” was the only reproof of Mrs. Verne, while she sought to cover her annoyance in a marked attention towards the others at the table.

“Indeed, Miss Marguerite; it will be a long time before I shall tell as many lies for you again. I was really ashamed, for they all knew that they were broad falsehoods,” exclaimed Miss Verne, casting an angry glance at her sister, who sat between her mother and Mrs. Lister, looking the very picture of contentment and good nature.

“I am sorry, Eve, that you committed any grievous sins on my account, for it was a very unnecessary thing to do.”

“Unnecessary! Be careful, my dear little Madge, or I will out with the whole truth; and if I do not bring the blushes to your cheek my name is not Evelyn Verne.”

“Come, come, girls—never mind more talk now,” said Mrs. Verne, rising from her seat, and motioning them to withdraw, at the same time trying to conceal a look of displeasure that had contracted into a dark frown.

Mrs. Verne was a woman not to be trifled with. She had a look of one born to command, and well each member of her family was aware of the fact. She was a handsome woman, of proud and dignified presence, high−tempered, and in many instances unreasonable, her opinions being strengthened by the force of circumstances, and very seldom on the side of right. On this morning in question she was inclined to feel somewhat ruffled at Marguerite, rather than the aggressor. Miss Verne had thrown out a hint that was more effective than a well−timed speech of polished oratory, and well she knew it.

“Such a ridiculous thing to think of,” repeated the haughty mistress with emphasis, as she swept from room to room giving orders to each domestic, and arranging and rearranging matters to meet her own taste and convenience. The pretty crimson cashmere morning robe, with relief of creamy lace, hung in graceful folds and set off Mrs. Verne's form to advantage; and as you looked upon her then and thought how she must have looked more than twenty years in the past, you could not blame Mr. Verne for seeking her to grace his luxurious and beautiful home.

Evelyn Verne has picked up a very sensational novel and is languishing on a divan of crimson velvet and old

gold plush, with a drapery of beautiful design which she had thrown aside. One arm is gracefully curved around her head, while the other clasps the book, and in contrast with the rich hue of oriental costume resembles that of polished ivory.

The passage being read is certainly pleasing—yes, rapturous—for a current of an electrifying nature suffuses the slightly−pale cheeks and delicate lips, and again Evelyn Verne wears a beauty that is fatal in its effects. While the latter is engaged in this selfish manner we hasten to a somewhat odd−looking apartment, which, from its confused array of books, playthings, fishing−tackle, hammocks, old guns, powder−horns, costumes that had assisted in personating pages and courtiers, and also many other articles of less pretensions, might be taken for a veritable curiosity−shop. A central figure gives interest to the surroundings and prompts our curiosity to watch the proceedings.

The mischievous smile upon Marguerite Verne's face is of sufficient proof that she is engaged in a pleasant occupation. She has pressed two of the Misses Lister into willing service, and they are a happy group.

“What will this make, Madge?” yelled Charlie, with as much as his lungs had capacity, holding up an old green velvet tunic with enormous supply of tinsel.

“I'll go as Coeur de Lion, and wear it,” exclaimed little Ned Bertram, snatching the precious article from the other.

“Nonsense, children!” cried Marguerite, who, with her companions, laughed long and heartily at the ludicrous representation of the “knight of the black plume.”

Considerable time had been spent in bringing these would−be heroes to any decision as to their respective characters. Ned wished to be Richard the Third, and Charlie that of Richmond and repeat the triumphs of Bosworth; but meeting such obstinate opposition from their council, turned their attention to “something commoner,” as Ned expressed himself. After several hours intermingled with side−splitting laughter and grave discussion, a fair representation of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday was produced, while Marguerite and her friends received more compliments from the young aspirants than the most gallant cavalier of the sixteenth century ever paid to the queen of love and beauty. But the last remark was a deep thrust from the innocent and unconscious boy.

“You darling old Madge! I am going to tell Mr. Lawson you got us up, and I am sure we will get the prize. And I bet you I'll not forget to put a word in for you too, Miss Marguerite, and mind you Mr. Lawson don't consider me no small account.”

The manner in which this twelve−year−old urchin got off the speech had a telling effect. His air of importance brought a burst of laughter, but it could scarcely hide the blushes that played hide−and−seek on the girl's face—which fact fortunately escaped the notice of the Listers.

The long−looked−for hour has arrived, and Crusoe and Friday emerge from their “den,” as Miss Verne contemptuously designated the curiosity−shop. On this occasion Marguerite remains at home. Her constitution is rather delicate, and owing to a slight cold and throat irritation it is deemed advisable to exercise caution.

“I am sorry that you will not have your papa's company this evening. There is to be a meeting of the Board. There is always something going on.”

“Don't mind me, mamma. Please bear in mind I am good company for myself. I remember once reading a passage in some book which said that all the pleasure we derived had its source in ourselves, and not in external objects. I often think of it and believe it to be true.”

“What a sensible, but conceited girl!” exclaimed the proud matron as she kissed Marguerite, and sallied forth to chaperone the Misses Lister and their loquacious mamma.

“You dear old room, I'm with you once again,” said the girl in half dramatic tones, as she drew her favorite arm−chair near the grate and sat down, not to read but to weave bright, golden dreams—fit task for a sweet maiden of eighteen summers—with a quaint simplicity of manner that is more captivating than all the wily manoeuvres that coquetry can devise. Were there any pretty pictures in those dreams? Yes. But those that gave the most pleasure she tried hard to shut out from her sight and with a gentle sigh murmured “it can never be.”

Sweet Marguerite! Has she her “concealments” too?

CHAPTER III. A NOBLE CHARACTER.

In Phillip Lawson, a young lawyer of more than average ability, is realized Pope's definition of an honest man—“the noblest work of God.” Those who think that all lawyers are a set of unscrupulous and unprincipled men are sadly mistaken. There are in our midst men of the legal profession who follow the paths of high−souled honor and integrity with as unerring coarse as the magnet the north pole.

But it is in a special sense we wish to speak.

Phillip Lawson is sitting at his desk in one of the upstair apartments of a large building not many rods from “the Chambers.” His office is not inviting in its appearance—no luxurious leather−upholstered arm−chairs, Brussels carpeting—nothing to suggest ease or even comfort. Stamped upon every inch of space enclosed within those four bare walls we fancy we can almost see the words “up−hill work! up−hill work”!—and look toward the young aspirant to see if he is in the least disheartened thereby. But our friend receives us with a gracious smile and extends his hand in a manner that is hearty and genuine. Even the tone of his voice is assuring, and we listen, wrapt in admiration, forgetful that we are trespassing upon his generosity. But we must first introduce you personally to the subject of our remarks, that you may form your own impression:

Phillip Lawson is not handsome. His large irregular features are not in keeping with the proportions we call classic, nor is the sallow complexion any improvement; but despite these facts, there is indeed much that is attractive in Mr. Lawson's face. His gray eyes have a tender sympathetic look—tender as that of a woman; his brows have the reflection of genius as they are being knitted over some intricate and perplexing law points at issue; and the look of benevolence expressed in the lips, mouth, and chin, impart a tone of self−respect and dignity which, united with culture and refinement, make our legal friend an ornament to the profession.

Nor is it when office hours are over that Mr. Lawson's labors are ended. His services are freely given to many societies. Old and young, rich and poor, can testify to the fact.

Yet he does not rest here. Many an hour the midnight oil has burned low as this thoughtful student sat poring over pile upon pile of some old work as he kept up his never−flagging research, or penned his thoughts with marvellous rapidity.

As anyone appears to better advantage in a neat, cosy little library, with a bright fire burning in the grate, than in a cheerless, dim and prosy den, called by way of courtesy, an “office,” we thus look in upon the young man of books and letters. Phillip Lawson has just returned from a meeting in connexion with his church, and judging from his haggard looks, has had a busy day. His bright−eyed little sister has made her appearance at his elbow, and has placed upon the pretty five−o'clock table a cup of coffee and some of her own making of tea−cakes.

“Lottie, you silly little puss, why did you go to such trouble?” asked the admiring brother, as he took the little hands in his and looked into the piquant face for answer.

“Just as if I am going to let you work yourself to death and starve you into the bargain! Oh, no, my big brother, I am too selfish to keep you for myself to do any such thing; so go now and take the coffee while it is hot, else I shall have to bring more.”

Lottie Lawson shook her head with all the determination of a miss of fourteen, and emphasized the fact by settling herself very cosily into a low seat to see that every cake is disposed of to her satisfaction.

“Have you anything to tell me, little one? You know I can talk and eat at the same time,” said Phillip, sipping his coffee with the *abandon* of an epicure.

“Indeed, I have not one bit of news worth telling. I hear anything except a lot of the silly stuff the girls bring to school.”

“Well, that must be worth something, arising from such a variety of sources,” replied the young man, his grave face expressive of the fund of true humor within.

“Suppose you heard of the quarrel between Maud Harrington and Hattie Reynolds?”

“No; what was it about?”

“Oh! I can hardly tell you; but it was at recess, and nearly all the girls were out, except three or four. Maud said that Carrie Wilson's mamma had been calling at Mrs. Simpson's and that she said that Mrs. Ashley told that Hattie's sister Belle was the most dowdy−looking girl at the Langley's party.”

“How did Hattie find it out?” asked Phillip, with all the gravity he would exercise on one of his clients.

“Oh! you know listeners never hear anything good about themselves. Hattie was listening and never said a word about it until she got home, and then Hattie's mother went to all the folks who were mixed up in it and they had an awful time of it. Oh, yes, and what do you think?——“ Lottie gave another piece of news of much more importance to her brother than the preceding one, but he very quietly kept his own counsel, and soon after dismissed the little maiden, that he might take up a few hours of hard study. The student lamp was lighted, and new fuel added to the grate. Phillip Lawson sat himself down; but it cost him great effort to concentrate his thoughts upon the work before him. Still he labored on and fought manfully with the intruding thoughts, that, despite all resistance, would at times be heard. But duty gained the victory, and it was not until the young man had placed the much−prized manuscript in its resting place, drawn his chair nearer the hearth, and lit a cigar with the blessed expectation of having a puff of the weed, that he again reverted to the banished subject.

“How the child could hear such a thing! Much as I dislike gossip I should, like to question her further, but I dare not encourage such things in a child,” murmured the young man, involuntarily pressing his hand upon his brow, as if bent upon study. And it Was a study both pleasant and unpleasant. It presented two pictures—one fair and bewitching, which lit up the student's face with its reflection, while the other, dark and lowering from its deep and gloomy appearance, shed a cloud of despondency and sadness upon the thoughtful brow, leaving thereon an expression that was fretful and annoying.

“If the fellow were worthy of her I would not care so much, I could and *would* live it down; but for me to see her associated with him through life, it is something dreadful. And what am I to do? Warn them of the danger myself? oh, no; that will never do! I will be accused of plotting to secure the prize myself. But you will certainly do it in justice to the man whom you value as a true friend, if for nothing else,” were the burning thoughts that forced themselves uppermost, and bade the young man reflect very seriously. “Yes, that is a motive sufficient to nerve any man; but there is a deeper one—yes, I will admit it—a selfish one.” There was a struggle going on worthy the soul of this noble−minded youth. He was trying to solve a problem which vacillated between right and wrong. It was no common task, for when duty pointed the way, the form of self overshadowed the path, and showed only fitful gleams of light.

“I will be cautious; but she must not be sacrificed to the artful wiles of unprincipled tricksters while I have an trinity. Come what may, I must and *will* speak out!” Phillip Lawson thus resolved, with a sense of relief. He knew now how to act, and his mind was clear, calmly awaiting the hour to carry his resolutions into effect. But how often do a few careless words change the whole course of action which hours of thought had premeditated.

Phillip Lawson's high−toned resolutions by these means were scattered to the winds, and he turned once more to the lofty aspirations of his intellectual nature for refuge.

Let us explain:

It is the hour of twilight, and the streets have an air of desertion. The people of fashion that are daily to be seen on King and Prince William streets have retired within their palatial residences, and none are abroad except an occasional man of business, with wearied and abstracted air, soon to find rest in the bosom of his family. Suddenly a handsome turnout claims our attention, and instantly the driver assists a lady to alight. She is dressed in costly furs and velvet, and her haughty mien shows that her associations and preferences are with the patrician side of nature.

“Will you come in, too, Rania? I need not ask Marguerite, lest she might miss a chance of seeing 'Farmer Phil' and lose effervescence of the hayseed. Do you know he is always associated, in my mind, with homespun and hayseed.”

Evelyn Verne laughed at the cleverness of her remark, and adjusting her mantle entered a publisher's establishment, followed by the said Rania Lister.

“Homespun and hayseed,” muttered a muffled figure as he stood in the recess of a doorway, from which situation he could see each occupant of the sleigh and hear every syllable that was uttered.

“Homespun and hayseed! ah! my proud beauty, the effervescence of hayseed is less noxious than the stench odors inhaled from dissipation and vice, notwithstanding the fact that they are perfumed over with all the garish compliments and conventional gallantries that society demands.”

Phillip Lawson had a highly−wrought imaginative temperament. He had not heard more than those few words, but his mind was quick to take in the whole situation. He could hear the lengthy speeches of ridicule and sarcasm

aimed at him from every possible standpoint, and he felt the more determined to live down the scathing thoughts. The man did not hear the reply by Marguerite Verne to her arrogant sister, but he calmly and slowly repeated the words—“God bless you, noble girl!” He still had faith in the purity of her mind, and would have given much to be able to convince her of the fact.

It did, indeed, seem a coincidence that the moment Phillip Lawson uttered the words above quoted, an almost perfect repetition found their way into Marguerite's heart, and left a deep impression which all the taunts of the subtle Evelyn could not shake off. Nor did it seem strange to her when she fancied that a figure, on the opposite side of the street, hurrying along at a rapid pace could be none other than the subject of her thoughts.

* * * * *

“A delightful evening, indeed. It is almost too fine to remain indoors.”

The speaker is none other than Mr. Lawson. He is looking his best in the neatly−fitting dress suit, with all the little make−ups necessary to complete a gentleman's evening costume, and while he leisurely surveys the groups of pretty faces on every side, is also engaged in entertaining a bewitching little brunette, charmingly attired in cream veiling and lace, with clusters of lovely damask roses to enhance the brilliancy of her complexion.

The scene was truly intoxicating. Mrs. Holman, the fashionable belle of society and wife of one of the leading physicians of the city, was entertaining a brilliant assemblage of the *elite*. The informal announcement of her grand “at home” had kept society in a delightful state of anticipation for the past ten days, and reality was indeed equal to all that could be devised. The grand drawing−room, furnished with regard to the beautiful in art, was certainly a fit receptacle for such an array of beauty and grace. There was the exquisite blonde, with face of angelic purity; next came the imperial Cleopatras, with their dusky grandeur of style rivalling that of empresses; and conspicuous among the latter was Evelyn Verne. Her amber−satin robes revealed the fact that she was an adept in the art of dress, and spared no pains to display the beautifully−rounded form and graceful carriage as she whirled through the mazes of the waltz, with Montague Arnold as partner. The latter was indeed a handsome man—one that is sure to attract a fashionable woman. There is a sarcastic expression lurking around the well−formed mouth, that has not, to the intelligent mind, a wholesome tendency; but then there is such a dash of style, and an amount of gay and charming sentiment in every word, that the resistless Montague Arnold finds himself an important adjunct to every gathering representing wealth and prestige.

To an ordinary observer the contrast between Phillip Lawson and the acknowledged beau of society never appeared more striking, and many would exclaim, “Well, Lawson is a very nice fellow, but then he is awkward, and makes a poor appearance in society.”

At this moment a familiar and graceful figure engaged the attention of the young lawyer. Marguerite Verne has been dancing, and accidentally finds herself seated near the conservatory in which Phillip stood. He is instantly at her side and it is then that the real beauty asserts itself—beauty of soul. “Miss Marguerite, I see you are determined to enjoy yourself, if I may judge by the number of dances you have already participated in,” said the young man, eager to join in conversation with the gentle but dignified girl.

“Why are you not doing likewise, Mr. Lawson? Now if all the gentlemen were like you what would be our fate? What an array of hopeless wallflowers there would be! Really I feel half angry at you already!—” Marguerite stopped suddenly in her remarks. Hubert Tracy came to claim her for the next dance, and as she took the arm of the latter, she quickly turned towards Phillip Lawson exclaiming, “Remember, I will be back in a few moments to finish what I intended to say. Indeed you need not think to escape censure so easily;” while the accompanying ripple of silvery laughter “low and sweet” were something to contemplate in the happy meantime.

“Mr. Lawson is evidently not intended to be a society man,” remarked Hubert Tracy to his partner, when they had reached the other end of the room.

“In my opinion he is all the more to be appreciated,” returned the other in a tone of reproof which stung the young man with deep anger and resentment; but he was too artful to express himself, and from that moment there entered into his mind a firm resolve to lessen the high estimate that Marguerite Verne had formed of the would−be lover.

CHAPTER IV. A SCENE OF HILARITY.

Several weeks had elapsed since Hubert Tracy had made up his mind to thwart the man whom he hated with a bitter hate. He was not backward in expressing his thoughts to the accomplished Mr. Arnold, who entered into the project heart and soul, and discussed the subject with all the nonchalance his shallow nature was capable of.

On the evening in question they are seated at a small side−table, profusely decorated with champagne bottles, glasses, and a few delicate morsels of refreshments.

“At the bazaar, Dick?” exclaimed Montague, stroking his artistically−waxed moustache with considerable dexterity.

The individual addressed as Dick was certainly a dude of the fifteenth degree—his pale−blue pantaloons being sufficient proof without venturing another glance. His movements, voice and manner were constant reminders of the excruciating assertion, “I'm a dude.” But of the question.

“Oh! is that you, Arnold? I really did not expect to see you here to−night. How is business at the governor's? Hear you are making a bold dash there?”

“Yes, you can bet on that! I'm the white−headed boy there now.”

As Arnold was in a short time highly exhilarated by the contents of the table, he became very communicative, and as his conversation was not such as would be under the head of pure language, we will leave him to make merry with his set of jovial companions.

Hubert Tracy was calm and self−possessed. He was too much intent upon some plans to allow himself to become incapable. He had “another iron in the fire,” to quote his expression as he thought the matter over to himself, and called upon all the powers unknown to come to his aid.

It was within a short time that Hubert Tracy had become vitiated in his moral nature. He had hitherto been known as a good−living young man—one that respected what was good and pure; but the old, old story—he fell in with bad company, and almost fell beyond reprieve.

You ask, “Had he a home?” He had, indeed, a home, where all that was good and pure was daily practised—loving, warm−hearted sisters, and a fond trusting mother had not the power to drag him back from the tempting gulf of dissipation and allurement. But we will not say that their prayers were lost. There was yet a small, still voice, that would intrude itself upon the young man, and despite his attempts to silence it forever, would steal upon him in the silent hour of midnight, and haunt him in the noisy abodes of revelry and carousal. It even forces itself upon him now as he sits planning a scheme to outwit his rival. The voice is repeating over and over again the words “Lawson is a good young man,” and they are re−echoed until Hubert Tracy raises his head and glances around as if to convince himself of the reality. “A good young man,” he murmurs bitterly; “I was one myself—in the past.”

A bitter groan escaped the lips of the speaker as he uttered the sentence, and his face became stone−like in expression.

“It is of no use; I must not give up. The fellow is good; but what is that to me now? If he win the day, I am lost forever—for it is only through her I will be a better man—and surely, with Lawson's nature, he would willingly make the sacrifice. But here I am, moralizing like a preacher,” cried the young man, as he arose and began pacing up and down the floor in an excited manner. “By heaven! it won't do to give up! If I ever expect to be a better man I must first fall still lower!”

A strange method of reasoning indeed! But a striking illustration of the fact that degenerate natures have always some loop−hole to crawl through in order to shield themselves from just reproach.

Hubert Tracy had not sufficient moral courage to take upon himself the responsibility of his actions. He had not faith to strike out on the path of right, and with a sense of his own helplessness, turn to Providence for his guide. Oh no, he could not see ahead of him with an honest hopefulness; but instead “an ever−during dark surrounds him,” and he, with all the cowardice of his nature, consoles himself with the thought that the nobility of Phillip Lawson is apology for his base actions.

It was after such reverie that Hubert Tracy bethought himself of an engagement he had made to join a number of acquaintances at a whist party. He straightened himself up and cast a glance in the mirror opposite to see if he

would “pass muster” in a crowd. “Guess I'm all right,” he exclaimed, stroking his fingers through the masses of chestnut curls that clung so prettily around his well−shaped head.

“Halloo, Tracy, not going so soon? The night's young yet, boy! Come, sit down and have some of the 'rosy,'“ shouted a rubicund−faced youth, with a generous proportion of carrotty hair crowning his low flat forehead.

“Sit down Tracy,” exclaimed another, slapping him on the back by way of accompaniment to the words: “We'll not go home till morning,” which song the whole company began to roar in a style more forcible than artistic.

When the last strains of music had spent its force and a general interchange of silly speeches had been made, the young man once more rose to go, but a youth with broad Scotch accent seized him by the arm exclaiming: “Don't go yet, Tracy dear; for if ye do, ye need'nt come back here.”

“A poet of the first water,” cried a voice from behind, at which all joined in another roar of laughter, which reached its climax when a feminine−looking youth exclaimed, “What a pity the government have not discovered such talent! they would surely have him for poet laureate.”

Before quiet was again restored Tracy took advantage of the occasion to cover his retreat, and hastily gained a small side entrance which led to the suspicious−looking alley not many yards from a very public thoroughfare. Having reached the street without any serious apprehension, he then set off at a rapid pace in the direction of his lodging.

A careful toilet, including some necessary antidotes, and we find the subject of our remarks an honored guest in one of the luxurious drawing−rooms in the city. Not a trace of the recent association is visible as Mr. Tracy takes his seat at a whist−table with an interesting and amiable young lady for partner.

“What a brilliant young man Mr. Tracy is,” remarked an anxious mamma to a lady sitting near, who also was on the *qui vive* for an eligible *parti* in the capacity of a son−in−law.

“Don't you think Miss Simpkins is very forward; just see how she is flirting with Mr. Tracy. I'm glad she is no relation of mine.”

Miss Dorothy Strong had ventured the above speech in hopes of testing the *strong* tendencies of her audience. She was a spinster of youthful pretension, and invariably took occasion to condemn any such exhibition on the part of others a dozen years her junior. Not meeting any remonstrance she made quite a speech on the familiarity of young ladies, their want of dignity, and ended in a grand peroration upon the conceit of the young men, their vicious habits and all short−comings she could bring to bear upon the subject.

But Miss Dorothy's speech was unhappily chosen, and therefore “lost its sweetness upon a desert air.”

“Sour grapes,” whispered a pretty miss of sixteen to her elder sister, as they stood apart from the others and watched the effect of the oration.

As we glance towards the said Miss Simpkins and watch the game for a few moments, we feel certain that Hubert Tracy is not deeply concerned whether he win or lose. He is evidently studying a deeper game—one on which he would willingly stake all he possessed.

“Now, Mr. Tracy, that was mine as it lay!” cried his partner, somewhat petulantly, as she noted the mistake.

“Never mind this time; I will look out better again,” said the culprit, his penitential look being sufficient apology for a more grievous offence.

“If I didn't know you better, Tracy, I would say you were in love,” exclaimed a fashionable young man, engaged as bookkeeper in one of the largest wholesale firms in the city.

“You seem to have great confidence in your own opinion, Mr. Berkeley,” retorted Miss Simpkins, who, be it said, was a girl of much moral stamina, having an aversion to conceited young men, and let no opportunity slip when she could give a home−thrust.

“Pray don't be so captious, Lottie; I am certain that Mr. Berkeley's opinions are always founded on correct observation,” timidly ventured a mild−looking little woman, whose speech had no other motive than a desire to throw oil on troubled waters.

As the game progressed, the party became more interested, and after an hour or more thus engaged Miss Simpkins was congratulated on her run of good luck; and Mr. Tracy, to show his appreciation of her ability, turned out some pretty compliments.

“Where is Mr. Arnold to−night, Mr. Tracy?” asked one of the guests, as the party stood in the hall making their adieux to the hostess.

“I cannot say,” replied the young man, tugging at his great coat with more vehemence than was necessary, but affording relief to hide this oracular reply.

“Oh! you need not ask that question,” exclaimed a voice near; “we all know that he is at 'Sunnybank,' paying his devoirs to the peerless Evelyn.” The speaker was a young lady, and the tone of this speech intimated that jealousy was at the bottom of it. But there was another side to the story. Turning to Hubert Tracy, with an air of playful badinage, the young lady continued: “And I believe that Miss Marguerite has a lover too. Surely, Mr. Tracy, you must know about it for you are on intimate terms with the family. You can enlighten us upon the subject.”

Hubert Tracy was master of his feelings, but he had difficulty to suppress himself. An opportune bustle among some of the other guests gave him time to reply in a cool and wholly indifferent manner which would turn their attention to another source.

It was only when this would−be suitor had thrown off the mask of studied indifference that he began to realize the state of his mind.

“It will never be,” he cried, in a fit, half−anger, half−emotional, as he paced his room during the silent hours that precede the dawn.

“I don't want to injure the fellow in any other way. Arnold says wipe him out; but—heavens! those words—he is a good young man! what makes them haunt me! It seems as if my mother and the dear girls at home are repeating them to me: Why was I not dragged up, instead of living hourly under the influence of a sainted mother and devoted self−sacrificing sisters? Ah! young man; it is a hard struggle for you to fall when you think of 'Home, sweet home!'“

Such was the soliloquy of Hubert Tracy as he sat himself down in a half−desperate state and commenced writing a letter with that nervous haste which showed he was anxious to get rid of the disagreeable task at once. After the envelope had been addressed the writer gave a sigh of relief, and rising from his seat, exclaimed: “Heavens! I would rather than a fortune it was over with!”

Despite the fact that curiosity has been defined “the lowest emotion of the soul,” we cannot forbear glancing over the content of the letter which seemed to affect the writer so deeply. It ran thus:—

ST. JOHN, Jan. 25th, 188−.

Dear Friend,—Intended to write you some days ago, but am now at fever heat, and manufacture my thoughts accordingly. Going to make no excuse, but come to the point right off. You heard the report about Lawson. It is too true, and if I cannot choke him off somehow, it is all up with me. I want to get the fellow out of the way. Can you secure that site for him instead of poor Jim Watters? If we can only get that deuced sprig of the law entrapped out there, some goodly stroke of malaria may come to the rescue, and I can breathe the grateful fog with double freedom. “Give the devil his due,” I believe the fellow is a veritable Mark Tapley—jolly under all circumstances—and will in the end thank us for giving him a change of climate and the vicissitudes of life so invigorating to his athletic and muscular composition. Much depends upon you to think and act at once. Saw that “drummer" yesterday; not a bad sort of a fellow. He speaks well of you—says you are a tramp. Go to headquarters on receipt of this and write immediately. If Lawson can be induced to go, my prayers will follow you for life.

Yours in dilemma, H. T.

This epistle—disconnected and vague as it seems—needed no further explanation on the part of the writer. The recipient was acquainted with the whole history of Hubert Tracy's career and also that of Montague Arnold.

It is necessary to add that while this correspondence was being carried on, that Hubert Tracy was a daily caller at Mr. Lawson's office, and without any apparent effort, had the satisfaction of knowing that the young lawyer was much attracted by his engaging manners and persuasive tongue.

It had been considered somewhat strange that a man of Lawson's integrity should look with favor upon a gay youth whose preferences were ever on the side of conviviality, but many wise−headed seniors said that the influence might be exerted upon the other side and Tracy would thank heaven for the star which guided him thither.

It was surprising how many little attentions were paid our young lawyer from the fact of the newly−formed friendship, and how many consultations were held as regards a promising field which glittered before the eye of the hopeful aspirant. A wide range of labor lay within his grasp, and Phillip Lawson was not made of the stuff to

lose a prize when it could be attained at any cost of self−sacrifice and personal feeling. With herculean effort he shakes off the bitter thoughts that hourly intrude within the privacy of his own heart, and armed with all the moral courage and true heroism of his soul he goes forth into the world's conflicts a noble defender of the rights of true manhood!

CHAPTER V. MORNING CALLS—“GLADSWOOD.”

A bevy of fair and interesting young girls are grouped around Marguerite Verne in the spacious bay−window of the library. One, a bewitching brunette, dressed in slight mourning, is indeed a pretty picture to contemplate. Louise Rutherford possesses a face and form which bespeaks a high degree of idealism—an aesthetic nature that is lofty and inspiring. As she turns toward the fair young hostess, there is an expressive look of sympathy that leads one to know they are firm friends.

“It is no use to say anything against it if *you two* have made up your minds,” exclaimed a good−natured looking maiden of seventeen, who had been trying to convince her audience that they had not selected the most fashionable characters for the coming parlor entertainment.

“That's just what I always have said, Mattie. You know well what Damon proposes Pythias will ever agree to,” ventured another devotee with a “cute” little face, tiny hands and tiny feet, with decisive tone and dignity of manner showing that she was beyond the ordinary type of girlhood, whose highest ambition is to have a good time, cheat her teachers out of as many lessons as she can, and walk, skate and dance, with a train of admirers ever at her command.

Helen Rushton was a native of Halifax and had been bred upon strictly conservative principles, but there was an innate generosity of heart that converted them into a happy medium.

She had relatives in St. John, and hearing much of its advantages And disadvantages, had accepted an invitation to see for herself, And now, after six months had been passed amid the grateful breezes and invigorating fog, she dreaded the approaching season, which demanded her return home.

Marguerite Verne was indeed the crowning deity on that happy morning, as she replied to the many little speeches intended for her benefit, and as the color came and went she was truly worthy of all the admiration then and there bestowed.

She is in striking contrast to Louise Rutherford whose black cashmere costume forms an effective back−ground.

Marguerite's delicate cream−colored morning robe is also relieved by the shades of garnet worn by the others.

Much real happiness is exhibited as one looks upon every countenance within the radius of her smiles. No jealousy lurks upon the brow of any. Thrice happy Marguerite! The secret of making others happy lies within the confines of your own unselfish nature!

“Well, girls, I declare, you have not told me one bit of news. Surely there must be something going on worth talking about,” exclaimed a new comer who had pounced in upon the company *sans ceremonie*.

“Nothing much, Josie,” returned Marguerite, “we have just been having an old−fashioned chat, and I am not sorry to say gossip has been at a discount.”

“Oh, you bad girl! Now, had that been Louise I would have been 'hoppin', but, girls, you see, we take everything from Madge.”

“Yes, anything from her is worth coming from Halifax to hear,” exclaimed Helen Rushton, rising from her position and crossing over to the range of bookshelves that adorned the opposite walls.

“Well, it's no use; I'm out of my element here. I can't get up to your high−toned talk. Look at Louise—reminds one of a Roman empress—and you, my self−conceited Haligonian, must follow suit; was there ever such a set?” The manner in which this speech was dictated set the circle in a roar of laughter, and Josie Jordan felt repaid seventy−times−seven.

“Helen is going to leave us soon. That is news,” exclaimed Louise Rutherford, glancing at the incorrigible Josie.

“But bad news,” chimed in Marguerite.

“Not going home so soon, Helen,” ventured Josie, with an earnest, inquiring glance.

“I am only going to Fredericton, or the Celestial City, as it is generally called,” said the other in reply.

“Pardon me, Helen, but the manner in which you say that word only would lead one to suppose you did not entertain a high opinion of our seat of government. I have been there during several sessions, and I always felt sorry when the time was up, and the M.P.P.'s and their families turned their faces homeward.”

The speaker was Louise Rutherford—her face aglow with an enthusiasm, called up by those pleasing associations which gave rise to her speech.

“Louise Rutherford,” said Helen Rushton, the color mounting higher in her cheeks, “you misinterpret my thoughts. If I have not sufficient command of the powers of speech to express myself without blunder, you should not attribute it to want of charity. Indeed,” added the girl, with more than due emphasis, “if, for no other reason, I should speak respectfully of the place, from the fact that I have very dear friends there.”

“Josie, this is all your doings,” cried Marguerite, raising her hand in a menacing gesture and trying playfully to restore quiet.

“I'm always bent upon mischief,” cried Josie, her eyes sparkling with merriment. “Indeed, at home, I am treated to that highly− seasoned speech every hour of the day, and now I don't think I could live without it.”

“Helen, my dear, I did not”—“think to shed a tear in all my miseries,” shouted Josie, in a stagy and tragic style, and then, 'twixt laughter and song, attempted a series of courtesies worthy a star actress.

“Why did you interrupt Louise when she was going to say something good?” asked Marguerite in a half−reproachful tone.

“Just because I want no scenes until to−morrow evening, when Miss Louise Rutherford and Miss Rushton will not display their histrionic ability to a desert air.”

“Hear! hear!” cried a voice from without, and instantly a promising youth dashed in *sans ceremonie*, claiming all the familiarity due a younger brother.

Fred. Verne's arrival changed the current of conversation. Louise and Helen were soon interested in the costumes to be worn at the theatricals, and Marguerite's good taste was always to be consulted on such occasions.

“Madge is a genius of the first order. Charlie and the boys all swear by her, and say she would beat the fellow that invented the carnivals.”

“Fred, do be moderate,” cried Marguerite; who at the same moment could not repress a feeling of pride in the boy's earnestness and filial affection.

But Fred, was not to be gainsaid, and edged in his witticisms with an air of infinite satisfaction. Trinity chimed out the hour of twelve, and served as a reminder for the withdrawal of the guests. Josie had succeeded in getting up a first−class encounter with the indomitable Fred, and then beat a hasty retreat, utterly regardless of the least approach to etiquette.

“I will see you again before you go away, Helen?”

“Yes, my dear Madge,” cried the other putting her arms around Marguerite in a sweet caressing manner, “and I shall have one more chat that will last until I see your dear old face again.”

Marguerite Verne stood in the outer doorway waving adieu and throwing tokens of affection to the two young girls until they had crossed Queen Square and were lost to view.

On returning to her room a formidable array of letters lay awaiting their owner.

A glance at the address of each was sufficient. Marguerite rapidly seized a large square and heavy one from among the number and very soon devoured its contents. It came from “cousin Jennie Montgomery,” a genuine and true hearted girl whom Marguerite loved as a sister. Mrs. Montgomery was a sister of Mrs. Verne but never was nature known to indulge in so many freaks as when she bestowed such relationship.

“Gladswood,” the comfortable and happy home of the Montgomerys, was indeed no misnomer; for in this beautiful and sylvan retreat every heart was truly made glad and every guest only felt sad when the summons of duty suggested departure.

Marguerite Verne never had too many society demands upon her to neglect correspondence with cousin Jennie, and she was more than delighted on this morning to hear such glowing accounts of “Gladswood" and its inmates. On the situation of this charming country seat we might exhaust pages and never weary of the effort. It stood on a rising knoll surrounded by the picturesque scenery of Sussex Vale. Here was that enchanting beauty of nature in which the most aesthetic soul might revel. In the months of summer the verdure was “a thing of beauty.” Luxuriant meadows showered with golden buttercups, alternating with patches of highly−scented red and white clover, while the air seemed freighted with the balsamic odor of the crowning foliage. But the foliage of “Gladswood”! We have no powers capable of description. The majestic maples, stately willows and graceful elms were grouped with an effect that baffled the mind of man. And the interfacings of soft feathery furze, moss and ferns. Surely this spot must have been in the mystic ages one grand amphitheatre for the sylvan deities. And the

stately manor−house, for such it much resembles with its quaint wings and irregular outbuildings. Its old−fashioned windows, tall chimneys, projecting eaves and arched doorway have an inviting appearance and impresses one with the fact that there are still some substantial homes—some reminder of the past.

And now we come to the mistress of “Gladswood.” While she is carefully pruning some choice specimens of ferns growing on the shady side of the doorway, we take advantage of the situation, and hence the result: Mrs. Montgomery is a matronly−looking woman, of about forty−five years of age, perhaps less; for the abundant mass of dark chestnut hair reveals not one silvery thread. One glance is sufficient. Never was character more cleverly delineated than upon this woman's face. There, in bold relief, is the deep penetrative mind—one that has power to read the masses as they pass before her mental vision. Her's is the heart that opens wide to the one crushed and broken by the uncharitable sect called “the world.” Her's is the hand ready to help the suffering and support the tottering. The shoddyisms of modern every−day life have no charms for Mrs. Montgomery. Woe be to the victim who comes under her censure. She has no mercy upon those who are under a daily strain to cater to the usages of society.

Let us see good, honest and noble−minded men and women, and then will follow all those accomplishments that are really necessary. Jennie Montgomery had early imbibed those principles, and in her we see a striking illustration of this truth.

But in our praise of the mistress we must not forget to introduce the master.

Mr. Montgomery is not the sort of man one would naturally associate with his energetic and self−reliant helpmate. There is a lack of shrewdness and an utter want of that keen discriminating power, which can give at first glance the full numerical value of all exterior objects. The owner of “Gladswood” belonged to that “come−easy−go−easy" class, who, unless circumstances come to their relief, are ever being duped or made a prey to the avaricious. But Mr. Montgomery had a source of never−failing strength in his wife. “Had William Montgomery married a different kind of wife he would have become a poor man,” had grown into a proverb regarding matters at “Gladswood.” All business transactions and pecuniary affairs always received the approval of Mrs. Montgomery before they took effect; while each and every individual about the farm well understood the business−like capacity of their respected mistress. But it must not be supposed that Mrs. Montgomery was the ruling spirit of “Gladswood.” She displayed no strong−minded nor dictatorial manner; no arrogant gestures or inclinations to combativeness; but seemed as one endowed with the happy faculty of presenting herself at the right time and right place, and by her motherly counsel to superintend the working of her household in a perfect and unconscious manner.

There are several younger members of this family, but as they are not necessary throughout the work we will not make mention of them here.

On the morning when Marguerite Verne sat in the luxurious crimson velvet arm−chair reading Cousin Jennie's letter, the latter was engaged in fashioning some dainty scraps of wool and silk into various little knick−knacks for a bazaar.

The pupils in attendance at the common school were anxious to procure some extra apparatus for the hall, and having received much assistance from the young ladies of the district, entered into the work with a will.

Jennie Montgomery was a host in herself. A bright, amiable girl of eighteen, with robust constitution, sunny disposition, and step elastic as a fairy. She was, indeed, an ornament to her home and also to the community.

Jennie was not a beauty—had not the least pretentions to one. Her dark complexion was pure and health−like; but it was not heightened by that peachy bloom peculiar to brunette's, instead only a warm, bright and ruddy hue, which some might consider as approaching the rustic. Her eyes, as they sparkle with delight at the pretty array of bright colors, might not be admired as of the poetic or ideal type, but in their depths lurks a keen and significant expression of the peculiarly intelligent and earnest appeal that seldom speaks in vain. The neat and cosy parlor, with its many articles of female handiwork, speak for the taste and talent displayed by this interesting girl. The pretty sketches of familiar haunts near her loved home showed that genius had stamped the brow of Jennie Montgomery, and inspired her with a deep enthusiasm for the beautiful and sublime.

Presently she rises from the work table, and opening a door leading to the balcony, stands for some moments gazing in mute admiration upon the lovely view of Sussex Vale, wrapped in its mantle of purest white, reflected in the sunshine as a vast expanse of frosted silver.

CHAPTER VI. A LAWYER'S REVERIE—A VERDANT CLIENT.

A dismal dreary day. The fog had crept slowly over the city and enveloped every object within its reach. There was fog clinging to turrets, spires and towers, fog in the streets, fog in the alleys, fog in the ditches—all was fog. It hurried along utterly regardless of the delicate fabrics that were ruthlessly despoiled by its touch, musing now and then, doubtlessly, on the ingratitude of the fair daughters of St. John who, in the possession of their clear and brilliant complexions forgot to give thanks to the great enhancer.

In the midst of this fog many pedestrians are wandering to and fro, crowding the streets, hurrying along the wharves, hailing vehicles, accosting their friends, and in fact as perfectly happy in their surroundings as though the cheerful, sunshine were illuminating all visible space.

Passing along Prince William street as far as Chubb's Corner we see a familiar form—it is Phillip Lawson. He is enveloped in a gray Mackintosh and his soft felt hat is worn with an air of careless ease that is more becoming than otherwise.

“Chubb's Corner” had lost its charm for the young lawyer. He did not stop to consult stocks, exchanges, debentures or any such business, but merely nodding to an acquaintance or so crossed the street and wended his steps to the lawyers' nests—nests from the fact that in this, locality they hatched all the schemes by which to victimize their unwary clients.

But of our friend. He gained his apartments, and throwing aside the outer garment, sat down at his desk and drawing his hand across his forehead, began to think. “I want to see nobody for the next hour,” murmured the young man, his brows contracting as he spoke.

A deep shade settled upon the usually mild countenance. A question of momentous importance was to be decided. “To be or not to be” was the final answer. Each solution involved a corresponding number of conflicting doubts and anxieties, and left scarcely any choice in the mind of the reasoner.

“No doubt it's a good field for a beginner in life. St. John has more lawyers than would start a colony. Some of us must go to the wall, and I don't fancy being one of that number.”

This was the sunny side of Phillip's reflection. He was trying to cheat himself into the belief that “green fields and pastures new” were panacea for all other grievances, and that that was the goal of his ambition.

“Yes, it's a good 'spec'; but why is the fellow so anxious for me to get it? Still I would like to hear more of the matter before I question the motives.”

The young lawyer was aware of the fact that Hubert Tracy had been using his influence for another a short time previous, and he could not see his motives for such change of opinion. True, a sudden intimacy had sprung up between them, but the subject had been hitherto mentioned and acted upon; therefore the last reason formed no groundwork for his convictions.

Occasionally a dark thought crossed Phillip Lawson's mind. Can the fellow be honest? I cannot bear to think ill of a fellow−man, and I must not now. I know that Tracy is not what he might be, yet he has a kind heart and what's the use of my talking, who is faultless? “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.”

It was here that the beauty of Phillip Lawson's character showed itself. The young man was a Christian. He had always cherished the principles of true piety, and as he repeated over the words of Him who was the friend of sinners, it was in tones of sublime tenderness.

Instantly a second thought flashed across his mind—he had an acquaintance—a member of a legal firm in that newly−founded city in the Northwest. He, therefore, made up his mind to write at an early date and make all the necessary inquiries.

Having settled his mind upon this point another subject presented itself to our friend, and from the sudden flash of his grey eyes one would imagine that it was of an electrifying nature.

It is one, which, from the remote ages, has had power to magnetize, humanize and civilize; it is the power which makes man what he should be—love—that short word of four letters—what a world of thought it embraces—it held the heart of Phillip Lawson at will, and despite his power of self−control he was often the victim of its vagaries.

But the lawyer had not long time to indulge in such thoughts. A knock aroused him.

“Come−in.”

A stalwart looking youth of muscular build (with suit of grey homespun not cut exactly in the proportions of that of a dude) stood upon the threshold with a look upon his florid face that betrayed some embarrassment.

“You be Mr. Lawson the lawyer, sir.”

“Yes, sir,” said the young practitioner, a smile lighting up his face and making him an interlocutor not to be dreaded by the most unsophisticated client.

“'Spose I needn't ask, be you pretty well posted in law?” queried the individual on taking his seat, at the same time pulling out an enormous expanse of red and yellow cotton, called by way of courtesy a handkerchief, which he vigorously switched across his face as though a swarm of mosquitoes were on the aggressive, and kept the field unflinchingly.

“What is the cause of complaint, sir?” ventured the interested lawyer, scarcely able to repress a smile.

“Well, sir, to come to the pint at once, as you fellers allus happin to say, since I was knee−hight of a grasshopper I had a hankerin' after the law, and allus envied tother fellers when they'd to go to the 'Squire's on trials, and I tell you they thought themselves some punkins when they got a day's wages for goin'”—

“Of your question at issue,” interrupted our legal friend, “I mean on what point do you wish to consult me, sir?”

“Well, sir, as I told you before, I'm comin' straight to the pint,” replied the youth, giving the aforesaid bandana a more vigorous switch in the direction of his interrogator, then continued, “and, firstly (as them lecturin' fellers say) I allus thought I'd like mighty well to have a trial myself, and bring some un up to the scratch; and I've jest got my wish, and if it costs all dad's worth I'll make 'em sweat!

“Are you a minor, sir?” demanded the lawyer.

“No, sir; I'm no relative to them *miners*, nor don't want to be, tho' Sally Ann is allus taggin' arter me, and would like terrible well to hitch on to me; but I tell you, 'Squire, I'm not so green as they think, though I'm mighty fond of buckwheat.”

This last speech was too much tax on the risibility of the “'Squire,” as familiarly dubbed by the would−be client, and after some merriment, explained the tenor of his question, assuring the youth that it bore no allusion to “Sally Ann.”

After the young lawyer had taxed his ingenuity to draw the verdant client “to the point” he learned that the cause of complaint was directed against one Joshua Jones, who had given himself an invitation to haul off some cedar poles claimed to be the property of the said Mose Spriggins, and the said Mose wished indemnification right speedily.

“Tell you what 'Squire I'll put him fur as the law will carry it, and if you can slap on plenty of cost 'Squire, it'll do me more good than eaten my supper.”

“I shall do the best I can for you sir,” said the young man, carefully noting the points which Mose brought to bear on the matter.

“Well now 'Squire, suppose you want your wages for this 'eer job. What's your price?”

Mose now produced a complicated piece of mechanism from his expansive waistcoat pocket. It might have been constructed for a three−fold purpose—for money, pipes and tobacco. The odoriferous exhalation giving strong evidence of the latter commodity.

“Well 'Squire, you fellers earn your livin' mighty easy,” exclaimed Mose, tendering the five dollar bill into the lawyer's hand.

The latter smiled, pocketed the fee and commenced writing the letter to the defendant Joshua Jones.

“Now sir, if this thing works well, I don't grudge ye the money 'Squire, and any time I have somethin' more in the law business I'll throw it your way, for I think you a squarer sort of a chap than them ere gang further up the street. I tell you they're sharpers, they fleeced dad last summer and I wasn't agoin' to be so green, eh 'Squire?”

“Well Mr. Spriggins, I shall always try to work to your satisfaction any time you are in need of advice,” returned our friend, rising from the desk and going toward the window.

Mr. Spriggins thought he would soon be ready for “startin'“ and also rose up, in the meantime depositing the before−mentioned wallet in his waistcoat pocket. Silence reigned in the lawyer's office for three minutes, when the door was reopened and Mose Spriggins' rubicund face once more adorned the apartment.

“Say, 'Squire, aint there a new kind of insurance consarn 'round these diggins? I'm thinkin' of gittin' my life

insured—not 'cause there's any kinsumption in our fam'ly, only there's no tellin' when a feller might peg out. Tell you, 'Squire, I'm sound as a bell."

Mr. Spriggins turned himself around for inspection, and shrugged his broad shoulders with an air of evident self−esteem.

A lengthy speech might have followed, but our legal friend averted the catastrophe by informing his client that the Dominion Safety Fund office was close at hand, and with quiet mien escorted the said Mr. Spriggins to the door.

A genial "come in" answered the summons of the applicant, and in another chapter we will be able to inform the reader how the veritable Mr. Spriggins was sent home rejoicing from the fact that he had become insured in the Safety Fund.

Phillip Lawson was re−established at his desk, and not wishing to allow his thoughts to wander to the subject which had hitherto occupied them, took up a novel that lay upon the opposite shelf. It was one of George Eliot's masterpieces—Daniel Deronda. Its depth of thought and richness in the sublime and beautiful theories as regards the Jewish dispensation had a charm for the talented scholar, and he read for more than an hour, deeply buried in the inspired words of the gifted author—one who will occupy a deep niche in the inmost recesses of all hearts, so long as the literature bearing her impress shall make its way in all tongues and through every clime! Presently a light, well−known step greets the reader's ears, and a trim little maiden, with waterproof, heavy boots, and umbrella in the foreground, presents herself upon terms of much familiarity.

"And my dear old Phillip, how happy you look in here! Why, its fearfully disagreeable out to−day, and you look as contented as if the room was heated only by the sunshine, while I am really shivering with the dampness and fog."

"Well, little woman, what brought you out to−day?" exclaimed the indulgent brother, stroking the fair hair of his pet sister as she stood beside him, looking into his face with a look of pure devotion—a look which showed that her brother was her world, and in his face shone all that was good and true in her eyes.

Lottie Lawson was a child of a sweet and tender nature. She had been watched over by a model mother, and this earnest mother's prayers had not fallen unanswered.

"God grant that the woman be a living realization of the child," was the fervent prayer that dwelt upon Phillip Lawson's lips, as he drew the child towards him and tenderly kissed the fair forehead.

"You wonder why I am out to−day, brother Phillip; I came on a message from Kitty."

The latter was the house−maid, and the young man smiled as he thought of the force of character which constituted this efficient maid of all works.

"Oh, I see now, there is some excuse for you. What are Miss Kitty's demands to−day?"

"She is having a new dress made and wished me to select some samples for trimmings, and as she wants to wear the dress home next Sunday, I had to go to−day."

"Yes, that is all right; Kitty's wishes must be attended to," said Phillip, with an air of much gravity.

"Will you soon be ready to go with me Phillip. I shall wait for you. It is just such a day as needs your dear old self to drive the gloom from the back parlor."

The little maiden had not long to wait for an answer, as the young lawyer took down his mackintosh, and in a very short time the pair were to be seen walking at a quick pace along Charlotte street, through King Square and out beyond the limits of the old church−yard.

A neat and cosy cottage is reached, and a tidy looking domestic answers the summons and smiles graciously as the coveted samples are placed in her hand while she receives a full explanation of the prices and the additional advice of Miss Lottie thrown in as extras. The cottage has an air of neatness throughout. Its windows filled with choice plants and gorgeous foliage lend a charm that impresses one with the taste of the inmates. The spotless purity of the muslin curtains and the transparency of the windows bespeak the thorough cleanliness and comfort of this home−like little nest. And the inviting parlor: it's furniture was neither elegant nor costly. The plain mahogany chairs and straight−backed old−fashioned sofa were well preserved. Not a particle of dust could be seen without the aid of a microscope. And the beautifully polished andirons which had done service in the family for many years, and seemed to assume an air of importance over the less attractive articles grouped around. A pretty little work−table with writing−desk combined stood at the left side of the hearth. It was a gift from Phillip Lawson to sister Lottie. It was the child's favorite seat, and that fact repaid the brother more than the most

extravagant praise.

The upright piano was not neglected. Piles of music lay near, and the well−worn rug beneath showed that music had its charms for the members of this household.

Reader, we will not weary you with minute details, but merely say, such was the home of Phillip Lawson. In this abode he could look back to a country home, with which, as the haughty Evelyn Verne said, “you could associate hayseed.” But did that fact lesson the reputation of this gifted scholar?

Nay; the sons of the soil are in reality the “lords of creation.” They have the first and highest calling, and ere the proud beauty had passed through all the ordeals of life, she hastily repented of the bitter and sarcastic words.

CHAPTER VII. ADVERSITY.

As our legal friend occupies a prominent part in our story we will endeavor to give such explanation as will enable the reader to form a true estimate of his character.

Phillip Lawson was indeed the son of a farmer—a man who had, by honest industry and untiring perseverance, made a comfortable home for his family in one of the frontier settlements of Carleton County—that truly agricultural locality where nature has done so much to assist the sons of toil—that county where the crops are almost spontaneous, and where none need be ill off, unless through misfortune or mismanagement.

"The Lawson farm" was the abode of comfort and happiness. Thrift greeted the eye on every side—from the well−filled barns to the unbroken range of fences, through which a sheep could not crawl, nor even could the most "highlariously" inclined Ayrshire be tempted to try the pass.

The neat farmhouse, with its bright coat of paint, was the attraction of the district, and was just such a place as would be besieged by all the lecturers, agents, and travellers that happened to strike oil in this direction. Nor were they ever disappointed.

Mrs. Lawson was truly wife, mother and friend. None passed her door without the hospitality they craved.

"It is a wonder to me how the Lawson's stand it," was often the comments of the less hospitable neighbors, as they watched with no uncommon curiosity the daily arrival of some unexpected guest.

"The more we give the more we'll have," was the wise mother's reply as she sometimes heard complaints from the female portion of the household as regards the extra work.

It had always been the highest ambition of John Lawson that his family should grow up industrious men and women and that they should each receive all the benefits of education that lay within his power.

In his eldest son he saw much ability and also a mind logical and argumentative, and he had fully resolved that the boy should be educated and trained for the legal profession. And the farmer "plodded his weary way homeward" each day buoyed up with the thought that he was doing his duty towards his family and above all towards his God.

"But man proposes and God disposes."

Ere the young student had finished his collegiate course the fond parent was called to his long home, and within a year the heart−broken mother was re−united in that world where sorrow never comes; where she awaits a further re−union, when she shall once more gather to her bosom the loved forms whom she watches over in anxious solicitude from the portals of her blessed abode. It was from this time that the noble minded youth was aroused to a sense of his duty. He must not give up the course of action which had been laid out for him.

What was to be done?

Sickness and death had told heavily upon the pecuniary resources of the family. Much of the produce had to go to pay the wages of labourers, and only by dint of much anxiety and careful management could the farm be made to cover expenses. Something further must be done.

Julia Lawson had reached her sixteenth year, and possessing more than ordinary ability, resolved to prepare for the vocation of teaching; and within a year from the time she had formed such resolution, was actually engaged as teacher of the school in their immediate district.

This fact gave Phillip Lawson much relief of mind, as the young teacher could still have a care over the household, and give advice to the two younger children under her charge. The young student having received his degree at the N. B. University next turned his thoughts towards the law.

While spending a few weeks at home to assist in the farm−work, he received a letter from an old friend of his father. Nothing could exceed the joy of this young man as he read and re−read the kind−hearted proposal from one of St. John's most able and popular lawyers, praying that the son of his old friend engage to enter as a student in his office.

"The Lord will provide," was the earnest comment of the reader, as he folded the missive and laid it away between the leaves of his wallet.

But means were necessary as well. Phillip had, much against his inclination, to raise money by a mortgage upon the farm. He had often heard it said that a property once mortgaged was never redeemed, and the thought

gave much concern. But the old maxim, “Where there's a will, there's a way,” was ever rising uppermost in his mind, and he was doubly resolved to make the trial.

A few weeks later the student is at his desk, poring over the dry documents and legal lore. On his brow is determination and disregard of difficulties.

Phillip Lawson soon became a general favorite. His generous nature and frank manners won the esteem of his fellow students, and also that of the senior members of the firm.

“Lawson will make a mark some day—he has it in him,” was the first remark passed upon the student as the eagle−eyed solicitor glanced at the son of his friend, whose thoughts were intent upon the copy of Blackstone before him.

Things went on prosperously at the homestead; and as the student had succeeded in increasing his means by giving evening lessons to a class of young men, he felt comforted and assured that in the end all would come out right.

But a heavy blow had suddenly fallen upon the Lawson family—typhoid fever came into the household and prostrated the noble−minded Julia upon a bed of suffering.

Uncomplainingly she had watched her pet sister through all the stages of this dread disease, until the child had been pronounced out of danger. It was then that outraged nature asserted itself and the worn−out system was not equal to the strain—she succumbed to the raging and delirious fever an object of deep and tender pity.

“God help me,” cried Phillip Lawson, in despairing tones as he read the letter conveying the news in as mild a form as possible. “If Julia lives I shall never be separated from her again,” were the reproachful thoughts that forced themselves upon the affectionate brother.

Need we speak of the agonizing hours spent in the dread suspense that followed.

In the midnight watches as the hours dragged slowly by, the young student was silently learning to “suffer and be strong.” And it was well that these lessons took deep root in good soil, for within a few weeks Phillip Lawson knelt beside the dying bed of his beloved sister, and in heart−broken accents commending her departing spirit to the loving Saviour.

Ah, such a scene is too sacred for intrusion; but it is only by such means that we can realize the true value of our esteemed friend.

And as the last sod had been placed upon Julia Lawson's grave, and the flowers that she loved strewn over it by loving hands, we cannot move from the spot.

It is scenes like those that teach us what we are, so long as there is the least impress of the Divine in our nature will we look to those scenes as mile−stones on our journey through life.

Kneeling beside the sacred spot the grief−stricken brother was utterly unconscious of our presence. With tearless eyes he gazed upon the mound that held the remains of her he loved so fondly.

Who will not say that in that dark hour there hovered near a band of angelic beings, and foremost in that band the angel mother whose breath fanned the pale brow of the mourner and quieted the soul within?

Ah, yes; it is not heresy to think thus. Phillip Lawson surely felt such influence as he arose and in tones of quiet resignation murmured, “Father thy will be done.” Then picking up a half blown rose that had fallen upon the ground, pressed it to his lips exclaiming, “fitting emblem of the pure and innocent young life cut off ere it had blossomed into womanhood.”

And the hollow sounds that greeted the mourner as he wandered listlessly from room to room apparently looking for some object, some vague uncertainty, something indefinable.

What solemn stillness reigns around where death has been! The painful oppression, the muffled tread, the echoes that haunt as tidings from the spirit world, borne on invisible wings, confronting us at every step.

To the most matter−of−fact mind these things are indeed a solemn reality. Death has power to change our every−day thoughts to others ennobling, beautifying and divine! But we do not sink under the weight of affliction. God has seen otherwise for us. He heals the wounds and bids us go on amid life's cares administering to those around us with increased diligence, happy in the thought of doing what is required of us.

Throughout the inexhaustible stores of poetry and song is there anything more exquisitely touching than the lofty and inspired dirge wailed out in tremulous tones—in memoriam—and the healthful words,

“Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;

Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.”

But to return to the Lawson homestead.

Very soon all was bustle and preparation. The young student had rented the farm and by selling off the stock had raised means to secure a home for the children in the city, and ere a few weeks had passed around we find them comfortably situated in a convenient tenement in the suburbs of St. John.

But a stouter heart than our young friend might well have groaned under the weight of difficulties that pressed upon him.

What with the management of his household, the hours of office work, and the hours devoted to his classes, and hours of anxiety and care, the young student was oftentimes depressed and wore a look beyond his years; but he never once swerved from his duty, and trudged manfully onward his eyes ever bent upon “the strait and narrow path.” Lottie the pretty child, full of life and hope with her sweet winning ways imparted warmth and sunshine to the snug home; and the merry high−spirited Tom, a blue−eyed youth of fourteen, gave life and freshness to the surroundings.

It was indeed a pretty sight that greeted a visitor as he entered the plain but neatly−furnished parlor, in this quiet home. It is the hour between tea−time and that prescribed for evening work. It is the only hour of leisure during the day, and it is generally devoted to the boy and girl at his side, the latter sometimes sitting upon his knee looking into the face that in these moments wore a smile that oftentimes belied the conflicting and agitated thoughts within.

Such was the history of Phillip Lawson previous to the opening of our story. A period of six years had elapsed since he commenced life in the city and now we find him an honoured barrister, with sufficient practice to meet the expenses of the pretty residence to which he had removed some months ago and to which we referred in the previous chapter.

We now see the reason which prompted Evelyn Verne in associating the young lawyer with “hayseed'“ It is only shallow sordid natures as hers can indulge in such meanness, but thank heaven the venom has only a momentary sting, a resting place in proportion to the superficial source whence it springs.

In respect to other members of the Verne family it must be said that Phillip Lawson had received much kindness and hospitality within the walls of their princely residence, and if the spoiled beauty indulged in spiteful taunts it was because she saw in the young man that ability and soundness of principle which placed her set of worldings at painful disadvantage.

Montague Arnold with his waxed moustache, Adonis−like form and studied hauteur, minus the brains, amiability and that true politeness which constitutes the real gentleman cut a sorry figure when contrasted with Phillip Lawson.

Mrs. Verne was in every sense a votaress to the world's caprice, yet she was not devoid of insight. She could see the noble traits of character in Phillip Lawson; but she must bow to the mandates of fashionable folly.

Mr. Verne, deeply absorbed in stocks and exchanges, seldom took respite in the gaieties of the drawing−room; but in his business hours he saw enough of young Lawson to convince him of his character.

A slight circumstance happened one evening which had a tenfold effect upon Marguerite Verne; but the girl kept her own counsel, and cherished the thought as a happy talisman through all the months and years that followed ere events brought about the consummation of her fondest hopes. Mr. Verne was seated in the library. Brilliant rays of light were reflected from the highly−burnished chandelier. “Madge, my girl, come read awhile,” exclaimed the former, as he espied his favorite across the hall with a delicate bouquet of hot−house plants in her hand.

“I will be with you in a minute, papa, dear,” was the response, in a sweet, childlike voice, as the speaker ran up the broad staircase with elfin grace and gaiety.

“So the flowers were not for me, you naughty girl. Well, well, times have changed since when, in the eyes of the august peers of our motherland, it was considered 'an atrocious crime' to be a young man.”

“Oh, papa, you see I do know a little history—enough to accuse that 'young man' of being guilty of sarcasm in the highest degree.”

“Well done, my Madge! Here, take the paper—read me the rest of that speech of young Lawson's. It is a clever defence, and goes to prove my words—that he is a young man of sound judgment, and every day gives

proof of greater force."

It was well for Marguerite Verne that the newspaper hid the blushes that, despite her efforts at self−control, played hide−and−seek upon the soft, fair cheeks.

"I am waiting, Madge."

The sweet, silvery tones were the only response, and though the maiden knew it not, there was a tender chord of sympathy that united father and child more firmly, and bent their thoughts in the same happy direction.

CHAPTER VIII. HUBERT TRACY'S DILEMMA.

As Phillip Lawson sat silently poring over a formidable looking volume, bound in heavy parchment, he was accosted by a familiar voice.

“Working as usual, Lawson?”

“Yes, sir; I generally find something to keep me out of mischief,” said the barrister, smiling, in the meantime clearing the proffered seat of a pile of documents that had been cast aside as useless.

“What's the news?” demanded Hubert Tracy in his indifferent and careless style.

There was a restless, wearied look upon the face of Phillip Lawson, as he glanced towards his interrogator. “To tell you the truth Tracy I've heard nothing startling to−day. I might for your amusement give you some of my own afflictions. In the first place I have a headache that I would gladly part with.”

“For heaven's sake don't wish it upon me,” cried the visitor, thinking no doubt of the unsteady hand and nervous headache of the previous morning.

But this was not the kind of news that Hubert Tracy sought. He wished to draw out some well−timed allusion to the northwest and he had not the courage to do so.

He had been a frequent guest at the Verne mansion of late, but the fact did not add to his felicity. Marguerite Verne could not play the coquette. She was attentive to her callers but nothing more.

Montague Arnold, who was on the eve of declaration to the imperious Evelyn, had now gleaned much of the affairs of the family. He learned that Mr. Verne had a high regard for the rising young barrister and he knew well that there was strong sympathy between father and daughter.

“That little dame has plenty of grit to fight the battle, but if I can manage it she will have to give up, if not she is a match for the old fellow.”

The above remark of Montague Arnold gave his companion some assurance yet it did not satisfy him.

“I tell you what Mont, the only chance for me is to get the fellow out of the way, then you can influence the old lady and if she puts her foot down we are all right.”

Hubert Tracy was far from being in a settled state of mind. He had a continual dread of his suspected rival, while a strange fascination possessed him—a something which attracted him to the latter with a force in proportion equal to the dread.

It was this state of mind that forced his steps to the barrister's office at this time, and as he turned the burning subject over and over he felt more confused.

“It is madness to give up—it will kill me;” were the thoughts that rose half framed to his lips and then forced themselves back with renewed energy.

But of the forgoing conversation which we interrupted.

“Don't be alarmed my friend,” cried Phillip “I can get rid of it sooner than you, and judging from your looks this morning one would imagine you too had been battling with some of the 'ills that human flesh is heir to.'“

Hubert Tracy winced under this remark but the fact was lost upon the other who innocently exclaimed, “Any trouble in the shipping business just now.”

The young man laughed.

“Thank heaven I'm right on that score and don't even expect much trouble unless the world would get turned upside down.”

“Which is an unlikelihood,” said Phillip adroitly. And much as we speak of the uncertainties of this world, the latter remark might be accepted as a truism in regard to the pecuniary affairs of Hubert Tracy.

He was the heir of a rich uncle—a modern Croesus—a man who had amassed a princely fortune by his wonderful success as a manufacturer and speculator.

It was this circumstance which gave the nephew such value in the eyes of good society. Hubert Tracy was fully aware how matters stood. He knew that money was the only screen to cover up all the shortcomings and glaring deformities of our nature. He well knew that he could haunt the abode of dissipation and vice and fill up the intervals with the gaieties of the fashionable drawing−rooms. He well knew that a young man of pure morals with strong determination to rise to the highest manhood would have no chance with the heir of Peter Tracy.

And the young man was right. He was sought after and courted by fashionable mothers who saw only in this beau ideal of a son−in−law—fine houses, fine carriages and in short everything that wealth could give.

The worldly Mrs. Verne was not without her day dreams on this subject. She never let an opportunity slip when she could show Mr. Tracy that patronage which his prospects demanded.

But this woman of the world did nothing rashly. She was always acting from motive and though apparently unconcerned was keenly alive to the situation of the hour.

Such was the tenor of Phillip Lawson's thoughts as he chatted to Hubert Tracy for more than half an hour, when the latter departed less satisfied than when he entered. Then the former set to work upon some important business, and being a rapid penman, soon finished the job. Finding time for a short brown study, or more properly speaking a soliloquy.

“If I go out there and be dissatisfied it will be worse than ever, and there is Lottie, I cannot think of taking her with me. The poor child would break her heart if I left her behind, and our cosy home would be broken up—perhaps forever.”

Home had always been the oasis in the dreary waste of Phillip Lawson's late eventful life. After the monotonous round of office−work he always anticipated with delight the hour and circumstances so truthfully depicted by the poet.

“Now stir the fire and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steaming column and the cups
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.”

Therefore the thought gave much pain. “But life is made up of such struggles,” murmured Phillip, “and it is our duty to be happy wherever we are—in Winnipeg as well as St. John.” The last words were repeated in a tone of determination and the speaker arose hastily, took down his overcoat and shortly afterwards was to be seen walking along the north side of King street with a rapid but regular step. Having gained Charlotte street the young lawyer is greeted in an artless and unaffected manner by Marguerite.

The graceful and sylph−like form had sufficient power to cast all the high minded resolutions to the four winds of the earth. In the maiden's presence Phillip Lawson was bound body and soul, yet he would not allow himself to think so.

“I am quite fortunate in meeting you, Mr. Lawson, as I am saved the trouble of sending a note.” Marguerite emphasized the word trouble in a manner altogether peculiar to herself and a manner which infected the banister with a certain degree of gaiety that was unusual to him.

And no wonder that our friend felt the influence of the maiden's smiles. Marguerite Verne was indeed a pretty picture to study. Her rich costume of seal brown, plush with ruchings of feathers, the coquettish hat to match with the jaunty ostrich plume were becoming in the extreme and gave an air of richness and refined elegance.

“Is it any harm to inquire as to your wishes Miss Marguerite?” said Phillip, glancing inquisitively into her face.

“I don't think I shall tell you to−day.”

There was a look of arch mischief accompanying the words—a spirit of banter that was truly fascinating.

Phillip had escorted his companion as far as Coburg street, where the latter was to call upon some of her friends.

“Mr. Lawson, I am not quite so dreadful as you think. Come this evening and I shall gratify your curiosity at once, and you know papa always likes to see you.”

“I shall go,” exclaimed the barrister to himself, as he had turned down Paddock street on his way homewards. “Her papa will receive me; why did she not say Evelyn?”

Marguerite was sensitive on the subject of Mr. Lawson's reception, and she had a modest intuition of her friend's feelings, and, as is too often the case in trying to smooth matters, only made a greater blunder.

“Why did I not let well alone,” exclaimed the girl, as she stood on the broad stone steps leading to the elegant home. It was six o'clock and the first bell gave the warning that there was barely time to dress for dinner.

“He will be here without fail, for I know his word is inviolable,” cried the girl, as she hastily re−arranged

some lace on the sleeves of her pretty dinner dress—a combination of silk and velvet in shade of ash of roses.

"Dear me, there is the bell, and my hair not presentable."

But Marguerite was mistaken.

"Why, Madge, where have you been?"

"I have been out making calls," said she, with an air of surprise.

"Well, my dear, I advise you to go every day if you can bring back such roses."

Marguerite blushed as deeply as if the compliment came from an admirer—aye, more so; for the girl well knew that those from her fond parent were from the heart.

"There now, don't spoil them, *ma belle*," cried Mr. Verne, his eye resting with fond admiration upon his daughter.

Children are oftentimes *de trop*, and Charlie Verne proved no exception.

"Papa, I was one day with Madge, and she had two big red spots on her cheeks as big peonies."

The precocious youth was on the eve of explanation, when Mrs. Verne's—"Children should be seen and not heard" put an end to the subject.

It were well for Marguerite that her elder sister did not grace the festive board that evening. Evelyn's keen and penetrative eye would have taken in the situation at a glance. The light in the soft, deep, violet eyes would tell the tale that the maiden would strive to conceal; and the bright flush, heightened by fond anticipation, would have accomplished its deadly work.

But Marguerite was granted further respite.

She gave Phillip Lawson a quiet reception, and much to the relief of the latter, they were allowed to chat at their ease the greater part of the evening, uninterrupted by a guest.

Mr. Verne, having returned from one of those Board of Trade meetings, on hearing that Mr. Lawson was in the drawing−room, immediately made his appearance, and from his warm greeting, one might see that the young lawyer stood high in his favor, and that his prospects were indeed fair as any suitor might wish for.

CHAPTER IX. MR. SPRIGGINS GETS INSURED—THE DOMINION SAFETY FUND.

As Mr. Spriggins is a gentleman of no mean pretensions and occupying a prominent place among our characters we will again introduce him as he is seated in the office of the Dominion Safety Fund.

The general agent greets Mr. Spriggins in his usual gentlemanly and unassuming manner—a fact which is not lost upon the applicant. “Well, Mr. Agent, spose you'll think it a mighty queer business to see a feller comin' here without a bein' asked, so to make a long story short, I might as well till you all about it.”

With this remark the speaker pulled his chair closer to the desk and with an assumed business air began—

“You see, Mr. Agent, I'm not a married feller but have a terrible good mind to hitch on one of these days and that's the reason I'm here to−day.”

“A poor place this to come to look for a wife,” remarked an elderly gentleman in a gruff voice, who had just entered on business as the last words had been repeated.

A happy smile illuminated Mr. Spriggins' face as he rose to retaliate.

“Oh, indeed sir, I'm posted on such affairs. When I want a pard'ner I know mighty well where to go—none of yer peeaner players for me—give me the girl that can make butter and boil a pot of tatters without havin' em all rags and mush.”

Mr. Spriggins became more and more eloquent upon the necessary qualifications of the future Mrs. Spriggins, and then once more addressed the gentleman behind the desk.

“Well, now, Mr. Agent, suppose you don't mind me a askin' a few questions on this eer bisness.”

“Not at all sir, that is our pleasure Mr. ——”

“Spriggins sir. I'm Moses Spriggins of Mill Crossin', but they allus call me Mose to hum for short.”

Mr. Spriggins would have added further explanatory remarks but was interrupted by the official:

“Now Mr. Spriggins, I wish to hear from you—”

“What do you say the name of this consarn is Mr. Agent?”

“The Dominion Safety Fund Life Association.”

“Well now, that's a terrible long name. Hanged if that doesn't beat Uncle Amaziar Wiggleses family, for their oldest gal's name is Samanthy Eunice Esmereldy Jerushy.”

At this speech Mr. Spriggins burst into a fit of laughter, affording sufficient proof to the company that there was little need of the necessary medical examination to testify that the applicant was of sound health.

“Why do you call it the Dominion Fund?” queried the applicant looking intently at the title.

“Because it is the only one of its kind in the Dominion sir!”

“All right, Mr. Agent. Safety Fund—that's a queer name. Would you mind explainin' that. You musn't think hard of me sir if I want to know all about this business, for you know people have been so taken in by so many humbuggin' consarns that it makes a feller keerful.”

Within a very short time Mr. Spriggins was led to see the beauty of the Safety Fund. How that the longer he was insured the more favorable his position; how persistent members of the class received the benefit, etc.

“That's just the thing I've been lookin' for,” exclaimed the applicant, his face aglow with enthusiasm.

A few more preliminaries were discussed to the entire satisfaction of Mr. Moses Spriggins, and arrangements were made that he should present himself before the medical examiner on the following morning at ten o'clock.

“Nothin' could suit better, Sir, for one of our naber's girls is a'stayin' in town now, and there's enough attraction there, sir, to keep me here for to−night.”

Mr. Spriggins cast a knowing glance at the official as much as to say “you understand me.”

On his way up Princess street the veritable Mose might be heard soliloquizing at a wholesale rate—“Well, now, its mighty cheap, too, and a feller is gettin' sich profit; better that than raisin' tatters and lettin' the bugs eat 'em—on a thousand, too. By George, it's next to nothin'; let me see: four times $1.44—4 times 4 are 16. 6 and carry 1; 4 times 4 are 16 and 1 are 17; 4 times 1 are 4 and 1 are 5—576, that is $5.76, and $3.00—$8.76—and next year less—then lesser, and then I'll be a makin' right straight along— won't Melindy Jane be astonished.” A dashing turnout for the nonce arrested Mr. Spriggins' attention, and as he gazed at the richly caprisoned steeds,

and fair occupants, exultingly exclaimed, “Yes, ye think yer a mighty fine crowd, but there's not one I'd swop for Melindy Jane.”

And Mr. Spriggins had not changed his opinion when, at the appointed hour, next morning, his good−natured face wreathed in smiles, made its appearance before the official, hailing all with delight, and full of conversation of the most animated style.

The entrance of the medical examiner now claimed attention, and when the said Mr. Spriggins had passed the fiery ordeal his delight knew no bounds.

“What did I tell you—sound as a bell—no kinsumption among the Sprigginses.”

This and corresponding remarks fell from the lips of Moses as the papers were being filled. Silence was the order for a few moments when our friend rising quickly to his feet exclaimed:

“But, hold on, here's sumthin' I've not seen afore. Is it part of the agreement?”

Mr. Spriggins then drew attention to the motto—

“non mihi sed meis vivo.”

The medical gentleman very quietly allayed Mr. Spriggins' fears by convincing him that it was the motto—the principle which governed the working of the institution, and also, gave the literal meaning in our mother tongue.

“The very words I told Melindy Jane last night. Well, if it don't seem, like magic. If it don't suit my case to a tee—not for myself but others—well, there is just one mistake in it. I would say not for myself—but mine.”

Mr. Spriggins directed his remarks to the follower of Aeculapius with an air of importance, and then began a vigorous onslaught on the pronunciation of the foreign words.

“And that's Latin. Well, I never had such liken' for Latin afore. If I wasn't too old would try to learn it yet—by jimminey, doesn't it say nice things though?”

The forms being filled in and payments being made Mr. Spriggins reluctantly arose to depart, but another glance at the motto and he broke forth afresh. “It's just the thing that old Parson Simes was speakin' of last Sunday—gracious me—who'd a thought there was so much religion in the insurance business. Well, sir, I feel like a different man already; and now folks, if you see any more fellers from the Crossin' you'll know who sent 'em that's a sure case. I tell you what the crossin's not the worst place to come to, and if any of yous would happen to come our way don't forget to give us a call.”

Thus ended Mr. Spriggins' speech and as he made his exit through the doorway at a two−forty gait a smile was visible upon the occupants of the office. But ere business had been suspended for the day Mr. Spriggins again appeared on the scene with the following exclamation:

“I could'nt go back to the Crossin' without seeing you and tellin' what I heard. Of course I wouldn't like it to go outside as it is a kinder secret but thought it too good to keep, eh Mr. Agent.”

Mr. Spriggins threw himself into an arm−chair and then in lively tones continued:

“You know them ere Verneses that live in the big house on that high bank near the Square—well that's where Melindy Jane is hired, so of course when I left here I went up there and as I was a showin' the paper to Melindy Jane and explainin' it who should walk in but one of the young ladies.—(Now between you and me and the wall I believe it was a put up job of Melindy's to show me off and have the young missis' idees of me.)”

At this point Mr. Spriggins became very confidential and lowered his voice almost to a whisper, then, no doubt bethinking himself of the importance of the subject added: “Howandever its no matter here nor there, so as I was a sayin', the young missis came right over and I had to say sumthin', so I ups and tells her where I had bin and you never seed anyone more delighted. She seemed to know all about it and told me it was the best insurance consarn in the dominion.”

At this remark the agent smiled and said that he was pleased to know that young ladies were interested in the Institution.

“Well, sir,” continued he, “but that was not the hull of the conversation. I was a'telling her about that ere young lawyer, the young feller that gave the advice for Josh Jones (I declare it makes me bile over while I think on it), and she listened quite attentif and took great consarn in it, and said she was sure I would get justice, as Mr. Lawson was an honest lawyer, (and between you and me, Mr. Agent, that's more'n can be said of most of 'em).”

“You are rather severe on the legal profession, sir,” ventured a voice from the other side of the room.

Mr. Spriggins having confided his affairs, and seeing that business absorbed the attention of his audience, finally took leave, with the parting injunction to give him a call if they happened his way.

It did, indeed, seem a strange coincidence that while Mr. Moses Spriggins drew Miss Marguerite's Verne's attention to his legal proceedings that Phillip Lawson should be turning over certain facts in his memory in order to elucidate some important problems as regards his relation to this fair being.

Could he then have seen the respectful manner with which Marguerite greeted the son of toil, he would feel more deeply impressed with the beauty of her character, and could he have heard her modest eulogium upon himself, an emotional chord would have vibrated to the musical tones of her soft and well−modulated voice. But our young friend was not to be thus gratified. It is contrary to the laws which govern the order of the universe that an eternal fitness should adapt itself to our circumstances.

Ah, no, my young dreamer, much as we would wish it otherwise, we must sit patiently and see you suffer much mental agony in trying to discipline your mind for the trying ordeal through which you must irrevocably pass.

Nor did the sweet−faced Marguerite, as she chatted in her quiet happy way, for one moment dream that the brawny and muscular hand of Moses Spriggins should be yet held in friendly grasp, and that she would ever cherish this sturdy son of toil in grateful memory.

Standing there on that uneventful morn with the rays of sunshine playing hide and seek through her silken hair, could she have looked beyond the surrounding of the present, and cast her eye along the dim and shadowy perspective, what sorrow might have been averted; what heart−throes might have been quieted! But let us not be carried away by such thoughts. Let us not seek to penetrate beyond the airy nothings of every−day life.

Marguerite Verne went back into the presence of the other members of the family. She chatted, laughed and sang blithe as a bird carolling its earliest matin.

Marguerite's pure and transparent soul finds shelter in the daily acts of goodness emanating from her loving heart, and if she feels a momentary pang she struggles bravely and lives on. She could ill repress her feelings when the peerless Evelyn, radiant in convenient smiles and blushes, went to be congratulated on her engagement to Montague Arnold.

“You never did seem like a sister to me Madge, and you act less like one now. I did not come to tell you that I was going to die.”

Evelyn's manner was anything but amiable. She could brook no opposition to her will, and she was piqued to the highest degree that Marguerite did not break forth with the wildest terms of extravagant congratulation. But it matters not. Marguerite is not a hypocrite. She pities from the bottom of her heart the woman who will wed an unprincipled man like Montague Arnold.

How her tender pitying nature went out to the first−born of the family but the girl knew well the stubborn haughty spirit and looked calmly on without reproach.

Mrs. Verne had accomplished much in her own eyes. Her daughter was to revel in the comforts and elegancies of life. And when once the grand event had taken place she would have further opportunity to turn her attention to Marguerite. “I must get rid of Evelyn first,” was her comment as she bent over a piece of embroidery designed for a mantle drapery—bunches of delicate ferns and golden rod on garnet plush, and intended for the home of the future Mrs. Montague Arnold.

But there was one who took a different view of the matter. Mr. Verne looked on in grave disquietude. It may be sacrilegious but we cannot refrain from intruding upon his inmost thoughts and with heartfelt sympathy grieve for the indulgent parent who sees his fair first−born sacrificed to the world and mammon. The man of far−seeing penetration knows too well the great mistake and with painful intensity contrasts the sweet girlish wife of his youth with the fashionable woman of the world who presides supreme over his household—he sighs deeply and plunges deeper into the ponderous folios before him.

Presently a smile illuminates the grave face. A graceful form is at his side, and as the maiden holds up a pretty bouquet arranged by her own fair hands, the fond father draws her towards him and tenderly kisses the white, smooth forehead earnestly hoping that his favorite child may have a happier prospect before her—that she may be happy with one she loves.

“A guardian angel o'er his life presiding
Doubling his pleasures, and his cares dividing.”

CHAPTER X. HELEN RUSHTON AT THE “CELESTIAL.”

A few weeks had rolled by and Helen Rushton once more entered “Sunnybank.”

Marguerite receives her visitor with open arms.

“I am so glad to see you, Madge,” exclaimed the quaint little maiden, as she threw aside the pretty wrap, worn carelessly around her shoulders.

“I ought to be angry with you, you naughty girl,” returned Marguerite, playfully, shaking the former by way of punishment.

“Oh, please don't say a word, like a good old dear. I did intend to write, but you just know how we spend the time running around, and I had so many demands upon me.”

“Well, this time, I shall 'take the will for the deed,' but remember the second offence will be dealt with according to law.”

Madge emphasized this threat with a hearty embrace and turned her eyes in the direction of the door.

“Well, if that is not too good to keep,” shouted Josie Jordan, rushing in pell−mell, and seizing the pair with a lustiness peculiar only to a maiden of athletic pretensions.

“Oh, you nuisance,” exclaimed Helen. “How did you know I was here?”

“If that is not ignoring our hostess I should like to know what is. Indeed, Miss Helen, I came intent on weighty business matters, but Madge's allusion to the law drove it out of my head.”

Josie shrugged her shoulders and gave way to fits of laughter, then exclaimed, “But you know, Helen, why Madge should be interested in legal matters.”

“Josie Jordan, I believe you are the greatest pest I ever met, just to come in when I was going to entertain Madge with my visit.”

Helen Rushton had adroitly commenced an attack upon the former to conceal her friend's embarrassment. She saw that Marguerite liked not the badinage of the thoughtless Josie, and she was determined at her own expense to turn the conversation.

“Just as if I am not as much interested in hearing celestial gossip as our worthy hostess,” exclaimed Josie, making one of her most stately bows and assuming a very mock−serious air.

“We can both listen, you saucy puss,” said Marguerite, drawing a pair of pretty ottomans close to the sofa on which Helen sat.

“Indeed I am not going to listen—I can't wait—I am going to ask questions, and then we will hear more in the prescribed time—as the teachers say.

“As you wish,” said Helen, patting the mass of golden curls that were as antagonistic to all order as the fair head they adorned.

“Did you go often to the House, Helen? Now for my questions.

“Yes, I went when there was anything worth going to hear.”

“And I suppose that was not often.”

“Hard on the M.P.P.'s, Josie,” said Marguerite, smiling.

“Not half hard enough!” said the girl, vehemently. “They go there and sit and have a good time at the expense of the Province, and show off a little with a passage−at−arms now and then that suggests more of a gladiatorial arena than that of a body of august law−givers!”

“Oh, mercy! hear the girl!” cried Marguerite, raising her hands in tender appeal.

“I tell you it's the truth; I will ask Helen if it is not so,” cried the speaker turning to the latter for answer.

“I must confess that to a certain extent Josie is not far astray. I have seen exhibitions of cross−firing not strictly in accordance with one's ideas of a gentleman. But I suppose sometimes they forget themselves.”

“A gentlemen never forgets himself, Helen. Although you have high−toned notions of the Capital, and granting that you have been lionized right and left, it does not excuse you from exercising a sense of right and wrong.”

Marguerite could not but admire the brave girl with such an earnest look upon her face. The laughing, romping hoyden was capable of sound sensible argument, her character was made up of opposites; and Helen

Rushton, clever in many things, was almost baffled.

Marguerite soon poured oil on the troubled waters.

“You told me where you were going to stay Helen but I have forgotten,” ventured the latter.

“I did not happen to find my friends in the Belgravian district, but what matters it?” returned Helen.

“Up town or down town, that is the burning question always uppermost in Fredericton,” cried Josie.

“It was that part I believe they call the West End, but unlike London and other cities it is not a locality habitable by the fashionable or good form of the pretty little city. But the residence of my friends is, notwithstanding this drawback, the home of culture and refinement, nay more—it is the home of generosity, for never did I see more genuine true−heartedness than in this truly happy home.”

“You doubtless have found many such people during your visit, for the hospitality of Fredericton is proverbial,” exclaimed Marguerite in a soft and gentle manner.

“I did indeed,” exclaimed Helen, “the people are very much conservative, but that gives them all the more favor in my eyes.”

“Ah, you precious daughter of the old school,” cried the vehement Josie, “it were well that you went to the Celestial ere you started for Halifax, in order that you might, to a certain extent, have re−acquired that amount of red tapeism which you must have almost forgotten amid the more liberally−inclined citizens of our fog−begirt city.”

“Quite an orator, Josie,” ventured Marguerite. “I will not interrupt you again, Helen, only to assist your memory by questions. Were there many young ladies in the family?”

“There was just one of the loveliest and sweetest girls in existence,” cried Helen, enthusiastically.

“Be careful now, we are jealous already,” said Josie, holding up her forefinger, menacingly.

“And two young gentlemen, lately enrolled as professionals.”

“At which?” cried Josie, in mock gravity.

“Where's your promise now?” ventured Marguerite.

“Never mind, Madge, I can manage,” replied Helen, smiling. The latter then gave an interesting description of her visit from general to particular. She had listened to the speeches from the government and opposition; admired the pretty surroundings of the Parliament buildings; glanced over several of the volumes in the neatly−kept library, and in the meantime formed opinions upon many of the representatives of our Province. Government House also received much notice.

“I've never been there yet,” cried Josie, in a half−regretful tone.

“Then you have something in store worth going to Fredericton for,” said Helen, “it is such a grand old place. The conservatory is charming—a spot where you can dream that you are in the land of perpetual summer and golden sunshine. Standing upon the threshold of the blue drawing−room you are almost spell−bound. Really my eyes were dazzled with the array of lovely pink and white azaleas that were arranged at respective distances. And the camelias—really, I had to hold my breath—then came the endless group of calla lilies— pure, transparent and beautiful.”

“Oh, Helen, I should have been tempted to pluck a stray one and say, 'old conscience, it is public property.'“

Marguerite laughed at the amusing look depicted upon Josie's face, but Helen disconcerted went on. “But what made the scene more effective was the soft and velvety carpeting of luxuriant grass growing in the centre of the conservatory—nothing to be seen but lovely flowers, foliage and verdure.”

“Suppose great care must be bestowed upon it,” said Marguerite.

“Truly, I could have lingered there for days and not been wearied.”

“And in the meantime live upon the effervescence of your beautiful thoughts,” cried Josie, bursting out into a wild ringing laugh.

“You mentioned the blue drawing−room, Helen,” said Marguerite, anxious to prolong the conversation; “is it not very pretty?”

“Pretty is indeed the term suitable for it, Madge. There is no elegance, but it is sweet and inviting, pretty draperies, pretty bric−a−brac, and pretty effect.

“Did you notice anything different from other drawing−rooms, Helen,” queried Madge.

“Yes, I did,” replied Helen. “The entire absence of so many silly knick−knacks oftentimes heaped up in ordinary drawing−rooms. How my eyes gloated over a few pieces of quaint and rare old china!”

Helen's keen, scrutinizing gaze had taken in the whole situation, doubtless without any apparent effort; good−breeding was the innate principle which actuated the speaker's every−day life; and it was now from a desire to speak in high terms of life in the capital, that she wished to entertain her companions. “I have heard Louise speak so many times of the kindness she received there, that I seem to know all about it,” said Marguerite, her dark violet eyes aglow with earnestness.

“And yet you never went with *her*?” queried Helen.

“Something always happened to prevent my going then, yet I have some pleasant associations connected with Fredericton.”

“Pleasant anticipations you should say,” chimed in the irrepressible Josie.

“Miss Jordan, please do not misconstrue Madge's words, you saucy girl!” retorted Helen, tapping her toes upon the stool near, by way of calling the other to order.

A brilliant description of a ball at the Government House then followed, also several parties and other indoor amusements.

“That is all very nice Helen,” cried Josie, “but I want to hear about the people. There is always so much talk about the celestials, their culture, refinement and all that sort of thing, now you can give us your opinion.”

“That is a delicate subject for Helen to handle,” said Marguerite with a slight shade of embarrassment heightening her color and making more pathetic the soft speaking eyes.

“Indeed my peerless ones you are all good and lovely in my sight and the fair Marian is among the number.”

“Is she pretty, Helen?”

“Not what the world would call pretty, but she is neat and graceful, has a pretty form and graceful carriage and carries her head like a queen.”

“What of her brothers—are they blonde or brunette?”

“Neither, but tall, straight and rather inclined to be fashionable young men.”

“Then I cannot bear to hear of them; for anything in this world I despise is a dude,” exclaimed Josie with an expression of disgust upon her face that was in accord with her speech.

“Anything in moderation is tolerable,” returned Helen, “I cannot say that I admire the extremely fashionable young man but I must say that I cannot appreciate the young man of antediluvian aspect.”

The latter then settled down to a lengthy detail of her visit in particular, the different characters she met and the pleasant hours enjoyed in their company.

“How different your visit has been to some who have gone there. Why, I have heard the girls say all you could do was go up and down Queen street for a few times, hear remarks passed upon you by the loungers at the hotel doors, and then stow yourself away to be scorched to powder in summer or be converted into a tolerable sized iceberg if it happened to be winter.”

“Like all other places, Josie, one's impressions are always formed according to circumstances and I must say I never will forget the happy hours in Fredericton.”

“But you never told us of the 'head of the family,' Helen?”

“That thought was uppermost when you spoke, Josie. I never can fully express my gratitude to the esteemed couple who so kindly invited me to their house.

“Marian's father is fat, fair, and slightly over forty, with the most happy and frank countenance that you ever met. He has a good story always on hand, can entertain clergy or laity, and never wearies in contributing his store of amusing anecdotes, which oftentimes are at the expense of his nearest relatives.”

“How I should like to listen to them; it does me so much good to laugh,” cried Josie, her eyes beaming with fond satisfaction. “Kingsnook” (for such we will name this happy professional's abode) is of all others the place for a good hearty laugh. No simpering, silly affectation is allowed much reception within the neat and tastefully arranged parlors, or tempted to display itself on the shady verandah, cool, leafy shrubberies, or spacious garden.

“Did you see much military life there, Helen?” asked Marguerite, who had been for some moments apparently engaged in deep study.

“That is the beauty of it, my dear. The study, the drawing−room, and in fact, every inch of 'Kingsnook' reminded one of the true spirit of patriotism which ruled its master, who could look with pride back to the sturdy and high−spirited ancestors who wore the uniform of the British army. I am not the daughter nor grand−daughter of a British officer, but I could look with pride upon the arms and accoutrements adorning the study walls, and

feel a wave of emotion break over me and fire my soul with a pride that can only be experienced by one of Britannia's children."

"Hear, hear," cried Josie Jordan, springing to her feet, and seizing the speaker by the hand. "Helen, I am with you heart and soul. Remember, we New Brunswickers are true loyalists. I am proud to belong to that good old stock which gives our Province so much of its prestige."

The bright romping girl had now changed into a whole−souled woman. There was a dignity in her bearing worthy the mother of the Gracchi.

But an unlooked−for event put an unceremonious end to the conversation and Helen Rushton took leave promising to tell them much of the friends she made during her late visit.

The unlooked−for event was the arrival of Cousin Jennie Montgomery.

"I thought it best to surprise you, Madge!" cried the bright sunny−faced maiden as she was folded in the arms of the outwitted Marguerite.

"I suppose it is best to forgive you," cried the latter and putting an arm around Cousin Jennie led her into the family parlor to receive greetings from the rest of the family.

CHAPTER XI. PHILLIP LAWSON HAS GAINED AN ALLY.

It is needless to say that Cousin Jennie was a welcome visitor at “Sunnybank.” Her bright presence shone everywhere from the drawing−room to that particular spot dedicated to the sports of the romping, noisy boys.

“We will have the jolly times,” was the password of the latter; “Cousin Jennie is the girl to help us fellers along.”

And there was the usual stir and bustle necessary for the equipment of Evelyn Verne's trousseau. The beauty had scarce time to think of anything but the different styles of dresses, pretty bonnets, delicate laces, and the most costly trifles, from the gorgeous fan to the delicate tiny slippers.

“Dearest Eve, I should think you would be tired looking over such a lot of things,” exclaimed Cousin Jennie in her cheery tone, “really my eyes would get sore in less than no time.”

“What a speech, Cousin Jennie. Indeed, you are not so unsophisticated as you confess to be,” said the dark−eyed fiancee, with a tinge of sarcasm accompanying the words.

“Well, fair cousin, much as I may lose caste by my confession, I cannot help it,—you know the country folks never see grand weddings, and I may say truthfully that I never expect to see so much finery again.”

“Then you ought to make good use of your eyes now,” was the rather ungracious reply.

As Evelyn stood amid the heap of boxes, arranging and rearranging the delicate fabrics to her heart's content, she was not an object of envy. She was flattering, herself that she was moving a grand marriage and she never let her thoughts wander beyond that well−defined boundary line. Hers was a nature seemingly devoid of feeling and incapable of fine thought, and when she artfully feigned such in the presence of her lover, it was only from a desire to make him more completely her slave.

Jennie Montgomery was not many days at “Sunnybank” ere she saw a glimpse of the world from a fashionable society standpoint.

“Oh, Madge, how can Eve marry that man? You surely do not like him either?”

Jennie Montgomery had favorable opportunity of passing judgment upon Montague Arnold the previous evening, and now she had directed her appeal to her favorite cousin.

“I will be candid, Jennie. You know I never could admire, much less respect, an unprincipled man—I mean a man who lives for his own sordid pleasure—and my sister will have cause to repent the rash step. Poor Evelyn; she has faults, but really she has many good traits of character if her pride would not stand in the way.”

Sweet, confiding Marguerite. She fain would shield her sister from censure, and hoped for her a brighter future than she durst picture.

While at “Sunnybank” Jennie Montgomery saw much to like and dislike. She met many kind−hearted women whose mission on earth was to do good. With the keen, discriminating acuteness peculiar to this maiden, she could sift the wheat from the chaff—she inherited this gift from her far−sighted mother, and was happy in such possession.

But there was one who claimed due attention from Cousin Jennie.

Phillip Lawson of late had made several calls at the Verne mansion and had received a more than hearty welcome from Mr. Verne.

The latter held young Lawson in high respect and took no pains to conceal the fact—which was not lost upon the deliberating Mrs. Verne; but she was cautious, knowing well that moderation was the surest way to overcome opposition.

Within a short time the young barrister and Cousin Jennie became the best of friends. They chatted together without interruption and to the evident delight of Mrs. Verne seemed happy in each other's company.

Jennie was of a quick, decided turn of mind and had a dash of sentiment in her nature that might have been considered dangerous on this occasion; but her whole−souled sense of honor would have saved her from taking a step from the path of right.

“It is the best thing that ever happened, mamma,” exclaimed Evelyn Verne as she stood arrayed in an elegant velvet reception dress which she was admiring before the large plate−mirror in her dressing−room.

“I will forgive Jennie of all her rudeness and country ways if she will only rid us of this importunate suitor,”

said Mrs. Verne, giving the lengthy train a few more touches to add to its effect.

"He seems very much in love with her at present," replied Evelyn, "and indeed they are just suited for each other. It is to be hoped Mr. Lawson will find one more congenial to his rustic manner than Madge."

"Of course, my dear, you don't think Jennie very rustic in her ideas, but she has a certain odd way about her that is not the highest mark of good breeding."

"Common sense, as her wise−headed mother terms it," remarked Evelyn, with a scornful curl upon the otherwise pretty lips.

On the following evening Mr. Verne entered the small back parlor adjoining the library. Mrs. Verne was seated at a daintily−carved ebony work−table. A piece of silk lay upon her knee and many shades of crewel were spread out before her.

"Busy, my dear?" queried the husband, greeting his wife in a pleasant, quiet way.

"Really, Stephen [Note: hand−written, 'Richard' inked out], have you found time to venture in here? Surely there must have been a mistake somewhere," returned Mrs. Verne, in an affected and patronizing manner, that from a quick−tempered man would have forced a hasty and perhaps disagreeable speech.

But Mr. Verne sat down and commenced asking such stray questions as came into his mind.

"Where have the girls gone to−night, Matilda?"

"Jennie and Marguerite, you mean?" queried Mrs. Verne, dexterously weaving the bright silks into a pretty many−hued flower.

"It is the night of the concert, and they have accepted Mr. Lawson as escort." A slight frown accompanies the speech.

"Indeed," said Mr. Verne, with a knowing look upon his face, then turning abruptly towards his wife, added, "It seems to me that Jennie has made an impression upon Mr. Lawson."

"I hope so," was the only reply.

Mr. Verne was bent upon forcing from his wife the true state of her feelings towards his young favorite.

"Jennie will be a lucky girl if she can win such a prize," said he, with considerable warmth of expression.

"He is, indeed, a very suitable husband for Jennie," replied Mrs. Verne in icy chilling tones.

"He is a fit husband for any young lady in St. John, my dear. If he were to look with favor upon Marguerite I should say she, sweet child that she is, would be honored by the proposal of marriage from such a man."

This was too much for Mrs. Verne. It aroused her temper and gave opportunity for many harsh, bitter sayings. Then she found relief in sarcasm.

"I am pleased to know that Mr. Lawson occupies such a proud place in your esteem. No doubt you have been making a few encouraging suggestions to this second Gladstone." Then changing her tones to a higher key exclaimed, "Remember, I will not oppose you in this step, but If will never sanction my child's encouragement of that upsetting, half−starved lawyer."

"Please bear in mind, Matilda, that Mr. Lawson has never once spoken to me upon the subject and it is very foolish to suppose that he wishes to pay any attention to Marguerite otherwise than any young gentleman might."

"You need not think to hoodwink me, I can see for myself, and it seems too bad that when a mother expects her children to become well settled in life that she is sure to be disappointed."

Mrs. Verne within a few moments entirely changed her course of action. She was almost moved to tears and her manner seemed to say, "Well, I suppose it is all for the best, come what will I am prepared for it." But might we not quote the words of the Psalmist, "The words of his mouth were sweeter than butter but war was in his heart."

A clever thought had entered Mrs. Verne's mind. She is already armed for the occasion hoping that she will come off victor.

"Well, my dear, we will not quarrel over this matter. It seems so foolish, knowing it is only conceit on our part, for I believe that Mr. Lawson is very much interested in Jennie Montgomery."

"Jennie has grown to be a fine girl," remarked Mr. Verne, in a matter−of−fact way.

But the fact did not change his opinion as regards the preference for Marguerite.

"It would perhaps be better that such would be the case," exclaimed the parent, as he was once more closeted in his private apartments looking ever the list of bills and documents awaiting his signature.

In the meantime Mrs. Verne had found her way into the drawing−room, where she was soon after joined by

Evelyn and her distinguished betrothed. What a smile greeted the seemingly happy pair! In languid, drawling tones the beauty was relating her adventures of the previous afternoon—the calls made, and the making of a new acquaintance.

"A gentleman from England, did you say, my dear? How delightful! I shall be most happy to meet him."

"And so you shall, dear mamma, for he intends calling upon us very soon."

Mr. Arnold seemed not to notice the radiant smile which illuminated the countenance of his betrothed. Yet it gave him annoyance.

He bit his upper lip and bent closer over the new song that lay open before the piano. "She will sing a different tune before long," was his comment.

In truth Montague Arnold possessed not that feeling which can only be cherished by true, unselfish love. He openly admired Evelyn Verne for her beauty. His sole desire was to make her his, and bend her to his will. His nature was too superficial to harbor jealousy, but his stubborn vanity answered the purpose.

Ah, my peerless Evelyn! you may blush and smile at the well−timed compliments of your admirers now, but your reign seems nearly at an end!

"What a grand opportunity to give a party," exclaimed Mrs. Verne, glancing at her daughter for approval.

"It would be just the thing, mamma," said Evelyn, in her nonchalant and dreamy sort of air.

"You are already settled my dear and now I must try to do my duty towards Marguerite. Really, dearest, you have no idea of the anxiety I have about that girl. She is so much like her father that I am at a loss how to act. You know that she secretly adores that good−for−nothing lawyer and if it were only on her part I would not care, but I am certain that he is head and ears in love with her. Dear me! What a world of trouble we poor mothers have to endure. Why do not our children see as we do?"

Poor Mrs. Verne! She seemed in much distress and assumed a woebegone appearance.

Dear mamma—I think you ought to feel less uneasiness just now for I verily believe that Cousin Jennie has designs upon our unfortunate visitor."

"God grant that she may be successful," was the reply.

"You must encourage it in every way, dear mamma," said Evelyn, with more earnestness than usual.

"Yes; I was just thinking of a plan which doubtless by clever management, will succeed."

"Let me hear it, mamma," said Evelyn, raising her jewelled fingers, cautiously.

Mrs. Verne glanced in the direction of the smoking−room, (whither her future son−in−law had retired to enjoy the delightful weed,) and finding that there was no fear of interruption for the next ten minutes, cleverly sketched out her plan of action.

We will not give the outline of this cleverly devised speech, but merely say that from this time Cousin Jennie was honored to her heart's content, and was induced to remain much longer than she intended.

Mr. Lawson was a frequent visitor, and to the great delight of Mrs. Verne signified his intention of accepting the invitation of Mrs. Montgomery to spend part of his summer vacation at "Gladswood."

"That will certainly put an end to all your fears, mamma," said Evelyn, standing before the bronze mantel shelf admiring a pretty and rare vase which had arrived from England as a wedding present from an old school mate. And so matters went quietly along.

Mr. Verne kept his counsel and worked away amidst his folios, And when his pet daughter shed a ray of sunshine over the matter−of−fact apartment, he felt a tinge of sadness and fondly hoped that no darkening clouds should burst over this idolized treasure.

"What a pity that such a being should ever know the meaning of the word sorrow. In one way, my darling, I can save you, in another I cannot."

Mr. Verne was almost convinced that Cousin Jennie had supplanted Marguerite, and he well knew the proud nature of the latter.

"Perhaps it is all for the best. My pearl could never outweigh all difficulties like the self−reliant Jennie." Such murmurs escaped the lips of the fond parent as he glanced up and down the long row of figures balancing his accounts with a rapidity only acquired by long experience and constant practice. But what of Marguerite?

The girl was not unhappy. She lived on cheered by her happy, dreamy nature, and as it was far above that allotted to ordinary mortals, it sustained her and kept her mind above all sordid thoughts.

"Time has laid his hand

Upon my heart, gently, not smiting it,
But as a harper lays his open palm
Upon his harp to deaden its vibrations.”

CHAPTER XII. EVELYN'S BRIDAL MORN—FESTIVITIES AT “SUNNYBANK.”

. . . “To the nuptial bower
I led her blushing like the moon, all heaven,
And happy constellations on that hour
Shed their selectest influence, the earth
Gave sign of gratulation, and each hill,
Joyous the birds;” —*Milton*

Such is the glowing description of the appearance of nature on the morn when, in the presence of God and the host of white−robed angels, was celebrated the nuptials of our common ancestors— nuptials whence sprang the ills of our humanity.

Could the fair and beautiful Eve have foreseen the future that to her seemed so promising, would she not have given up to despair and remained aloof from sound of tempting voice?

But God's decree willed it otherwise, and the fair Eve, whose beauty and submissive charms had power to influence her lord and master, became the mother of mankind.

It would be unjust, uncharitable, to intrude upon the feelings of the pair to participate in the present festive ceremony at “Sunnybank.”

Evelyn Verne emerges from her boudoir “a thing of beauty.” Was ever bride more enchanting, radiant or beautiful? Were ever bridal robes more graceful? Perfect beauty, queenly beauty, dazzling beauty. It is needless to expatiate upon the shimmering train, mist−like veil or conventional orange blossoms. Reader, we will allow your imagination full scope. Let it rest upon the radiant bride until the eye becomes familiar with the minutest arrangement of the elegant costume.

And then the bridesmaids! Five lovely maidens—St. John's fairest daughters. Five bewitching forms with grace in all their movements, claim our attention; and on all sides—“How pretty!” “How sweet!” “How beautiful!”

Two sisters are exquisitely dressed in India muslin and antique lace—one in pale−blue and the other in pink.

Marguerite Verne is radiant in pearl−colored satin and ruchings of delicate pink azaleas.

Two younger girls are becomingly attired in cream lace and soft filmy crepe of the same shade.

Each maiden carries a bewitching basket of flowers, and imparts to the senses the most delightful effect. Indeed, it is seldom that historic Trinity ever witnessed a grander pageant within its sacred walls.

As the handsome and distinguished−looking bridegroom stood before the altar awaiting the entrance of his bride, it were almost sacrilege to utter a word deprecatory or otherwise.

Hubert Tracy supports his friend with an air of interest. He seems more impatient than the other, and has a look of ill−concealed uneasiness upon his slightly furrowed brow. He hears not the remarks of pretty maidens or dignified matrons, else the slight frown would have given place to a smile.

“Mr. Tracy is as handsome as the groom, mamma.”

“Handsomer, my dear.”

There was still a chance to ensnare the uncaged bird, and this fact was alone in the mind of the anxious mamma. But the entrance of the bridal party put an end to all talk concerning the sterner sex.

“Isn't she lovely?” “What a magnificent dress?” “She is so composed.” “Really, Marguerite is as pretty as the bride.” “Oh, indeed; fine feathers make fine birds.” “If our girls could have all the money they want and nothing to do I bet you they would look better than any one of them.” “Well, well. The world is ill divided.” “Isn't Miss ——gorgeous in that lovely lace.” “If we had some of the money that has been spent upon them dresses we wouldn't have to work any this summer.”

Such was a brief outline of the speeches made upon this important event, but they were lost upon the wedding party.

The guests comprised the wealth and beauty of St. John and as each guest was ushered in one could not fail to exclaim: “St. John has wealth, beauty and refinement.”

The scene was an imposing one. While the choir sang,

"The voice that breathed o'er Eden,"

a young man entered and took his place among the guests. He had been detained but arrived in time to tender his congratulations to one more important to him than the radiant bride.

Why does Hubert Tracy instinctively cast a glance towards the new comer, and feel a slight shudder through his frame?

It matters not at present. Let him enjoy the benefit of his thoughts while we turn to our old friend.

"Mr. Lawson is growing better looking every day," is our verdict, as with genial warmth we grasp him by the hand.

An intelligent face can never remain long in obscurity, and when a generous soul and kind, true heart are also accompanying graces there is a beauty that is unfading. But it is only the higher side of humanity which can discover this beauty. And perhaps on this festive morn many of the worldly minded would fail to recognize this superior style of beauty.

But proudly Phillip Lawson stands with the consciousness of having tried to act well his part and live in obedience to the dictates of his God.

It was only when the guests had assembled in the spacious drawing−room at "Sunnybank" that our friend found opportunity to have a short conversation with Marguerite, who with sunlit face took no pains to conceal her delight. She chatted with Phillip Lawson with a familiarity that led the calculating mother to think that she had no further troubles from that source.

And Cousin Jennie's presence heightened the effect of this illusion.

Clad in draperies of soft nun's veiling Jennie Montgomery was, if not pretty, quite interesting, and her bright, fresh face was refreshing as the air of her native vales.

As in truth every wedding boasts of the time−honored conventionalities, toasts and speeches, that of "Sunnybank" formed no exception, and we will not weary you with the endless list of compliments and amount−to−nothing−in−the−end talk which is current at such times.

It was only when the hour for departure had arrived that a sense of loneliness crept over Marguerite.

The elegant presents had been inspected, luncheon served, and the bride, attired in a superb travelling costume, stood in the doorway awaiting the carriage.

Montague Arnold wears all the necessary smiles that are expected of him, and as he takes his place beside his bride a new responsibility dawns upon him.

A large number of the party accompany the newly−wedded pair to the Fairville Station, and Marguerite is assigned to Mr. Lawson and Cousin Jennie.

The latter is cheerful and witty and strives, under cover of her remarks, to divert her cousin from the sadness that is common to such occasions.

Phillip Lawson sees with gratitude the girl's kindness and thanks her in a way that is tenfold more valued than the counterfeit everyday thanks passed around in common life. If the young barrister could have seen the true state of Cousin Jennie's feelings towards him he would have fallen on his knees and thanked God for such a friend.

But Phillip Lawson was not a mind reader. He could not divine the thoughts that were passing through Jennie Montgomery's ready and active brain. But one thing he did know, that in this warm−hearted girl he had a true friend.

When Marguerite returned to her home a vague, undefined feeling took possession of her, and gladly would she have given herself up to this feeling, and indulged in a good, old−fashioned, time−honored cry.

She felt a sudden pang of remorse. She thought of the lost opportunities when she might have had a stronger hold upon the sympathies of her elder sister.

"Poor Eve," murmured the girl, "she was less to blame than I. We have never had each other's confidence. I hope she will try to love Montague as a woman should love her husband. How I should like to ask mamma what she thinks; but what is the use. She will say it is one of the best matches of the season, and no doubt she will end by advising me as to her anxiety—on my behalf. Oh, dear! why cannot we live in a state of blissful oblivion?"

The miniature bronzed clock on the mantel−shelf caused Marguerite to look up.

"Four o'clock—dear me; I wish this afternoon was over. The house seems as if a funeral had left it. Poor

Evelyn."

"You naughty Madge, where are you?"

The speaker was Jennie Montgomery. She had been busy over the arrangement of a number of bouquets for the dinner−table, and assisting Mrs. Verne in many ways, and now made a hasty transit towards Madge's favorite retreat—a pretty boudoir adjoining her mamma's dressing−room.

"Just as auntie said, you old offender. A pretty time for day−dreams when everybody is head over ears in business."

"I have not been here an hour, Jennie," said Madge, in an apologetic manner, putting her arms caressingly around her cousin's waist.

The latter, though apparently preoccupied, could not fail to admire this quaint and pretty nook—just such a spot as one could sit in and dream their life away; a sort of lotus bed, where one inhaled the beguiling odors, and cast all worldly cares to the shores left behind.

And little wonder cousin Jennie gazed in admiration.

The walls were of the most delicate rose color, tinged with gold; the carpet, a ground of white velvet pile bestrewed with delicate roses; the furniture of delicate pink satin, with setting of quaintly carved ebony.

But the "seat of state," as Jennie termed it, was the crowning feature in this pretty retreat.

This seat of state was a raised dais, curtained with costly lace and surmounted by a canopy of pretty workmanship. In this alcove was an antique chair or fauteuil, and beside it a small cabinet, inlaid with mother of pearl, while opposite stood an ebony writing desk, strewed with fragments of exquisitely perfumed note paper.

It was evident that Marguerite had been penning down some stray thoughts, for the pen stood in the inkstand, and traces of ink were to be seen on her fingers.

This seat of state was just such a place as our sweet−faced Marguerite looked to advantage, not as a queen upon her throne, but as a type of the *spirituelles*—of the pure−minded maiden with a slight shade of melancholy, giving interest to the soft, fair face.

"You remind me of a madonna, my saint−like cousin," said Jennie, placing her bright red cheek against the purely transparent and more delicate one of her companion.

"What a contrast, Madge. Just look at your country cousin—a blooming peony, and you, my most delicate blush rose. Ha! ha! ha!"

Cousin Jennie's laugh was one of the genuine ring—untrammelled by affectation or repressed by pain or languor. She gave vent to her feelings and exercised such influence upon Cousin Madge who now joined in with a clear silvery peal of laughter, sweeter than the most bewitching music. Nor was this "sweetness lost upon a desert air."

Mr. Verne had been engaged in his apartments for some minutes. He had entered unobserved in company with a friend and a few minutes later a gentleman bearing some legal looking documents entered and without ceremony was ushered in. It was while the latter was taking leave that the well−known tones of Marguerite Verne's voice rang out its silvery sweetness and caused the listener to start. But it matters not who the latter was—suffice, a man

"of soul sincere,
In action faithful, and in honour clear;
Who broke no promise, served no private end,
Who gained no title, and who lost no friend."

"Come with me Madge and see what I have done. Indeed, I am not going to put my light under a bushel. Everyone must see my good works," exclaimed Jennie, drawing her arm through that of her cousin and leading her out to the supper room where a sight worth seeing presented itself.

The tables were arranged with an eye to the beautiful. Everything that art and taste could suggest was there.

Epergnes costly and rare almost overpowered the senses with the exhalations of their gorgeous exotics. It was a difficult matter to determine from what source came the most assistance, the caterer or the decorater, but all harmonized and all made up one perfect adaptation.

"Jennie I am ashamed of myself," cried Marguerite, standing before an exquisite combination of roses, heliotrope, lilies and smilax which occupied a central place on the supper−table, "you can do anything. How I envy you."

“Beware my little coz, I have read a little line somewhere throughout the course of my extensive reading—
'Praise undeserved is scandal in disguise.'
Now be governed accordingly and escape the fearful condemnation.”

Marguerite smiled at the bright cheery girl and wondered if it were possible that such a life might ever feel the weight of care. She was thinking might it be possible that the girl would give her heart to the whole−souled friend who always seemed brighter in her presence.

Is it possible that jealousy finds a lurking place within so fair a soul—that it may take root and grow and bloom and scatter the noxious weeds peculiar to its growth?

Ah no, pure minded Marguerite. We accord thee a higher mission upon earth. Thy nature is too exalted, too ethereal, too much of the divine.

“I verily believe if I were not here to arouse you, Madge, that you would be off in another dream in less than no time. I believe some day in the not very far future if one happened to stray as far as Boston that on looking over the *Herald* the first notice that will greet us is:—

“Madame Marguerite DeCoeur—Clarivoyant. Predicts past, present and future. Much attention given to maidens seeking a husband. For particulars see circular. Advice sent on receipt of postage stamps. No. ——Court Street, Boston, Mass.”

“What's all the fun about, I'd like to know?” chimed in none other than Master Fred. Verne with an eager curiosity common to his youth.

“Some time you may feel interested my young man, then you may consult your big sister,” was the reply of Cousin Jennie.

Four hours later Marguerite Verne was, as Cousin Jeanie said a perfect picture—a being born to be admired and loved. Never had she appeared more bewitching and as the clear−headed Jennie watched the effect produced upon a pair of thoughtful grey eyes she felt a sudden relief, murmuring “he will love but one 'my Marguerite.'“

CHAPTER XIII. MARGUERITE AT “GLADSWOOD.”

Reader, another glimpse of life at “Gladswood,” and in this inviting retreat imagine Marguerite. Great indeed, was the delight of Jennie Montgomery, when, on a shining, bright May morn, she set forth from “Sunnybank,” accompanied by her favorite cousin.

“Take good care of my Madge, Jennie. You see she is of two−fold value now. I cannot afford to lose my second daughter for a very long time.”

Mr. Verne had arrived at the railway station in time to see the girls off, and his parting injunction to Jennie was playful, and partook more of the nature of a brother than that of a parent.

In the companionship of sympathetic natures he was warmhearted, affectionate and familiar, but in ordinary moods thoughtful and reserved, and at times gloomy.

“Jennie, do you think it possible for any girl to love her father as much as I do mine,” asked Marguerite, as she leaned forward and waved adieu, then throwing a kiss sat down beside her companion.

“What a question,” cried Jennie. “I hope you don't imagine I care one straw less for my dear old man than you do for yours, my sweet, saucy coz. You really must be punished.”

Cousin Jennie gave her companion a hearty shake and the subject dropped.

Friends and acquaintances coming in at Torryburn claimed their attention and when they arrived at Rothesay a greater reinforcement came—a party of pic−nickers going to Hampton to feast upon the beauties of that pretty rural town, and divide the remainder of the day between the delicacies of the luncheon baskets and the more delicious bits of gossip common to such gatherings.

“Miss Verne, I really did not expect to see you to−day!” cried a sprightly miss, springing towards her at no gentle rate.

The girl was Lottie Lawson, her bright young face beaming with excitement and happiness.

“I have been at Rothesay for a week, and just think, Miss Verne, Phillip has not found time to come and see me.”

Lottie's manner expressed that of a deeply−wronged maiden, and Marguerite broke forth in a ripple of silvery laughter. Cousin Jennie also joined, and the infection spread to the aggrieved sister, whose child−like, musical tones were refreshing to all.

“How I should like to go as far as Sussex! but my visit ends to−morrow, and Phillip will expect me,” said Lottie, in a half regretful tone.

“But you can come with Mr. Lawson during his vacation. He has promised me to come to 'Gladswood' then.”

“How funny that everything seems to come contrary! I have promised to go to Woodstock.”

Having reached the Hampton station Marguerite glanced out of the window.

It was fortunate that Cousin Jennie was at that moment deeply engaged in conversation with a lady in the next seat. A blush mantled a maiden's cheek, then left her a shade paler than before.

“Brother Phillip—” In another instant the child was in her brother's arms. “You bad brother, you did not come to see me, I was just telling Miss Verne.”

The young barrister then espied the latter and holding his sister by the hand walked to the front of the platform.

“I must soon steal her away for a few days, Mr. Lawson. If business did not interfere, I should feel like making a second raid and secure another citizen.”

Cousin Jennie spoke in a way that one seldom hears. Her artless, heartfelt manner, was acceptable to our friend, and with true gentlemanly grace, he bowed acknowledgment.

One of the picnic party—a vinegar−faced woman of forty−five, with two eligibles at her side—declared to a very intimate friend that she thought it very queer that Miss Verne should be following at Mr. Lawson's heels all the time. “For the life of me I can't see why girls will make themselves so ridiculous. Why, I often see her cutting across the Square to overtake him.”

“Oh, indeed; the girls now−a−days don't have much modesty. Just see how she is laughing and talking now,” exclaimed the confederate.

“Yes,” retorted the first speaker “and that country−looking cousin is just a cloak for them. She is watching a chance to catch some others of the firm.”

“Nice looking, did you say? Not a bit of it. For my part, I think she is homely; her face is too round and red.”

The last remark was made by a saucy−looking maiden of sixteen, who owned to nothing being good that did not belong to herself.

Marguerite was utterly unconscious of the comments made upon herself and companion.

In the minutes that Mr. Lawson remained they found much to say, and there was an absence of coquetry that was gracious to see. The thoughtful, yet bright, expression of Marguerite's eyes had power to magnetize the most callous−hearted, and on this morn they were truly dangerous. The graceful form, attired in pretty travelling costume, could not fail to attract notice, and we see her repeatedly acknowledge the recognitions of many of the sterner sex with her quaint rare smile.

Just as the train was starting a voice exclaimed, “Miss Verne here are some violets, I brought them purposely to match your eyes.” The fairy−like child placed the treasures in Marguerite's hand and bounded away without further comment.

“She is a good child,” said Phillip, waving adieu to his companion and hurrying towards the carriage awaiting him.

Cousin Jennie now came forward demanding a share of the violets.

“Mr. Lawson thinks so much of her that I almost love him!” cried she vehemently. “And she is so cute, I'm sure her brother cannot pay such pretty compliments, Madge!”

Marguerite smiled and glanced far away over the distant hills, crowned with trees and foliage already flaunting themselves in holiday attire.

At that moment Phillip Lawson was thinking over a host of compliments, which if repeated would have caused Marguerite Verne's *spirituelle* face to glow with maiden blushes.

But let us believe—

“One truth is dear, whatever is, is right,”

and leave each to the free range of thought indulged in at the self−same moment.

The lovely views of nature on this lonely morn soon claimed Marguerite's attention.

“If the world were all so fair! Oh, how charming!” exclaimed the latter rising from her seat and drinking deep of the glowing beauty of hill and dale, beautifully undulating expanse of green carpeted fields lying in the distance, the purple mountain tops glowing with regal splendour and above all the ethereal dome of heavenly blue with fleecy clouds in fantastic shapes and trooping along in gay and festive march across the boundless field.

As the spire of Apohaqui Church gleamed in the distance Jennie caught her companion by the arm exclaiming, “Madge, I cannot realize that we are going to have your dear old self for three long weeks. I hope papa will be at the station to meet us.”

“If not what matter; I love to take good long walks.”

“And so do I, my pretty coz; just wait until I trot you out over the hills and far away,” said Jennie, giving her companion a pinch on the ear that caused it to assume a crimson dye. Sussex Vale, in all its loveliness now came within sight.

“My own, my native land,” cried Jennie, in high glee, as she eagerly looked for the guard of honor that would be awaiting the arrival.

“I thought so. Look Madge.”

The latter saw a group of merry children, a respectable−looking man, whose good−natured face could belong to none other than Uncle William Montgomery.

“Wasn't it lucky that you came on a Saturday, Cousin Marguerite; it is just lovely in the fields now.”

The bright−eyed urchin had claimed a seat beside the delighted maiden with all the airs of a gallant, and jealously guarded all access from the other unfortunates.

“Hal is not going to ride beside Cousin Marguerite to−morrow, for I will get in first,” whispered a younger lad to his confidante— Jennie.

“Yes, Jimmie, you shall have fair play. Count on me as your champion,” whispered the former in conciliatory tones.

It is needless to speak of the beauty of Sussex Vale. Did ever passenger travel along the Intercolonial “with

soul so dead" as not to be stirred with a sense of the beautiful as he neared this delightful spot.

On this golden May morn Marguerite was indeed intoxicated with delight. But she could not remain in silent admiration, for Master Hal's attentions demanded recognition, and after chatting gaily for half an hour the phaeton deposited its smiling load upon the terrace at "Gladswood."

Truly "Gladswood," for upon every side arose some sight to make glad the heart.

There stood the warm−hearted and energetic mistress, her genuine soul stamped upon every lineament of the plain but inviting face.

"And you did make out to come, Marguerite!" exclaimed Mrs. Montgomery giving the girl a warm, hearty kiss.

"Yes, we've got her now and the city folks can do without her until we are ready."

At this ambiguous declaration the gallant Hal gave his head a defiant toss and gathering up an array of sundry feminine indispensibles made towards a side entrance where he deposited the said articles.

"Cousin Marguerite come out and see the calves." We have two of the loveliest little creatures with large eyes and such pretty white spots! And you would think they had their foreheads banged!"

"Well, they must be very pretty, Jimmie," said Marguerite, laughing heartily at the lad's description.

"Now children do let Cousin Marguerite have time to draw her breath before you tease her to death about your stock," said Aunt Hester with an amused look upon her face.

"Cousin Marguerite will excuse herself to the company," cried Jennie, motioning Marguerite to follow her and the latter was soon snugly ensconced in the cosiest and most inviting chamber that one ever beheld.

It was not the spare room but a smaller one adjoining that of Cousin Jennie.

The walls, contrary to fashion, were covered with a delicate paper, a white ground sprigged with pale lavender, the paints were pure white and the hangings and draperies were transparent in their whiteness.

The neat furniture was also of a dazzling white relieved by stripes of gold and pale lavender. The old fashioned window was formed in a kind of recess which was filled with pots of the choicest flowers, while just within reach stood a large lilac bush which on the least provocation forced its branches into the room.

"Cousin Jennie, the grandeur of St. John cannot boast of a spot like this. Can it be reality." cried Marguerite, pushing aside the lilac branches and glancing out upon the enchanting landscape, which gave such effect to the pretty room.

"It is so cool," broke from the girl in rapturous tones as she eyed the bare floor with its coat of soft tinted lavender and deeper shaded border. "You know it would be such a disgraceful thing to have an uncarpeted floor in the city."

The last remark was in tones slightly ironical, and showed that Marguerite Verne held views not in accordance with good form and fearlessly regarded the consequence.

"Of course, mother would not have a carpeted chamber in the summer season, and now, I really like it, but I fear that some of our guests are very often surprised."

It being past the noon dinner−hour a luncheon was prepared and the girls were interrupted by the indefatigable Hal knocking lustily on the chamber door.

"Really, Jennie, I would rather sit here than eat," said Marguerite, going to the mirror to re−arrange the mass of silken hair that crowned her prettily shaped head.

"I am going to take Cousin Marguerite down to luncheon," cried a voice from without.

This set both girls in a fit of laughter.

"You can't say that you did not raise a beau while in the Vale," cried Jennie, with a roguish twinkle of her eye.

"Indeed, Cousin Marguerite will hare no city chaps skulkin' 'round while I am here," cried our twelve−year old with all the airs of a dude of twenty.

Next in turn came a tramp around the proud old domain of "Gladswood."

The stately elms seemed to extend a kindly welcome. All nature seemed to say "welcome, to Gladswood." The birds seemed to have been practising some of their latest melodies, for never did grander strains issue from their sylvan orchestra.

How pleasantly the hours glided by in this charming abode. Truly it hath been said—

"How noiseless falls the foot of time
That only treads on flowers."

“It is a fortnight to−day since I came to Gladswood,” said Marguerite, one bright, sunny afternoon, as she came up the broad avenue, crowned with lovely wild flowers and such trophies as the neighboring wood afforded.

Cousin Jennie had remained at home to assist in some extra duties, and as she greeted the “spirit of the woods,” as she playfully dubbed Marguerite, she was worthy of notice.

A neatly fitting light colored print wrapper, spotless in its purity; a linen collar, fastened by a silver horse shoe pin; a long, plain, white muslin apron; a neat and substantial shoe, tied with black ribbon, and high over all a crowning mass of purplish black hair, in beautiful and striking contrast.

“You radiant country maid,” cried Marguerite, “stand until I admire you awhile.”

Jennie was playfully turned around as an automaton in a shop window, and at length breaking forth into a merry laugh, exclaimed, “You saucy minx, please turn your wit upon some other object.”

And thus amid fun, frolic and gaiety, Marguerite's visit came to an end, and on the last eve to be spent at Gladswood, the girls are seated in the old summer house enjoying an uninterrupted chat—that blissful recreation peculiar to each and every maiden.

“Madge, I am almost sorry that you came,” said Jennie, taking the pretty white hand within her own. “Promise me that you will come while Mr. Lawson is here,” cried the girl in a vehement and almost determined manner, while the large, brown eyes had a far−off look that she tried hard to conceal.

“It is impossible, Jennie; besides, you must not mention the matter again.”

Marguerite's voice was clear and bird−like, but Jennie Montgomery fancied she felt a slight tremor in the last words uttered, and with that intuitive caution characteristic of her mother pressed the subject no further, and the warm−hearted maiden felt keenly her utter helplessness to render her companion any sympathy.

“Let us go in, Cousin Jennie,” said Marguerite, in tender tones that seemed as reproach to the high−minded girl, but she heeded not, and playfully putting her arm around her companion's waist, led her into the parlor, where the rest of the family were seated around awaiting their appearance.

“Marguerite is too proud,” murmured Jennie, as she sought her own room on returning from seeing her fair cousin aboard the down accommodation train which was to carry her homewards.

“Oh, my loving Marguerite, I know more than you think. I could indeed tell you much that you little dream of, but why is it thus?” and humming an old−fashioned air Jennie mechanically went back to her household duties, as if all the world were sunshine and brightness, and not a troubled thought had ever found a resting−place within her mind.

CHAPTER XIV. AT THE NORTHWEST.

The scene is changed; and we find ourselves transported beyond a doubt to the far−famed city of Winnipeg—that emporium of wealth, enterprise and industry which arose from its prairie surroundings as by the magic of the enchanter's wand.

It is a bright, cheerful day in leafy June, and as one jogs leisurely adown Main street, there are to be seen many happy smiling faces.

But we are bent upon important business, and yield not to the more leisurely inclined side of our nature. A large four−story building is our destination. Its door posts, windows and available space are decorated with the inevitable shingle that sooner or later ushers the professional into the notice of his victims. And this building was not alone in such style of decoration.

“Dear me, I believe every other man in this place is a lawyer! Sakes alive—it's worse than being among a nest of hornets.” Such was the exclamation of an elderly lady who had recently arrived, and was out taking a survey of the town.

And the old lady was not far astray, as Winnipeg has proportionately more of the legal fraternity than any other city of the Dominion.

But to our subject. Having arrived at the end of a spacious corridor we stop directly opposite a door bearing a placard—the letters are of gilt upon a black ground:

N. H. SHARPLEY, Attorney−at−Law, Notary Public, etc.

A medium−sized man is seated at the desk busily engaged over a lengthy looking document which he has just received from the young copyist at the further end of the office.

“All right, Ned, you are at liberty for the next hour. Wait: You can in the meantime run up for the ink,” said Mr. Sharpley, Attorney−at−Law, in an impatient tone, as though he wished to enjoy the delightful communion of his own thoughts.

And while the scion of the law was wending his steps towards the Hudson Bay Company store—that mammoth collection of goods from every clime—the father, yea rather grandfather, of variety stores— the disciple of Coke and Blackstone takes out of his breast pocket a letter, which, judging from its crumpled state, must have claimed the reader's attention more than once.

“Five thousand dollars—not bad, by Jove,” muttered Mr. Sharpley, in firm set tones, then began whistling the air accompanying the words:

“Never kick a man when he's going down the hill.”

Before going further let us take a survey at Nicholas Sharpley, Esq., Attorney−at−Law, as he sits with his right arm resting on the desk and his left supporting his very important head. He is about thirty−five years of age, or perhaps less. His face is long and his chin sharp, so that his name is no misnomer. A pair of glittering, steel−like eyes, play a prominent part in the expression of his face. A sinister smile plays hide−and−seek around the thin, pale lips, while the movement betray a flexibility of mind that is not nattering to the possessor.

There is about the man a striking combination of Uriah Heap and Mr. Pecksniff; which, to an honest−minded man, rendered him intolerable.

But Nicholas Sharpley had his followers, and thrived and shone bright among the legal luminaries, and was always ready to do the most unprincipled jobs to be met with.

A cunning leer passed over the greyish countenance as the dazzling vision protruded itself before Mr. Sharpley. He drew his fingers convulsively through the mass of bristling hair (which might be designated by that color known as iron grey), and then suppressing a yawn, muttered: “It's worth the trying. The fellow's good for another five—that's a bonanza these devilish hard times.”

The attorney then glanced over the contents of the prized letter once more and evidently experienced a fresh sensation of delight.

“Tracy beats the devil—all for the sake of a girl too; bet my life she's no better than the rest of them. Well, Mr. Tracy, my humble client, you will pay a good price for the enchanting dearie, who has caught you body and soul—fools—fools—men are fools.”

Poor Nicholas made the last assertion with much force of manner, betraying his own feelings more than he would have dared to acknowledge.

Dame Rumor had not been sparing in circulating the love affairs of our attorney−at−law, and when she fearlessly came forward and declared that a certain maiden with more pin money than beauty, rejected his suit, there went forth from the four walls of the bachelor's apartments an edict ruthlessly vowing vengeance upon the whole sex, and comforting himself with the thought that he loved a good horse better than anything in this fluctuating world.

“Ten thousand out of it; not a bad speck—and that in the eight per cent—a thousand times better than the other side of the bargain. Eh, Moll?” The latter part of the sentence was addressed to the pretty animal that was reined up before the court−yard just as the speaker rose to his feet.

It was four o'clock and Mr. Sharpley, taking the ribbons from the boy with all the importance of his position, rode down Main street towards the old fort, and afterwards through the different streets lined with the most imposing and stately residence so characteristic of the southern portion of the city.

Have patience, reader, while we give another thought to the crumpled letter. Its pages make mention of one very dear to us. Phillip Lawson is on the eve of being the dupe of two unprincipled schemers.

Hubert Tracy knew well where to look for an accomplice. He possessed money or the means of getting it, and he knew that for the precious dust the high handed and unscrupulous soul of Nicholas Sharpley was his only help.

“Ten thousand—not bad—and more to follow,” were the words that rose to Mr. Sharpley's lips and which he muttered incoherently as he sat over a rubber of whist in a private apartment of the hotel on the self−same evening, and as the many−sided character of the attorney−at−law presented itself, we can see in bold relief a placard bearing the mark “$10,000—not bad—and more to follow.”

And there is another on the eve of happiness—a rival is to be set aside—that other is Hubert Tracy, and the rival is Phillip Lawson.

Within a few hours from the time that Mr. Sharpley had made up his mind, there lay on the office desk a letter addressed:

W. CLARKE CONNOR, ESQ., Barrister, Portage, La Prarie.

Barrister at Portage La Prarie. Yes, my friend; barristers at the northermost corner of the earth.

Mr. Connor was a man of fifty years or upwards. He had formerly practised in Winnipeg and in his office Nicholas Sharpley first entered as a law student. Doubtless the quick−sighted lawyer saw in the former much in common with his own sordid nature and liked communion with kindred spirits, for Nicholas Sharpley rose high in Mr. Connor's esteem, and when the latter started out for “greener fields and pastures new,” he was in full confidence of the affairs of the younger lawyer.

Mr. Connor was a man whom few liked but very many dreaded. He had the power of ingratiating himself in favor when he was least sought, and his bland oily manner could scarcely be disconcerted.

“That old nuisance of a Connor is always poking his nose where he is not wanted,” was often heard from any outspoken Miss who had the audacity to express her honest thoughts.

Mr. Connor always appeared to take a very great interest in church affairs and from his indefatigable labor generally strove to be at the head of all measures advanced in the interest of his own church. Whether or no the congregation of the pretty Presbyterian Church on the outskirts of the town appreciated such labor we will not say but let the reader judge for himself.

But to the subject in question. Mr. Sharpley had no hesitation in disclosing his mind on the present burning question.

A great inducement was to be held out to Mr. Lawson to enter into partnership with the said Mr. Connor, Barrister. Nothing was to be left undone in order to accomplish this scheme. The wide field, large practice, wealth of the country; its future greatness was pictured in a wonderfully clever manner.

Mr. Sharpley had been made acquainted with the affairs of the St. John barrister in every particular.

Hubert Tracy had carefully noted the average salary of the latter and found that it was only by dint of perseverance and up−hill work that he could meet all his demands.

“The stronger the inducements the easier the job,” was Tracy's advice to the Winnipeg lawyer and it is needless to say that such advice was carried out to the letter.

Portage La Prarie was indeed an enterprising little town and possessing many of the characteristics of earlier

settled districts.

On Main street are to be seen several fine buildings, fine stores and fine residences, while Pacific and Belliveau hotels are quite imposing.

And the education of the youth is not forgotten. On an elevated position commanding a fine view of the town stands the new schoolhouse, a pretty and imposing structure with surroundings in keeping with such an institution.

And to this habitation the young lawyer was to be consigned. He could not see his way out of the arrangement to which he had partially given his consent. And when Mr. Sharpley's letters were read and re−read, Phillip Lawson was in no enviable state of mind. To do or not to do—to do was invariably the answer. Then there arose another side to the question, which the young man hardly durst think of.

"I may stay here until my hair is gray, and what matters it? I have no reason to think that there ever will be any hope for me in that respect."

Here Phillip fell to musing, and what his musings were, we may divine from the foregoing speech. He considered Mr. Tracy in several ways, and though he felt a little uneasiness in the matter attributed it to the morbid state of his own mind.

"With a wider field I can do something," murmured the lawyer, as he gathered up the loose sheets of paper lying around and threw them into the waste basket.

But Phillip Lawson only saw one side of the proceeding—the alluring, tempting side.

There was, indeed, a complication of schemes already concocted, and each one was to follow in a well conceived and nicely arranged order—"a wheel within a wheel," as Hubert Tracy coolly expressed himself.

Perhaps no more diabolical scheme could have been more cleverly planned to ruin the character of a fellow−being. But it is ever thus, and shall be until the arch fiend, who first plotted in the Amaranthine bowers of Eden, shall be cast out forever beyond the reach of mortal ear.

Had Phillip Lawson now received the timely warning of one kind friend—but there was none to warn. If he asked the advice of some older members of the profession, the answer invariably was: "Try it, my boy, if you think you will succeed." So the outcome of it all was that the young man had made up his mind to try it, and, after a long conversation with Hubert Tracy, resolved to inform Mr. Sharpley of his intention at the earliest opportunity.

But Tracy was not so deeply enthusiastic as might be expected. He seemed quite indifferent as to the result, and the change would have puzzled as wise a head as Mr. Lawson's. Great was the surprise of the latter when a few mornings earlier Mr. Tracy called to bid good−bye. He was ready to take the train for Halifax, whence he was to sail for England.

"I may never see you again, Lawson, so think of me as you will," cried the young man, with a sudden outburst of energy quite foreign to his nature.

"You may not go to the North−West?"

"I certainly shall," answered the lawyer, determinedly.

"Well may God prosper you, old boy," cried Hubert Tracy with a choking sensation in his throat, and rushing madly out Phillip Lawson caught the peculiar glance in his eye which he many a time called to mind years afterwards when he could interpret it with all clearness—the look which seemed to plead for forgiveness—which seemed to say, "I was desperate and the devil tempted me, I was indeed brought up by a good, pious mother."

But it matters not that Hubert Tracy had been early trained in the paths of right, he was possessed of a weak many−sided nature and fell a prey to vice on the first opportunity.

Worse still, he appeared in good society and was looked upon alike by maidens and mothers as a most desirable acquisition by way of alliance, notwithstanding the fact that many had doubts concerning the tone of morality set up as his standard.

Let us, however, earnestly hope that the pure heart of Marguerite Verne shall never come in contact with such deadly poisonous influence. May she ever remain the guileless, sweet creature that she now is.

CHAPTER XV. HELEN'S CELESTIAL SKETCHES.

A few mornings after Marguerite had arrived from “Gladswood” she was sitting in the library writing a note to cousin Jennie.

A fresh young voice gaily greeted her and Helen Rushton stood before her, a pretty picture in her morning costume of delicate cambric.

“Madge, darling, it seems a year since I saw your dear old face!” cried Helen enthusiastically, at the same moment embracing the former in truly genuine style.

Marguerite returned her friend's salutation, and putting her into an old−fashioned arm−chair drew her own seat near and was ready for a good chat.

“Madge, I have news for you.”

“Good news or bad news?” queried Marguerite.

“Both,” said Helen, “can you guess?”

“Spare my patience, Helen, I am no good at guessing.”

“Then you give up?”

“I do, but you know full well that I have as much curiosity as any of Eve's daughters.”

“Indeed, Madge, I will not give you credit for any such thing. I do think you have the least curiosity of any girl I ever met—you are far above it, you precious darling.”

“Be careful, Helen, or I shall begin to have more conceit than is strictly in accordance with what is right,” said Marguerite earnestly. “But of the news, Helen? You see, I cannot conceal the weakness after all you have said.”

“Well, I shall not tease you any more. Last evening I received a letter saying that papa was called away to England on business to be absent for three months, and as mamma's health is delicate the physicians thought the trip would be highly beneficial to her. Papa and mamma both write and ask if I would like to remain here while they are absent.”

“Oh, I am so glad Helen—of course you will,” cried Marguerite in earnest pleading tones.

“Yes Madge, I will stay. My brothers are in Philadelphia and the dear old home would seem very lonely.”

Helen was about to say more but the unceremonious arrival of Josie Jordan brought it to an abrupt end.

“Well, of all things! You girls here! I do think I am mean to come when I wasn't sent for. Now Madge Verne, you are one of the meanest girls I ever met.”

“What have I been guilty of now, Josie?”

“Oh yes, to be home more than a week without sending Fred. or Charlie to let me know. And this precious article,” pointing to Helen, “I thought in Halifax.”

“Am sorry you are so sadly disappointed, Josie.”

“Come now Miss Helen, I mean no offence and though it is nearly two months since I saw you, remember I have not forgotten your promise.”

“What about?” asked Helen.

“Celestial entertainment, my dear,” ventured Madge.

“I thought myself to be free, for you know, my dear, that was some time ago,” said Helen, laughing.

“I'm ready with questions girls. Let us call the House to order. Is the House ready for the question?” cried Josie, jumping to her feet and brandishing a lignum vitae rule which she held in her hand.

“Well girls to be serious I don't know how to begin. Last evening I had a note from Marion and she says they had a most delightful time at the Encaenia and spoke of two young gentlemen who graduated with the highest honors. I met them frequently and received much kindness from them.”

“Suppose you saw in them a 'Roland and an Oliver,'“ cried Josie, making a series of amusing grimaces.

“One was from Westmoreland and the other from Kings—the latter, I am told, is the banner county for intelligence and ability.”

“Now Helen Rushton, I am not going to stand that,” exclaimed Josie, her eyes sparkling with good natured repartee—“indeed the famous county of St. John has been the birthplace of men who ranked high in intellectual ability, proud attainments and held their own with the professionals, legislators and statesmen of other countries.”

"Well done Josie, you are true to the core," cried Helen in rapt admiration at the defiant and fearless girl.

"What if York could have her say, I suppose *she* claims to be historic and grand too," remarked Marguerite with a sly glance towards Helen.

"Aye, and that she is, too," said the latter, the bright color on her cheek betokening the earnestness of her speech, "surely you will give to York the credit of the 104th regiment. It was while there I heard much of that glorious march which is unparalleled in history. When the brave veterans set forth amid all the hardships of piercing winter winds and boundless wastes of snow, the patriotic band, their hearts kept warm by the patriotic fire within, toiling on without a murmur, and singing snatches of song to sustain their drooping spirits, at last reached the goal; and when called into action, fought bravely and to the end, shedding greater lustre on the Province of their birth than if each soldier had been raised to a peerage."

"New Brunswick has many such true, loyal and brave sons, Helen, and if the hour should come when our country demands them, not one will shirk his duty."

Marguerite Verne was the speaker, and at that moment the enthusiastic expression of her face showed that the girl would not stand idly by if she could also administer to the sufferings of the wounded and the dying.

"Well, I do believe we are the oddest crowd of girls in existence. Just look where our conversation has landed us, and for goodness sake look at Madge! One would suppose she was starting off with an ambulance and all the other requisites necessary for a field nurse! Ha! ha! ha!"

Josie's ringing laugh infected the others, and a general laugh succeeded.

"This reminds me of an evening while in Fredericton," said Helen. "Some company happened in, and after music we formed a party for whist, and during the first half hour as the game progressed the conversation was, strange to say, of a serious nature, when in an instant a bright, happy girl sitting near me, by an unconscious remark, completely changed the current of thought and convulsed the entire party with fits of laughter."

"How I would have enjoyed it, Helen. If there be anything in this world that I admire in people it is a propensity for laughing," said Josie.

"Yes," added Marguerite, "if people laughed more heartily there would be less doctor's bills to pay, and less palatial drugstores at every corner."

"I believe so, too; but as I have many friends among the medical faculty, would not like to take a shingle off by advising too frequent hilarity," said Helen, laughing herself as contradiction to the speech.

"Oh, I forgot, Helen; you said that you visited in a professional gentleman's family. I hope your host would not be among the list to be boycotted by our new method of prescription?"

We will not give Helen's answer. Suffice it to say the girls received all the facts they wished to know, and felt more than ever impressed with Helen's ideas of celestial hospitality.

Then followed a vivid description of several of the M.P.P.'s, particularly the younger members of that august assemblage.

"The Crichton's of the House, did you say, Helen?" cried Josie, abruptly.

"Yes, several are considered quite beaux; I believe many of the young ladies have had designs upon them."

"And they are invulnerable?"

"Not exactly so, if rumor is correct; but as I never met the young ladies in question, cannot tell you much about it. Yes, I was at several parties, and had a good opportunity of seeing many people."

"Did you form as favorable opinions of the fair sex, there as those of our set?"

"You absurd girl! what a question! Well, to be candid, I saw much to approve and much to disapprove. One thing I did not like—that was the young ladies invariably flirted with the married gentlemen, and *vice versa*,—anything I despise in this world is a male flirt."

Helen Rushton drew herself up proudly and looked the embodiment of scorn and disgust.

"And I dare say little Helen was not behind in the list, for you see, girls, she favors it among the fair beauties."

"Josie Jordan, I would not stoop so far beneath the dignity of woman as to indulge in the most 'harmless flirtation,' and I pity the woman who does so; but man, with all his high sense of honor, and in possession of those manly graces which, when properly directed, are a guiding−star to society, falls low indeed when he becomes what is generally termed a flirt."

"Dear me," cried Josie, "and you really passed through the campaign without making an attack upon any of the celestials?"

“I am not going to tell you, Josie. I only wish you to know that I walked, danced, sang and was kindly entertained, and hope that I may only have an opportunity of returning such kindness when any of those acquaintances should happily tread on Haligonian classic soil.”

“I believe the poetic and aesthetic of the celestial have taken, deep root already! Girls, just listen to the style of speech—tread on classic soil!”

At this Marguerite smiled, yet she did not altogether endorse Josie's repartee, and going to a cabinet took out a portfolio, which she passed to Helen.

“Excuse me, Josie, I had almost forgotten to have these sketches ready to send by the evening mail. I have promised two of them to Cousin Jennie, and really am at a loss to decide—which do you like best?”

Marguerite had now arranged several pretty sketches before her companions, and to decide was no easy task.

“This is cute!” cried Josie, holding up the foremost of the group.

“The banks of Nith,” remarked Helen, examining the pretty Scotch landscape with the air of a connoiseur.

“Yes, I believe Jennie will like that,” said Marguerite, taking the proffered sketch.

“Like it? she will adore it! for if she be like me she will admire anything that is Scotch—Scotch music—oh, girls! is there anything on this earth more enchanting than a quaint old Scotch ballad?”

“Yes; and if Madge or yours very humbly ever gets to Halifax we may expect a daily repast of oatmeal bannocks,” turning towards Helen, and was about to exercise some of her latent strength upon her, when a reminder from Marguerite caused her to turn in dismay.

“Look what you have done!”

The sketches were lying upon the carpet. Instantly Josie was on her knees; and as she placed each sketch upon the cabinet, described its merits and demerits most heartily.

A pretty companion sketch—“Kilchurn Castle,” rendered famous by Wordsworth—was also selected, and when the package had been sealed it passed into Josie's hands to be mailed on her way homeward.

Before the girls separated, Helen had given a glowing description of a choral service in the Cathedral. She described the building itself with the precision of an architect, not excepting the massive key which was also in keeping with the style of architecture—the form of a cross. And this grand and imposing Gothic structure, its solemn service, inspiring music pealing along the corridors, echoing and re−echoing through the vaulted arches, the solemn procession wending slowly down from the altar and entering by the eastern door, the prelates in the order of succession.

“It was a sight I shall never forget,” said Helen, with a peculiar earnestness. “I stood long in the grand tesselated vestibule and took in the scene, and as I did so, I noticed a young gentleman who seemed spell−bound; he was wrapped in deep enthusiasm, and on making enquiries learned that the dreamer was an artist—a native artist— in fact I could almost see the poetic glow overspreading each feature of the expressive face.”

“And thus it ended that Helen Rushton went to the Celestial and fell in love with a Celestial artist. Amen, so let it be!”

“Josie Jordan, how irreverent!”

“Forgive me, Madge! I forget that I am in the presence of High Church people. Now dear, I will be ever so humble.”

Josie's contrition was of short duration. Within a few moments she had to be reproved for interrupting Helen in the midst of a short but clearly−defined picture of the University and the pretty groves and avenues.

“I am determined to see those places later in the season.”

“Then you will be repaid a thousand times, Helen,” said Madge, a smile resting upon the madonna−like face and throwing a halo around her. “Last summer a number of friends were staying at the 'Barker,' and in the meantime Cousin Jennie and I found ourselves in Uncle William's care and registered at the 'Queen.' It was a lovely morning in August, and as we were engaged to attend a garden party on the self−same evening, we set off in the direction of Mr. Bebbington's garden, to get some of his choice roses. I was somewhat ahead of the party, and on turning the corner of Queen and Church streets the scene was truly enchanting. I was pleased to be alone to drink in the grandeur. I never could half describe that picture, it was as one brief glimpse of some paradise that appears only in dreamland. Not a sound marred the effect. All was calm and peaceful indeed. Stretching out in graceful curves lay the river, looking indeed like living silver; the soft, green sward and grassy bank; then the Cathedral in its sombre Gothic dress, its leafy grove, its hallowed associations. I looked further, and there stood

the outlying hills crowned with lovely foliage, and above all the soft, fleecy clouds chasing each other through the blue sky. Soft and beautiful as an Italian landscape! And the neat, suburban cottages with artistically−arranged flower gardens in front. All was in keeping with the scene.

'No sound of busy life was heard.'

“As I stood in wrapt admiration, the Cathedral clock chimed out in soft, silvery tones, summoning the worshipper to the morning matin. Presently a figure emerges from the doorway of a neat residence and crosses the street. It is the Lord Bishop, who for so many years has crossed the same well−beaten path. The calm serenity of the place, the hour and the solemnity of the scene was overpowering. I dared not wait until the ethereal sweetness of the music would cease. I took one lingering gaze and murmured: This is indeed Elysium—a step nearer Heaven, and with feelings of reverential awe set forth on my errand.”

“It must indeed have been grand!” cried the listeners in concert.

“I can never forget it,” said Marguerite, “and if you should ever happen to see the same picture, you can imagine my emotions at the time.”

“It is growing late, and I must attend to business,” said Josie, taking up the package and setting off for the post office, while Helen and Marguerite stood on the balcony throwing tokens of affection, and as the coquettish form was lost in the distance, Helen, turning towards her companion, said:

“If Josie could only remain as she is—a grown−up child!”

CHAPTER XVI. MRS. ARNOLD AS A DIPLOMATIST.

Some evenings later Phillip Lawson found his way to “Sunnybank.” He was received by the stately mistress with more than usual courtesy.

“You have surely forgotten us of late, Mr. Lawson,” exclaimed she, in a playful and remonstrating style. “Are we to attribute your delinquency to business or total neglect?”

“I must plead business to a certain extent, Mrs. Verne,” said the young man with a quaint dignified reserve.

“I understand that you intend spending your vacation at 'Gladswood' Mr. Lawson. Really I envy you the prospect, for it is a truly delightful spot.”

Mrs. Verne had seated herself upon the sofa. She wore a rich black moire robe which, with the addition of a magnificent display of garnets with setting of gold, made an elaborate costume.

“I am sorry that circumstance has cancelled my engagement in that direction. In fact I regret it deeply, I was anticipating too much and was justly punished.”

“It must be weighty business that would thus interfere, Mr. Lawson. I am inclined to believe that you are already becoming too worldly.” Mrs. Verne had raised her jewelled fingers and rested them upon her forehead.

Among the many weaknesses of Mrs. Verne was her vain and uncontrollable desire to show off her beautifully shaped hands—fit models for the sculptor's chisel—rivals for those of, the Venus of Cnidos by Praxiteles.

The young barrister had kept his negotiations quiet and had no intention to gratify the woman's curiosity.

Marguerite now entered accompanied by Louise Rutherford. The latter had returned from Montreal and was making her first call at “Sunnybank.”

“Mr. Lawson has just been receiving a slight reproof, young ladies, and I think you have arrived in time to assist me,” said Mrs. Verne glancing at Louise with a bewitching smile.

“I for one always think that when Mr. Lawson neglects any part of his duties it is wholly from inability to perform them,” said Louise.

“Duties! That is the great trouble. It is to duty that we attribute the true source of our complaint. To the stern goddess is sacrificed every would−be pleasure.”

“Forgive me Mrs. Verne, I believe that Mr. Lawson is right, and forgetful of every presence Louise exclaimed:—

“Stern daughter of the voice of God,
O duty, if that name thou love,
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove—
Thou, who art victory and law,
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free,
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity.”

“Noble girl,” thought the young man, “those words give me greater strength.”

Little did Marguerite Verne dream of the thoughts passing through Mr. Lawson's mind as he bowed acknowledgment to her companion's quotation.

The rising blush betrayed Louise Rutherford's embarrassment.

“Really Mr. Lawson, I beg to be excused. I have a habit of committing to memory any subject that I admire and it sometimes makes me seem very ridiculous when they unconsciously repeat themselves.”

“Not in this particular, I assure you, Miss Rutherford,” said the young man very earnestly, and as Marguerite fancied, with a hidden meaning in their depths.

“I presume you are aware that Mr. Tracy has sailed for Europe?” said Mrs. Verne, casting a meaning glance at Marguerite and watching the effect upon Mr. Lawson.

“Yes; I was somewhat surprised when he called at the office to make his adieu. It must surely have been an impromptu arrangement. Within a fortnight he had been planning a different course,” said Mr. Lawson, quite

cheerily.

"Sooner or later he will join Mr. and Mrs. Arnold," said Mrs. Verne, referring to the newly wedded pair with proud delight.

"That will be very pleasant, indeed," said Mr. Lawson.

"Would you not like to be one of the party, Madge?" cried Louise, with all the honest enthusiasm of her nature."

"I cannot say that I would," replied Marguerite.

"Oh! you are such an old−fashioned home body, Madge; I might know your answer without asking the question. Suppose I might ask *you*, Mr. Lawson," ventured Louise, persistent in getting a favorable reply.

The young barrister smiled, and that smile was a conquest in itself. It had powers to enable a mild and *spirituelle* maiden to form a resolve that was as unyielding as the marble hearthstone beside her, while on the other hand it exercised a spirit in the calculating matron that no human influence could brook.

Mr. Lawson had little thought of the agencies at work in those two beings of widely different natures, and of which time alone will interpret the result.

Marguerite Verne was sweetly irresistible. Her dress was simple—a sweet simplicity in every look, motion and gesture. The pure white draperies gave to the *spirituelle* face the radiance of a Madonna, and placed the maiden in striking contrast to the sparkling bright and witty Louise—a striking and high−spirited brunette, with a mind of no common order.

As Mr. Lawson sat in the Verne drawing−room with the being that he idolized so near him, a deadly struggle was going on within. What a conflict—what doubt, what irresolution!

It was worse than ever to give up all earthly hope, all earthly happiness.

What prevented the young man—aye, every inch a man—from falling on his knees and declaring his love, and begging a slight return for such love?

Go ask the weird sisters upon whose spindles hang the threads of every human life! Go ask the winds that echo the wails of human hearts and often carry them along with a cruel insatiable spirit of revenge, until all is hushed in the stillness of death.

Mrs. Verne dwelt with pride upon the adulation which her firstborn was receiving in them other country. Mrs. Arnold's beauty had been commented upon in the journals; her face was sought after in all the fashionable resorts, and her queenly torso was the subject of every artist.

"They are going to remain for some weeks in Paris, and I am really afraid that Evelyn will be intoxicated with gaiety. She is such a lover of society, the dear girl, and Montague is just as fond of gaiety as Eve. What a happy couple they must be—they write such sweetly interesting letters. Really, Mr. Lawson, it would do one good to read them."

The subjects of those remarks were in the meantime enjoying life at a hotel in Picadilly. They had seen the sights of the great French metropolis, but were they really enjoying life as it should be. Was there real true happiness existing between these two hearts—"this happy couple?"

This is a question to be answered in due time, and which will be "sweetly interesting" to know.

When Mr. Lawson rose to take leave he was uncomfortably conscious of the patronage bestowed upon him. Mrs. Verne was radiant in smiles and gave her hand to the departing guest with the grace of a dowager.

"You must not stay away so long again, Mr. Lawson. Remember if you do, I shall be very angry, and, perhaps, not so easily conciliated."

It did, indeed, seem a coincidence that at the very moment that Louise Rutherford had asked Marguerite if she did not wish to be one of the tourists that a thought flashed through Mrs. Vernes' head with the rapidity of lightning, and in less time than is conceivable was formed into high and daring resolve.

And more surprising still is the fact that some hours previous the same bent of thought was being cherished by the wily Mrs. Montague Arnold.

The latter was determined that through her influence upon her worldly mother that Marguerite should wed Hubert Tracy, heir to Sir Peter Tracy's grand estates.

"Mamma will accomplish her end if any person on earth can do it, and Marguerite is too good, too conscientious, to disobey."

Was this peerless beauty so fond of Hubert Tracy? Did she entertain, such high opinion of this fashionable

young man? No! He had riches— that was all in all. That was one reason; and another, it would be the means of outwitting Philip Lawson, whom she hated with a bitter hate.

When Evelyn Verne gave her hand to Montague Arnold she never gave her heart.

Her marriage was in the eyes of the world a good match, and that was all that was necessary. Mr. Arnold was a man of the world, addicted to many habits that were not what the better side of life would approve of; but his wife had her failings, likewise, and she availed herself of the license thus given her—the liberties of fashionable folly. Mrs. Arnold being a beauty, was courted by the gay and fashionable world. She flirted without restraint, and took delight in making conquests among the degenerated nobility, and lost no opportunity of displaying her charms. Excitement was as necessary to Mrs. Arnold's nature as the air is necessary for the support of animal life. She was buoyed up by excitement and kept alive by excitement. Life was one giddy round of delights—the dejeuner fete, opera, and ball−room.

It matters not to know whether this woman of fashion ever gave one thought to the real object of life—whether she even dreamed that God gave man an intellect, with mind−power capable of being brought nearer that state from which he fell ere he lost the impress of the Divine; but it matters us to know that she strove to bring every one whom she met on a level with her own superficial mind.

“Madge must marry Hubert Tracy; once with us she is perfectly safe. Papa will be beyond reach, and his counsel or suggestions will not come in time.”

Such was the comment of Mrs. Arnold as she stood opposite the elegant plate mirror which reflected a life−size portrait of herself.

“I am beautiful, and it is but in justice to myself that 'I improve the shining hour.' Oh, Montague Arnold, you were a lucky man to wed such a prize,” murmured the woman, clasping her hands over her head in an attitude often seen upon the stage when the actress is exhibiting much feeling: then looking into the depths of the brilliant dark eyes, exclaimed, “What jewels can compare with thee, my priceless orbs?”

The elegant evening costume was a marvel in itself—creamy lace, shining satin, and flowing draperies, while bright jewels gleamed from the dusky hair and burned upon the heaving bosom.

“Evelyn, my queen, you are ready for the conquest!” cried the beauty, taking one long gaze, and then picking up the jewelled fan that fell at her feet went forth at the summons of the waiting−maid to receive a visitor in the drawing−room.

“The Hon. Cecil Featherstone! The man is my slave! Why is he here at such an early hour?—it is too bad! What shall I do with poor Huntington, my latest flame? Oh, dear! I wish the men were not so incorrigible! Featherstone—it ought to be Featherhead, for I believe his head is sadly light of brains. Featherhead—Hon. Cecil Featherhead!—ha! ha! ha!”

Had not the grand drawing−room been at the other end of the spacious hall the latter part of Mrs. Arnold's speech would have been heard by the subject of these remarks. Be it said, to that gentleman's ease of mind, that he was in the meantime admiring some choice paintings and counting the minutes hours until the fair hostess should arrive.

“This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Featherstone! I was really wondering what I should do with myself until the opera—and how kind of you, Mr. Featherstone, to think of me! I believe that I am one of the most favored of mortals!”

Having made this speech, Mrs. Arnold cast upon Mr. Featherstone one of her duly−organized smiles—a smile that was magnetic, and that set the heart of the luckless visitor into a flutter beyond recall.

“My dear Mrs. Arnold, you certainly do me the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a human being”—Mr. Featherstone felt considerable difficulty in getting off this speech, but another glance at the fair creature and he continued—“for you are certainly born to be worshipped at a distance—a something too lovely to be approached by anything this side of paradise!”

“Oh, Mr. Featherstone, spare me this flattery—I cannot really receive such, and from you−one endowed with such intellectual power, such ability and such genius! The thought is really dreadful!”

Mrs. Arnold's assumed earnestness of manner was indeed flattery of the seventh degree to the superficial Mr. Featherstone. He was transported to empyrean air. Mrs. Arnold had insight and her opinion was something to cherish. Poor Mr. Featherstone!

The conversation that followed was extravagant to the highest degree, and he went away that evening in a

state of great disquietude, wondering why it was that it had not been his good fortune to meet his ideal of female loveliness ere she was wedded to another.

“That miserable bore! I am late in writing mamma's letter. I really wonder what she would say if she saw me flirting with the Hon. Cecil Featherstone! but I must be cautious, for I want the simple−minded Madge to share my blissful fate.”

A servant in livery entered in answer to the summons of the bell−rope.

“Has James gone for the evening mail, Watkins?” demanded Mrs. Arnold in an imperious tone.

“He has not gone yet, my lady.”

“Go and see how long before he does.”

“Yes, my lady,” said the servant, bowing very low, and with an air that seemed to say he was in the presence of royalty. The said Watkins had seen service in distinguished families, and the habit, though a ridiculous one, had become second nature, he invariably addressing every woman of fashion as “my lady.”

Mrs. Arnold was pleased to learn that she could put her plan into execution without a moment's delay, and being a rapid writer she wrote and sealed a formidable−looking document, which she styled “mamma's letter,” and within a few minutes saw it safe in the mail−bag awaiting the arrival of James, the trustworthy footman.

What the letter contained and its effects upon the different members of her family will follow in another chapter.

CHAPTER XVII. MR. SPRIGGINS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

It is indeed, a warm July day—a fine hay day—and the people of Mill Crossing are taking advantage of the occasion. They are turned out *en masse*. Mowing machines are called into active service, and the new inventions—reapers, binders, etc.—are also at hand. The farmers of this favored locality are pretty well to do, and conspicuous among the number is our friend Mr. Spriggins.

The Spriggins farm was well cultivated. A good frame house and commodious barns speak of the industry of the Sprigginses.

There was also a heavy stock upon the farm, and that fact alone is sufficient proof of its thrift.

On the day in question we see the healthy, beaming face of Mr. Mose Spriggins in the doorway. He had been very busy in the earlier part of the morning, but now had a few moments to talk to the young man who had been hired to help in haying time.

The homestead, like many others that we see in country districts, had a snug room on each side of the narrow entrance—the one on the northeast side being fitted up for the best room, and used only on state occasions, such as weddings, quarterly meetings, etc. Into this apartment Moses peeped with an air of great caution, as much as to say “I must be keerful the old lady don't spy me in here with my big boots on.”

But important business was on hand. The mantel piece must be reached! The old clock that didn't go stood there, and within, its sheltering recess was a valuable document.

“Well, I never; if this eer room isn't as dark as Egypt,” exclaimed Moses, going to the end window and hitching up the blind in that remarkable style peculiar only to the sterner sex.

The light sun streamed in and brought out each article of furniture in bold relief.

There was a brand new set of cane−seat chairs that the old lady had bought at Stewart &White's the last time she had been to town. A woollen carpet from A. O. Skinner's had lately taken the place of the home−made one which now graced the spare bedroom up stairs. A motto, “God Bless our Home,” hung over the mantel, and a few chromos relieved the walls. A large, beautifully bound Bible lay on the table, and beside it a photograph album, which had been subscribed for a few days previous by the persistent, efforts of an indefatigable canvasser. A white tidy covered the back of the rocking−chair, and another the back of the lounge. An old−fashioned pitcher filled with sweet−brier and some of the old−time flowers, such as bachelors' buttons, London pride, blue rocket and jump−up−johnnie stood on a kind of sideboard and showed a desire to make the room attractive and inviting.

In this apartment the young man stood for about five minutes' time, then exclaimed:

“By golly! I must soon git; for if the old lady catches me I'm a goner.”

Suiting the action to the words Moses made his exit, carrying in his hand a sheet of paper which, on gaining the door, he folded and thrust into his bosom.

“Where's N'h'miar gone, Bill?”

“He's up to Widder Smith's; Ned was here a few minnits ago and said he was a' wantin', so off he sot; but he said to tell you he would be back less 'n ten minnits.”

“The 'tarnal fool, to be a runnin' arter the Smithses every time they want him,” exclaimed Mr. Spriggins, seating himself under a tree to take the afternoon lunch which now had arrived.

“Why didn't mother send a bushel more?” exclaimed Moses, eyeing the basket of bread and butter, cakes and pie—real raspberry pie.

A slice of bread was followed by a mug of milk. Then Moses took a glance at the document, probably as a means of facilitating digestion.

“Great scott! what's this? Well, if I'm not one of the darnd'st fools on this side the crossin'. Well, if that ar' lawyer won't think me a nice 'un, and like as not a thief.”

Mr. Spriggins had been at Mr. Lawson's office some days' before, and bore away some advice, written down, that he “might not forgit.”

The barrister had received several visits from his client, and each time had treated the said client with considerable favor.

Mr. Lawson somewhat admired the honest−hearted young farmer, and really was interested in him, and felt a

sympathy which was unaccountable.

"One good turn deserves another, Mr. Lawson, and I may throw something your way some day."

There really did appear to be little value in this remark; but strange to say, in it were bound up Phillip Lawson's hopes, happiness, yes, all that was dearer than life. The sturdy son of toil proved his truest friend, and to the hour of his death he will ever cherish the thought wholly sacred.

But of Mr. Spriggins' surprise!

He had opened the letter to read the advice on trespass (which sooner or later is the experience of every farmer), when to his dismay another letter dropped out. It bore the address of the Winnipeg solicitor, and evidently was some private correspondence of his respected counsellor, Mr. Lawson.

"Ginger, I must git to town soon, for it must be something important! Darned if I know whether to read it or not. P'raps I'd better not. I couldn't go and tell a lie and say I didn't when I did. It would make a feller feel kinder streaked when he thought on't."

Mr. Spriggins reasoned thus, and the upshot of it was that next morning, after he had got a man to take his place, set off to town, a distance of twenty−two miles.

A pallor overspread the countenance of Mr. Lawson as he glanced at the missive which Mr. Spriggins placed in his hand, with the impression that it was business.

"Yes, it is indeed business, Mr. Spriggins, and I am your debtor for life," said the young man, extending his hand to the obliging Moses and giving him that hearty shake which often betokens lasting gratitude.

"Call on me at any time, Mr. Spriggins; you will be in again soon, I presume."

"After hayin', sir."

"Very well," and bowing the visitor out the lawyer once more took up the letter and read it slowly through.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the young man, excitedly. "I have it in my power to bring the scoundrel to justice. Thank God, I have not fallen a victim to the villains. And to think of the simple way by which it is brought about. Oh! Heavenly Father! to Thee I am truly grateful." The speaker raised his eyes upwards, and a light shone upon the broad manly brow—a light that seemed really to descend from Heaven.

Phillip Lawson buried his face in his hands and remained thus for some time.

During these moments what a rush of thought passed through the busy brain. What a change from the last fortnight, when he had made up his mind to leave for a distant town in the far West.

"And yet, if it had not been for the second part of the offence, I could have borne it; aye, it might have been better for me in the end. But the dreadful pit into which I was inevitably to fall—God forgive them. Hubert Tracy—we may never meet again, and if we do, you shall never know. And all engaged in it were of the profession. No wonder lawyers are denounced in the holy writ—"

"My dear old brother looks as if he had lost every friend in the world."

Looking up Phillip Lawson saw a *petite* figure in white cambric frock standing at his elbow. The child put her arms around her brother's neck and looked steadily into the honest grey eyes, so full of thought and so striking in their depths.

"Phillip, you are troubled, and you are hiding it from me. Dearest and best of brothers, can I not help you? I am not the little child you think me. Oh! Phillip; I can be a woman when I am needed," and the large bright eyes filled with tears.

"What nonsense, Puss. What an imaginary little creature you are. Now please drive away such silly thoughts, and when Brother Phillip is in need of sympathy he will ask none other than his little sunbeam."

The young man then kissed back the sunny smiles and listened to the playful prattle which fell from the bright lips. Then he thought of the lines—

"The tear down childhood's cheek that flows
Is like the dew−drop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by
And waves the bush, the flower is dry."

"What have you there, Puss?" said Phillip, glancing at the volumes in the child's hand.

"I can scarcely tell you, but I believe they are good, for Miss Lewis recommended them."

Mr. Lawson took up one of the volumes. It was Miss Alcott's first work—"Moods."

"It is very good, indeed, but I fear you are too young to appreciate it. There is an analysis of character that

requires much mind knowledge, and that is why so many young girls consider it dry. If I were to explain it fully you would not understand; but you can read the volume through, and we will have a little chat when you have finished. I hope my little sister will not be impulsive and moody as the heroine."

Phillip then patted the golden curls, and as he stooped to kiss the pretty pouting lips he saw a fair vision of a lovely maiden, no longer a child on her brother's knee, but a sweet and amiable maiden, with a subdued and thoughtful look that showed she had struck a sympathetic chord in a fond brother's breast and given him the devotion of her first and purest love.

Then the dreamer vainly tried to draw another picture; but all was chaos. No bright form could be exorcised from the conglomerate heap. All was disorder—a ruined mound of buried hopes!—a blackness dark as the Stygian shore.

"Is it not nice that we have a Public Library now!" cried the child in gleeful tone, so sadly in contrast to her brother's thoughts.

"It is, indeed, Puss. I wonder how you young ladies got along before we had one?"

"We did not get along at all, Brother Phillip. Annie Morrison says that it was not living, only staying."

"I suppose Miss Annie must be right," said the lawyer, turning to the other volume.

"'Tales of a Grandfather.' In this you have something nice. I read it when quite a little boy, and I can remember much at it yet."

"It is Scott's, and anything of his I love," said Lottie, with a womanly air.

"It is historical, and such books are great helps to study. You must read some of it this evening, child. I am somewhat, tired, and will be both amused and entertained. You can sit in the old chair and I will play lazybones upon the lounge."

Hand in hand went the pair in the direction of the cottage.

When Phillip Lawson sought the asylum of his own room he knelt down, and offered up a fervent prayer at the Throne of Mercy.

A sense of relief followed, and a light seemed to break forth amidst the gloom—a light that lightened the dark path of life and portended to usher in a new and happier day. The last look of Hubert Tracy received interpretation, and as Phillip Lawson thought over and over of the deep abyss into which he was so nearly to be plunged, tried hard to feel kindly towards the perpetrator of the double−sided crime.

"God forgive him! Let him pass into other hands than mine," was the young man's decision as he turned over the pages of the cruel letter. The young barrister was magnanimous in the highest degree. It was then the grandeur of his character shone in its purity and nobility, and as his sister came in with a tiny note she fancied that she heard him repeat in earnest tones the words "never— never—never!"

"This is for you, Brother Phillip; Fred. Verne left it this afternoon."

A smile followed the reading of the note. It was from Cousin Jennie. The young lady had arrived in the city and was ready to convey him to "Gladswood," free of charge.

"Lottie, can you get Edith to stay with you this evening? I shall be out."

The girl, with all the impetuosity of her nature, set off on the gleeful message, while Phillip Lawson mapped out a letter that was energetic and full of decision.

"There will be no more solicitation from that quarter. Heavens! it was a great temptation. Well, if I had exposed them, what good could come of it."

A few hours later Mr. Lawson was announced at Sunnybank. Cousin Jennie was in her gayest mood.

"I am ready for you. Mr. Lawson; what is your verdict?" cried she, giving him a hearty shake of the hand.

"That the law must take its course," said Mr. Verne, who at that moment entered and gave the young man a warm greeting.

"You have been sadly delinquent of late, Mr. Lawson. I ask the women folks, and the answer invariably is in the negative. Now, if it were not that this little country girl is here I would carry you off to my den."

"Yes, Uncle Verne, it is just such an ungallant thing as you would do," cried Jennie, giving her head a saucy toss.

"Madge, you are just in time to support our claims."

"Pray enlighten me, dearest," said Marguerite, who, hat in hand, stood on the threshold.

A second look caused a slight blush to mantle upon her cheek, and she came forward with a sweet smile and

gave her hand to the welcome guest.

“Mamma has a severe headache and wishes me to convey her regrets to you, Mr. Lawson,” said Marguerite, on her return to the drawing−room a few minutes later.

After the young girl made the above speech her eyes met those of her father, and she knew that he felt annoyed. Did he think she had done wrong? She could not refuse to deliver her mother's message. And that headache! It was a purely conventional one—arranged for effect. Mr. Verne had occasion to say some hasty words to his wife. He could not sanction the steps she had taken in direct opposition to his advice, and he must speak his mind. He was a man of few words, but those words were to the point.

Thus while the rest of the family enjoyed themselves in the drawing−room Mrs. Verne gracefully reclined upon die gorgeous crimson lounge in her own room, and was as deeply interested in the heroine of the novel which she was reading as a maiden of eighteen.

“Half−past nine. How the time flies over a good book. It is better that I don't go down. I would be almost tempted to break the news. Enjoy yourself while you may, my verdant friend. Money will triumph over brains, especially when you have none of the former to back them up.”

Mrs. Verne picked up the ivory−backed hand glass within her reach, and looking into its depths, exclaimed, “Mrs. Verne, of St. John, New Brunswick—not exactly beautiful, but a pretty and fascinating woman.”

As Mrs. Verne laid aside the glass and once more took up the novel—but not to read—her thoughts were bent upon conquest of an important nature. Accomplish her end she must at the risk of all that was near to her, and all that ought to be dear to her.

CHAPTER VIII. THE VERNES GO TO EUROPE.

“I declare nothing need astonish one nowadays,” exclaimed Mrs. Montgomery, throwing aside the *Daily Telegraph* announcing that Mrs. and Miss Verne had sailed for Europe the day before.

“There's something that will explain matters,” said Mr. Montgomery coming in with a letter with Marguerite's initials on the corner of the envelope.

Jennie tore open the missive and hastily scanned the contents.

“They went quite unexpectedly, mother,” said the girl, with a slight quiver on the healthful lips, “else Madge would have come to bid good−bye.”

Jennie Montgomery loved her sweet−faced cousin as she loved no other companion.

Madge was to her all that was good and lovely, and the thought of separation sent a strange thrill of emotion through her frame—a sense of loneliness that she had never known before.

Mrs. Montgomery felt for her child, and adroitly referred to the fine opportunity of having a correspondent from the mother country, and the pleasure it would give Marguerite to see the sights and curiosities and grandeur which she would hourly meet in her intercourse with the world.

But this shrewd, penetrative woman took another view of the matter when alone in the presence of her husband some hours afterwards.

“Matilda needn't try to stuff such nonsense down our throats. She cannot make me believe but that she concocted the whole thing herself.”

Mrs. Montgomery was evidently aroused. Her sallow face assumed a deeper color, and her eyes spoke out the honest convictions of her thoughts.

“*Poor Evelyn*, indeed! She is just as much sick as I am at present. How they can trump up such things and make people believe them is more than I can see.”

Mrs. Montgomery plied her knitting needles with almost lightning rapidity, and the exercise seemed to give relief to the angry feeling that accompanied it.

“You need not say a word in Matilda's defence, William. I pity Stephen Verne from the bottom of my heart. It is always such men that become martyrs to the whims and tyrannical grievances of their wives.”

Mrs. Montgomery stooped to pickup the ball of yarn that had rolled under her chair, and her husband went towards the door as if to depart.

“I tell you what it is, William, Matilda Verne is my own sister, but it grieves me to think so. Talk of pride or dignity. She has none. Pride—yes, a nice kind of pride that lives on lies and falsities of every description! But she cannot deceive me, thank Heaven; I can read her through and through.”

“In some instances, my dear, your boasted accomplishment is not always of the most agreeable kind,” said Mr. Montgomery, in his bland, easy manner.

“Never mind that part of it. I can bear it, since it gives the preciousness of seeing people as they are, their shallowness and their shams. Is there anything genuine in this every−day world? Really, each day I see something to disgust me.”

The speaker's face gave proof to her speech as she fixed upon her husband a long, earnest look.

“Poor Marguerite it should be instead of Poor Evelyn. It is the pure minded girl that is to be pitied. Marguerite is the victim of this freak. Matilda will drag that child to the four corners of the earth to accomplish her ends.”

“My dear, you are severe. Have some moderation,” said Mr. Montgomery, in a conciliating tone.

“Moderation!” retorted the self−reliant wife—“moderation towards a weak−minded, unscrupulous fortune−hunter and match−maker—a despiser of those genuine graces which adorn the female mind and make woman what she should be. Don't talk thus to me, William, else I shall feel that you would abet Matilda in what she has undertaken, and what she may evidently accomplish.”

“God forbid,” said Mr. Montgomery, with more vehemence than was peculiar to him.

* * * * *

Marguerite had only one week's notice to prepare for the projected trip. She did not receive the summons with joy and eagerness, nor did she evince any pleasure in the preparations.

"I shall have some beautiful costumes ordered for you when we arrive in London, my dear," said the fashionable mother on inspecting her daughter's wardrobe and commenting upon the array of materials before her.

"Really, mamma, if I am to be bored by *modistes* from morn till eve I should prefer to remain at home. I know it is wrong to say so, but I almost wish that Eve was well enough to get along without us."

"I believe you, my dear," said Mrs. Verne, stroking her daughter's head, "but then you know it would be cruel to have the poor girl break her heart, moping away her time and begging to see a dear face from home."

A wicked thought entered Marguerite's head. She wondered if it were possible that her haughty sister ever possessed a true, honest heart? and was there in her marriage with Montague Arnold the least approach to sympathy? Did the proud heart ever beat with one responsive throb for him whom she had chosen?

As the maiden reasoned thus there was a slight pang which told her she had a heart, but that it must be silent—it must not be allowed to assert itself, but masked in conventionalities she must act the part of the worldly wise.

Mr. Verne was piqued to the highest degree when his wife spoke of her intended tour.

"Why not put it off until next year and I may be able to accompany you. Arnold can take care of Eve without out assistance."

The sound sense arguments were of no avail.

"We must certainly go, and I should think it would be much pleasanter for us to think that we left home without any disagreeable feelings."

"I suppose it is the best way to look at it," said Mr. Verne, quitting the room and going to his office, where in a few moments he was found by his beloved Marguerite.

"So my sunbeam is going to leave me," said the father, taking the girl in his arms and kissing the soft oval cheeks until a faint flush overspread them and the lips grew tremulous.

"I do not want to go papa, but mamma says that she cannot think of going alone," said Marguerite, as she nestled closer in her father's embrace and wound her arms lovingly around his neck.

"Perhaps the invigorating sea breeze may coax a few brighter roses," said the fond father, emphasizing his words by patting Marguerite's cheek with childlike playfulness.

"Never mind, you dear old papa, they cannot force me to stay very long away from you. Remember, if you hear of my doing desperate deeds it will be through madness to be once more beside you in this dear old spot."

"Ah, you silly little Madge, you will soon find other attractions than your prosy dull old father, but you must reserve one little spot for him."

Mr. Verne glanced at his pure and lovely child, and inwardly invoked God's blessing, and prayed that she might pass through the many temptations and dazzling allurements of fashionable follies unharmed.

"Darling papa, believe me, I care so little for society, so called, that I would rather spend a few hours each day among my dear home friends than be lionized in the highest courts in Europe."

"I believe you, my child," said Mr. Verne, placing his hand reverentially upon Marguerite's head, "but it appears that it is a duty to go."

"Yes, papa, but I am inclined to be rebellious, and ask you to pray for me. Sometimes I feel that I am not doing my duty in any way. It seems so hard to know the way before us."

Marguerite's face had a perplexed look and a shade of gloomy foreboding succeeded.

"Put your trust in God, my child—never forget Him. He will be your best Friend, when earthly friends will fail you."

Mr. Verne was what is generally known as a "good−living man." He made no parade of his profession, but he tried to live at peace with his God and do right to each and every man. His religion was not put on with his Sunday coat. He wore it into the counting−room as well, and carried it to Chubb's Corner, aye to every business resort and doled it out on every opportunity by acts of charity and Christian benevolence.

But of the departure.

Mrs. Verne was in ecstacies of delight. Everything pleased her. She superintended the manifold duties as if her whole soul was in the work, and beaming with smiles, flitted from one room to another with the playfulness of a child just setting out on its holiday season.

"I hope we shall have no scenes from Madge," said she to one of the friends who graced the drawing−room the day previous to their departure, "for anything I hate is a crowd gathered around with faces all gotten up for a

funeral."

Here Mrs. Verne shrugged her shoulders and assumed a look of abhorrence.

Marguerite was leaving the conservatory as she overheard the remark, and she pressed more firmly the sprays of heliotrope and azalea which she held in her hand.

"Heaven help me," murmured the girl; "am I always expected to go through life with my feelings put away far out of sight−far away—

"Deeply buried from human eyes?"

Looking upwards she remained motionless as the marble statue of Psyche that adorned the recess in which she stood. Then the lips moved and the words "Put your trust in God," came forth soft and bewitching as the strain of an aeolian harp, and leaving, as it were, a holy hushed spell, subduing the soul of her who uttered it.

It was well for Marguerite that she had those precious moments of communion, and at no other time in her life did she need them more. They were the only beacon lights to guide her through the treacherous shoals into which she must inevitably steer her course.

It was with such feelings that the girl stood at the station and shook each friend by the hand without the least tremor in her voice or tear in her eye.

It did, indeed, cost a struggle to keep the pallid lips firm as Marguerite returned her father's parting embrace; but strength had been given her.

And the manly form beside him, Phillip Lawson, stood unmoved and erect, his face quiet in expression and not the least betrayal of the passion within his breast.

Mrs. Verne, with the tactics of a shrewd diplomatist, had arranged matters to enable her to perform her part without opposition.

Marguerite had to devote much time to the pressing duties devolving upon her, and when Mr. Lawson called at "Sunnybank" it always happened that she was out making her farewell calls.

It was the last evening that Marguerite should gladden her home, perhaps, for many months to come. The bronze clock on the mantel shelf struck the hour of eight. The drawing−room was unoccupied, and Marguerite stealthily glided towards the piano and sat down.

Her beautifully−moulded hands rivalled the ivory keys before her, and would have tempted the genius of a Phidias or a Lysippus.

Soon a low, soft symphony sounded through the room a music that had power to move the soul and hold it entranced.

"Marguerite, darling, do not play like that. I cannot hear such music without feeling sad, and sadness must not intrude to−night."

"Perhaps this will suit you, papa," and instantly Marguerite commenced to sing the old−time ballad, "The Campbells are Coming," in the liveliest manner possible, looking indeed the picture of happiness.

"How is it that my little girl cannot attend to the social demands that press so lightly upon her?" said Mr. Verne, as the last notes of the song were ended.

"I do not understand you, papa dear."

"Mr. Lawson called and I heard one of the maids tell him that you were not at home."

"It is strange that mamma did not send up to my room. I have not been out since ten o'clock this morning, when I went up to Manchester's to buy the pretty little work−basket that I wish to carry to Eve."

"A work−basket for Eve!" cried Mr. Verne, gaily. "What extravagant taste my little Madge has!"

Marguerite smiled and then looked thoughtful. She tried hard not to see her worldly mother's feelings. Yet she could not be blinded to the fact.

"It is ungenerous of mamma to deny me," she thought. But her mother's shallowness was sacred to her innermost thoughts. Much as she desired Mr. Lawson's visit, she offered not a word of complaint, but smilingly said, "Papa, when you see Mr. Lawson please apologize for me and explain matters to your satisfaction as I know that you feel sensitive about it."

"It will all come right soon—perhaps before you leave."

As Marguerite Verne waved her last adieu to her fond parent and received his tender recognition, a second glance convinced her that all was made right, as Phillip Lawson raised his hat and stood with uncovered head until the train was out of sight.

"Crying at last, Madge; I thought you could not bear up much longer," said Mrs. Verne, as she entered the seat with a new novel ready to devour, and smiling and bowing to several passengers whom she recognized. But the remarks were lost upon Marguerite. She remained in deep abstraction for some moments, and then regaining consciousness, threw aside the pretty wrap, murmuring—"Papa says it will all come right."

CHAPTER XIX. GRATITUDE.

We will now direct attention to our much esteemed friend, Phillip Lawson, who has much to be grateful for. He hourly thanks his Maker for the great mercies received at His hands.

“Let them fall into other hands than mine. It would do no good. Poor wretches, I envy them not their ill−gotten gains. There is a day of reckoning, and may God cleanse their guilty souls.” Such were the lawyer's remarks as he sat alone in his office with a heavy load off his mind.

He had just returned from witnessing Marguerite Verne's departure, and he felt calm and content.

Mr. Verne had accompanied the young man to his door and left with many kind invitations for “Sunnybank.”

How comforting was his kind, cheery voice and his parting: “Now don't fail to drop in often, for I shall be very lonely, indeed.”

Mr. Verne is a thorough gentleman and true friend, thought Phillip, as he turned over the last half−hour's conversation. “How thoughtful to explain Marguerite's failure to see me last evening.” Then a slight frown settled upon the broad brow, showing that some disagreeable subject had in turn claimed the young lawyer's thoughts.

“Perhaps she may be better than I give her credit for. Are there any of us perfect?” Then musing for a few minutes he arose, the poet's words recurring to his mind—

“The best of what we do, and are,
Just God, forgive.”

On opening the daily mail the color rose upon Phillip Lawson's cheek, and his fingers became tremulous as he seized a letter showing the unsteady chirography of Hubert Tracy.

“I will never open it,” he thought, and instantly the missive lay a mass of shreds in the waste basket. “'Out of evil good may come.' Hubert Tracy has taught me to be more grateful to the God who has done so much for me.”

“Keep your temper, old boy,” murmured the young man afresh as his eyes ran over the next letter—one dated from Winnipeg.

“To the flames I consign thee", said he, lighting a match and holding the provoking article over it until it was consumed.

“Halloo! I smell brimstone here. Suppose you're practising so it won't be so hard on you when the time comes?” cried a genial, hearty voice from the open door.

“Glad to see you, Mr. Montgomery,” said the occupant, offering a seat to his visitor.

“How are all my friends at 'Gladswood'?”

“Have hardly time to tell you, for I'm in a hurry. I promised to meet several of the sports at Breeze's Corner. We are going out to Moosepath: but this will explain everything, and more too,” cried Mr. Montgomery, producing a neat−looking note, and passing it to the young lawyer, making a hasty exit to meet said horsemen friends from Sussex and the city.

“I shall go to−morrow and stay over Sunday, at any rate,” said Mr. Lawson to himself when he had gleaned the contents Of Jennie Montgomery's note.

It was just what was necessary to the lawyer's existence. A day or two at “Gladswood” was panacea for almost any ill that flesh was heir to.

The self−reliant matron, with her healthful, stimulating advice, and the bright, merry−hearted girl with her vigorous and true resolve, were indeed incentives of good, and none could fully realize the fact more than the young lawyer. He always went away from “Gladswood” with a high and lofty purpose and firm resolve to tread the path of duty.

And this occasion proved no exception.

Jennie Montgomery's happy face would put to shame the most inveterate grumbler. Her buoyant spirits were infectious. Her ringing, merry laugh was cheering to the highest degree.

The sprightly maiden in her neat muslin frock and broad hat trimmed with freshly−plucked marguerites was a fit model of the fair daughters of Kings County, and it was no wonder that many of the villagers predicted that “the young gentleman from the city must surely be payin' attention to Miss Montgomery.”

Three days at “Gladswood”! What a world of thought it conveys— three days to revel among the beautiful

glades and linger among the bewitching groves of graceful elm and tasselled pine! to hear the lowing of herds and the music of the winged songsters blended in one exquisite harmony.

Yes, devotees of the world, who build upon the style of your neighbor's dress or equipage and trifle away God's precious moments in silly show and vain trumpery, go to the retreats at “Gladswood,” follow Phillip Lawson in his daily rounds, and if you will not, like him, feel your heart expand and seek aspirations of a higher mould— a something which gives comfort each breath you draw, each word you utter and each thought you frame!—then, we will make bold to say, your heart is irrevocably sealed beyond recall.

Cousin Jennie was shrewd and witty. She knew how to act that she might afford the least embarrassment to her guest.

For hours her guest was allowed to roam at his own desire, and felt not the pressure of conventional restriction.

Mr. Lawson was gallant in the true sense of the word, but he was no empty−headed fop, paying that amount of overdue attention to the fair, which, at times, becomes a bore and a pest.

It had been arranged that a small pic−nic party should relieve the quiet of the third day, and a jolly pic−nic it was. There was mirth enough to last for a month. Jennie's companions had mustered *en masse*. Groups of merry, rollicking youths and bright−eyed maidens lent a charm to the scene, and reminded one of the revels held in classic groves, when each sylvan deity, at a blast of her silver horn, made the wood resound with the voices of her myriads of subjects.

As the sayings and doings of all pic−nics are much in common it would be wasting time to describe the one at “Gladswood.”

“All went merry as a marriage bell.”

The sun was sinking in the west in all its glory—a blaze of living gold. The purple tops of the distant hills were enchanting and stood as huge sentinels of the scene below.

“Come here, Mr. Lawson,” cried Jennie Montgomery, in breathless suspense. “Is not that grand? This is a sight I have been wishing for. Just look.”

Mr. Lawson was truly a lover of nature, and his profound admiration excited her.

“I never stand here without thinking of Marguerite,” exclaimed the girl, vehemently; “she would sit upon that bowlder and gaze around until I would think that she had lost her senses. I believe if any being has a soul for the beautiful it is cousin Marguerite.”

The young man looked down from his proud eminence and encountered the fixed gaze of his companion. That look gave anxiety. A painful silence was the only reply, and both gazed upon the panorama before them for fully five minutes before the girl spoke.

“I can never forgive my cousin Evelyn for forcing Madge away. We all knew it was against her wishes that she went.”

How comforting those words to Phillip Lawson's ear.

“Mr. Lawson,” said Jennie, coming close to his side, “I am not going to hide my feelings any longer. You are a very dear friend and must have my confidence.”

The young man's looks were proof of the girl's words. His face reflected thought sublime as Aeschylus, beautiful as Sophocles, and pathetic as Euripides!

“Thank you, Jennie,” was the reply, and the eyes had a far−off look that went to the girl's heart.

“You are going to−morrow, Mr. Lawson, and I may not have another such opportunity.”

It was then that the beauty of the maiden's nature shone resplendently, showering scintillations of pure native goodness that forever sparkled as sunshine and cheered the rugged path of Phillip Lawson's life!

A crimson flush momentarily suffused Jennie Montgomery's face, then she became pale and agitated.

“Mr. Lawson!” she exclaimed, “I love my cousin dearly, and I grieve for her more than I can tell you.”

The young man's face blanched under the effect of the girl's tones, but he made no reply.

“Forgive me if I weary you, but I seem to feel in you a friend—one in whom I find sympathy.”

“Trust me fully, Jennie, I will try to be all that you think me.”

Phillip Lawson's earnest tones went straight to the girl's heart, and tremulously she continued:

“Mr. Lawson, you have not been a frequent visitor at my Uncle Verne's without seeing much to condemn in my worldly aunt. I know it is wrong to judge, but I cannot help it. I cannot help judging the motive of Aunt

Verne—indeed I cannot."

The listener had fixed his eyes upon the huge trunk of a venerable oak tree covered with a luxuriant growth of velvety moss.

"I really cannot feel kindly towards cousin Evelyn, for she has ruled with an iron rod, and she is so wily that Auntie thinks her every action something perfect. Now, Mr. Lawson," said Jennie, with greater earnestness, "Mrs. Arnold is determined that Marguerite shall marry that unprincipled Mr. Tracy, and the thought makes me sick. I loathe him—he is almost as contemptible as Mr. Montague Arnold."

Mr. Lawson knew not what to say. A struggle was going on within. Would he reveal the plot to the truthful girl and ask her assistance—or would he let the secret die with himself and perhaps see the lovely Marguerite become a victim to the merciless trio?

The girl knew not what was passing in her companion's, mind, and the latter felt sadly puzzled. He durst not meet the gaze of the thoughtful brown eyes, but found words to reply:

"You put me in a strange place, Jennie; but I know it is from a sense of right that you speak."

"Mr. Lawson, I appeal to your manhood to help me. I want to save Marguerite, and *you* alone can do it."

The girl's manner was vehement. Tears glistened in her eyes, and the pathetic nature of the appeal visibly affected Phillip Lawson.

He stood for a moment as if in a study. Had the girl in any way found out the plot? Could it be possible? What did she mean that he alone could save her?

"Mr. Lawson, I can be a friend when charity demands one; trust me; perhaps I am too bold—but it is my regard for both that forces me. Mr. Lawson, you love Marguerite Verne. It is in your power to make her happy, and oh!" cried the girl, seizing the hard, strong hand, "Mr. Lawson, promise me that you will do it."

The young lawyer held the girl's hand tenderly, yea, as that of a dear sister, then raised it to his lips—

"God bless you, Jennie," cried he, fervently, "I only wish it was in my power to do so; but Marguerite Verne is as far above me as the heavens above the earth."

"Believe me, Mr. Lawson, you are the only one towards whom my cousin gives a thought."

"She treats me always as a friend, and at times more as a brother," said the young man abstractedly.

"Phillip Lawson, keep this secret as you value your soul," cried Jennie, clutching the lawyer by the wrist in an excited manner, and lowering her voice to a whisper—

"Marguerite loves you as she will never love another. It is sacrilege to watch every movement and steal the secret from every breath she drew, but love prompted me and I did it, and I feel that I am not doing wrong in revealing it."

"God grant it, my true−hearted girl—yet I dare not trust myself to think of it. I love Marguerite Verne as no other man living can, yet she may never know it. She may one day be wedded to another, and live a life as far from mine as it is possible for circumstances to make it. Yet her image will always be sacred to my memory, and no other woman will ever hold a place in my heart. The sprig of cedar which one day fell unobserved from her corsage, I shall treasure up as a priceless relic. Yes, truly, I live for thee, my peerless Marguerite."

"If Cousin Marguerite could only hear those words," thought Jennie. "Why have the winged winds no mercy? why do they not hurl down the great sounding board which separates these two beings and transmit those valued sounds to the ear, where they shall fall as music from the spheres!"

"Jennie, as a friend, I ask you to solemnly promise that what has passed between us shall never be unearthed again—let it be buried deep in the grave of lost hopes."

"I shall make no such promise, Phillip Lawson; but I promise that I will never place you in an unworthy position. I will never utter one sentence that will compromise your dignity as a gentleman. Will you trust me?"

"I will trust you in anything, my noble girl," said Phillip in tones of deep reverence.

"You know that my Uncle Verne's interest in you is real—he is your friend," said Jennie, trying hard to brighten the path of her friend's existence.

"Thank God for it," said the lawyer. "Indeed I have much to be grateful for. Jennie, some day I may tell you more: at present my lips are sealed."

"Your sense of honor is too high for the nineteenth century, Mr. Lawson; yet I would not have you otherwise."

The girl was mechanically picking to pieces the white petals of bright−eyed marguerites and strewing the

ground beside her.

“You ruthless vandal! look at your work, Miss Montgomery,” exclaimed a bright romping miss of fifteen, bursting upon them without regard to ceremony and pointing to the ground where lay the scattered petals.

“But it is romantic, you know; one always reads of some beautiful maiden picking roses to pieces to hide the state of her feelings.”

“Thank you, Miss Laura, for your well−timed allusion, for Miss Montgomery and I have been romancing indeed,” said Mr. Lawson, bowing to the young miss with an air of deferential homage.

“It will all come right yet,” said Jennie, pressing her friend's hand with the tenderness of a sister.

The young man smiled sadly, murmuring: “'It will all come out right.' How those words seem to mock me—'it will all come out right.'“

CHAPTER XX. SCENES AT THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

Mrs. Montague Arnold sat, or rather reclined, in her handsome breakfast−room. She was awaiting the morning mail, which had been somewhat delayed. A bitter smile played around the daintily curved lips.

“The saucy little minx; I shall teach her better,” murmured the beauty in angry tones and gesture.

Montague Arnold paid no attention to the half−spoken words. He looked the veriest picture of dissipation. Late hours, cards, and wine were stamped upon his hitherto handsome face and left an impress at times anything but flattering.

In private, few courtesies were interchanged between the husband and wife. It would, indeed, be wrong to say that Montague Arnold on his marriage morn did not give to his fascinating bride more adulation than he ever bestowed upon any other woman, and had the haughty beauty given more attention to her husband he might have become a different man; had she shown a true heart, a truthful, honest nature, and a mind adorned with what is lofty and elevating, what a different life those two might have led? But Evelyn Verne was without heart, and we might almost say without soul. She lived for society alone; it was her first duty, and worshipped more zealously than the goddess Hestia that occupied the first altar in a Grecian home.

Mrs. Arnold was indeed an object of admiration in her superb morning toilet of fawn−colored Lyons silk, with faultless draperies and priceless lace. It was the beauty's ruling passion that no toilet was ever neglected; hours were spent in putting the finishing touches to some becoming style that brought out the wearer's charms and set the hearts of her admirers in a flutter.

As the soft white hand was raised to suppress a yawn a solitaire diamond caught the ray of sunshine that found its way into the elegant mansion, and reflected a radiance that was enchanting.

Mr. Arnold could not fail to be impressed with the sight. He at last found words to say, “What is your programme today, Eve?”

“I have promised to visit the studio with mamma and Madge. Lord Melrose is to be there, and I am very anxious to see his portrait.”

“Don't flatter yourself that you are his latest charm, my dear,” said her husband in sarcastic tones.

“You are altogether *de trop*, my amiable husband,” said Mrs. Arnold with an angry gleam in the brilliant and wondrous dark eyes.

“I was sorry to hear that the young and beautiful Mrs. Maitland has possessed the fellow body and soul. What an honor to the young 'squire to have his wife thus lionized in the London drawing−room.”

Mr. Arnold could be tantalizing without mercy, and when he had fully aroused his wife's anger he was happy.

Mrs. Arnold had received much flattering attention from Lord Melrose, and it wounded her pride when she heard that another had supplanted her. The remarks that had escaped her lips referred to the merciless young matron; and well Montague Arnold was aware of the fact, but he winced not, and only plunged deeper into the whirlpool of dissipation, which sooner or later would be his inevitable destruction.

“I was really tired waiting,” exclaimed Mrs. Arnold, when Mrs. Verne and Marguerite entered the reception room an hour later. “I had begun to think that some prince in disguise had eloped with little sobersides.”

“I don't think we will be quite so fortunate, Eve,” said Mrs. Verne, with a significant look which annoyed Marguerite more than she was willing to acknowledge.

“Really, Madge, you are growing prettier every day since you came on English soil. Mamma, just look at her color; is it not bewitching? I tell you, Madge, you will turn half the heads in Piccadilly.”

Marguerite saw with disgust the real object of her mamma's visit, and she was determined to show her dislike in a manner that would save herself from being the object of ridicule.

“Eve, I wish you to understand that I am not interested in love affairs. Please choose your conversation from other sources, and I will be much obliged—indeed I shall be forever grateful.”

The girl's manner was serious, and her pleading looks would have given pleasure to a sensible woman, but they were scorned by Mrs. Arnold and her mother.

Mrs. Verne had been expatiating upon the immense fortune which had fallen to Hubert Tracy, and took the greatest of pains to impress Marguerite with a sense of his importance.

"How I wish that I had waited, mamma. You know that Mr. Tracy was devoted to me in every way, but you preferred Mr. Arnold."

"I preferred his riches, my dear, and you know Montague is so handsome and distinguished looking. Why, he really was the handsomest man in the ball−room last evening."

"But Hubert's fortune is tenfold that of Montague's. His income is immense."

"Well, all we can do is to consign him to Madge," said Mrs. Arnold, with an affected air of deep regret. "It is certain that he clings to the family, and his great wealth would be an heirloom for many generations."

"Quite a speech, Eve," said Mrs. Verne, clapping her white palms together by way of applause.

Crimson silk *portieres* separated the party from Mr. Arnold, but not a word had been lost. "You will have to play your little game quick, else the fortune will soon be a thing of the past," muttered the husband under his breath. "Curse these women, they are nearly all tarred with the same stick. And my charming wife. What a pity I stand in her way. Well, she can go on in *her* way and I will stick to mine. Heavens! is there one true woman?"

Montague Arnold's face, reflected in the mirror opposite, was not then a pleasing study. A sardonic grin was on his lips and a dangerous light in his eyes.

Just then Marguerite changed her seat, and, unobserved, the dissipated man glanced at the pure *spirituelle* face which had appeared as answer to his questioning words.

"Yes, Madge, I am a veritable scoundrel; already I see before me one true and pure being."

Was it a tear that glistened on the maiden's cheek as Montague Arnold once more contemplated the fair brow and madonna−like eyes?

Marguerite, in her courtly surroundings, was indeed indulging in day dreams, woven from scenes of her native land. And when she contrasted the picture with the vague, undefined reality, her emotional nature was stirred within her, and the gushing tears would force themselves in spite of all efforts at control. She was longing for one glimpse of dear old "Gladswood" and the fond embrace of Cousin Jennie.

"What would I not give to be free from this," murmured the girl in an undertone; then glancing around she recognized her brother−in−law, his eyes fixed upon her in close scrutiny.

"Upon my senses, Madge, you look like some one in a dream. I really might imagine you a piece of rare statuary—one of the Niobe group strayed from the Florentine gallery to meet the wistful gaze of the sight−seers of London!"

Marguerite smiled, and the color rose to her cheeks.

"I have dispelled the charm!" cried Montague Arnold, pointing to the vivid, life−like and roseate hue of the oval face.

"A flirtation, I declare!" said a lady who formed one of the party for the morning's entertainment. "Mrs. Arnold, I really would not allow it."

"But you must remember we have liberty of conscience, my dear. Each is free to act as he pleases within the realm of British jurisdiction."

"I am afraid you are giving us a wide license, Mrs. Arnold. Please be more circumspect," cried the lady in playful tone, "else your suggestion may have a very bad effect."

Mr. Arnold looked askance at the fashionable woman beside him, and thought what a world of deceit lurked within—a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Instantly he was at the woman's side, and began paying her those compliments which the most enraptured lover might pay to her whom he adores above all women.

At the studio Marguerite was introduced to many persons of distinction, among those a German Count, a blaze looking Captain of the Life Guards, and a bright, dashing young officer of the Dragoons.

"What a host of admirers you have already in your train, Madge," whispered Mrs. Arnold to her sister as she came opposite the portrait of Lord Melrose and stood admiring the exquisite touch and execution of the artist.

The latter had been engaged in conversation with a group of ladies when his eyes fell upon Marguerite Verne. The earnest gaze made the girl look toward him, and as she did so that look made a deep impression upon the youth.

"I would give almost all I possess to paint that face," thought he, gazing intently at the *spirituelle* type of beauty that is so seldom seen.

"Allow me to introduce my sister, Miss Verne," said Mrs., Arnold, who felt much flattered at the admiration

paid Marguerite.

“I think that we must persuade her to sit for a portrait, Mr. Manning,” said Mrs. Arnold, trying to attract her mother's attention from the niche in which she sat carelessly chatting with some acquaintances they had made on their ocean trip.

Soon Mrs. Verne found them, and was in ecstacies over her daughter's proposal.

“It would be such a nice way to show Madge to advantage. I am delighted with the thought,” said Mrs. Arnold to her mother, as she toyed with her jewelled fan and gazed carelessly around to see if Lord Melrose were yet in the studio.

“How provoking. It is just always so! It will afford such satisfaction to my sweet−tempered husband.”

“My dear Mrs. Arnold; it does one good to meet you after trying to live a few days at Portsmouth,” cried a showy looking military man, perhaps forty years of age, perhaps younger, with a heavy reddish moustache and dark auburn hair.

“I cannot really say whether you are complimentary or not, colonel,” said Mrs. Arnold, smiling with all the angelic sweetness at her command, “since I have never had the pleasure of visiting that renowned place.”

“Well, I should consider it the highest compliment that could be paid,” said a brother officer in dark blue uniform with a sprinkling of “silver threads among the gold,” “coming as it does from one who can stand the siege when a thousand bright eyes are levelled upon him at a garrison ball in Portsmouth with a heart as impregnable as the fort at Gibraltar!”

“Thank you, Major Greene, for your kind consideration to both parties,” said Mrs. Arnold, bowing sweetly to the former. The gallant colonel also bowed acknowledgment, and then espied Marguerite Verne, who still lingered near the artist, considering him far above the shallow set that frequented his studio.

“Who is that beautiful girl talking to Mr. Manning?” queried he, raising his eyeglass with an air of interest.

“I shall present you in due time,” said Mrs. Arnold, with a faint smile revealing the most exquisite set of teeth that eye ever beheld.

As if by intuition Marguerite cast her eyes towards the aspirants and the action brought a faint blush.

“Beautiful as Hebe, by Jove,” exclaimed the rubicund major, in an undertone that implied he was also deeply interested in the fair young face and graceful supple form.

How the manoeuvering mamma watched each sign of admiration thus directed towards her daughter.

“If I can only accomplish my wishes my life will be one uninterrupted calm. I will then lay me down in peace,” thought Mrs. Verne, as she re−arranged the folds of her silken train to her entire satisfaction.

Hubert Tracy had been detained on a fishing excursion up the Cam, whither he had gone with some rollicking companions to recruit his health and restore some of the youthful bloom that dissipation had almost destroyed.

Marguerite could ill conceal her disgust as she met the weak−minded and, to her, contemptible young man, on the week following.

It was at a brilliant assemblage, under the patronage of Mrs. Montague Arnold.

Never was maiden more becomingly attired, for despite her friends' entreaties, Marguerite's taste was simplicity, indeed. Her modest pearl−colored satin was relieved by knots of delicate pansies—one of Marguerite's many favorite flowers—and the delicate and chaste silver ornaments, made her toilet simply bewitching.

“Mrs. Arnold is imperial, but Miss Verne is truly angelic,” was the exclamation of a man of fashion, and the leader of his club, as the two sisters stood side by side receiving the brilliant throng of guests that filled to overflowing the gorgeously lighted parlors, sumptuous drawing−room and bewitching conservatories.

Why was it that Marguerite shrank from the touch of Hubert Tracy's hand as if stung by an adder? Why was it that, when she was obliged to listen to his flattering, oily tongue, that she saw the manly dignified form of Phillip Lawson standing between, with his hand uplifted, as if in gesture of warning, and a stern reproachful look upon his honest face?

These are questions that will be answered some day when the world is older and wiser—when the great road to science will have been trodden further on towards the goal which shall reveal all mysteries in the light of simple truths—when man can look a fellow being in the face and trace each thought written there.

Mrs. Arnold was in the confidence of her husband's friends, and she had partly deceived her mother to carry out her designs.

Mrs. Verne had hitherto set her heart upon Hubert Tracy, but she was now flattered by the admiration paid to

Marguerite by several of the nobility, and she thought it would indeed be a rare distinction for her daughter to have a title.

"I see how it is with mamma, and if I am not sharp she will nonplus me," thought the beauty, as she watched the game which her anxious mother was playing so skilfully, and, as the latter thought, so successfully.

"But I will do nothing rash. Nothing succeeds like caution," and musing thus Mrs. Arnold placed her jewelled fingers in those of her partner and was whirled away to revel in the delightful elysium of waltzland.

CHAPTER XXI. MRS. ARNOLD CONFIDES IN HUBERT TRACY.

Mrs. Arnold's beauty was commented upon by the fashionable throng with whom she daily mingled. She was sought after and courted by her many admirers; yet among them all there was none who thought her the most charming of her set.

The wily beauty had adopted a line of policy that was not the most discreet. She showed a spiteful spirit towards any of her sex who laid claim to personal charms, and often said many bitter things in a way that was neither dignified nor ladylike.

It was in such a spirit that Mrs. Arnold returned from a grand ball where she had seen Lord Melrose pay marked attention to the pretty Mrs. Maitland. With anger in her bosom she strode the elegant boudoir with measured beat and vowed vengeance upon her more fortunate rival.

“Why does any one envy me the charms I possess?

“Ah, me!” she cried, looking at herself in the mirror with her hands poised in the attitude of a Caryatid. “It is all I have. Happiness I shall never know; but one thing I do know—that I will laugh, dance and sing and have a merry life while I am young, and then when my charms have fled to a younger form I will bury myself in some remote convent and try to make atonement for my gay and worldly life.”

It were strange, indeed, that Mrs. Arnold had this sense of wrong. She did, indeed, realize that her actions were not what any sensible woman would justify, yet she took refuge in the thought that when she grew old there was time enough for discretion.

Another trait of her disposition: It grieved her to see others happy. Like the arch fiend who turned aside with envy when he beheld the happy pair in the Garden of Eden and from that hour plotted their ruin, so Mrs. Arnold from, sheer envy was determined that the innocent and pure−minded Marguerite should be associated with the coarse side of humanity—in short, that she should become familiar with the fashionable miseries of a fashionable woman.

But Mrs. Arnold reckoned without her host. She met with more opposition than she expected, and the lesson she yet had to learn cost her a bitter experience!

Mrs. Verne's vascillating nature was a source of much annoyance to her first−born.

“It is so provoking,” murmured Mrs. Arnold, as she noted the infatuation her mother possessed for a certain baronet of a distinguished Yorkshire family.

“I've set my mind upon Hubert, and mamma must yield. As for Madge, she is out of the matter entirely.”

As if in answer to her thoughts the young man was soon at her side looking quite interesting.

“You naughty boy; I am inclined to be angry with you—not one dance have you sought.”

“From the very fact that I cannot have one. Ah, Mrs. Arnold, you well know how to amuse yourself at the expense of us poor unfortunates,” said Mr. Tracy, glancing at the tablet already filled for every dance.

“I have a mind to cancel this,” said he, pointing to that of the Yorkshire baronet.

“No, indeed, Mr. Tracy; that would be pleasure at too great a sacrifice. I have a motive for entertaining the baronet.”

Mrs. Arnold smiled one of her peculiarly attractive smiles, significant of the part she was to enact.

She whispered a few well−directed, words into the young man's ear, and taking his arm led him to the conservatory.

“I can only stay a couple of minutes at the least, so I wish you to be all attention.”

Hubert Tracy seated himself beside Mrs. Arnold and listened to her dear confiding tones.

“Mr. Tracy, I despise that Yorkshire bore, with his coarse English and stupid manners. And his effrontery in presuming to play the suitor to Madge. It is all your own fault. You follow at a distance and have not the courage to claim your rights—”

“Rights!”

“Yes; I say rights, Mr. Tracy. I say that you have a right to claim Madge, because we always looked upon you as her future husband. The girl knows not her own mind, but she will never go against mamma's wishes, and I know that she cares for you, though she will not own it.”

“If I thought so I would be happy, for if any woman will ever reclaim me it will be Marguerite Verne.”

“Such talk, Mr. Tracy; I'm sure you are no worse than the general run of men. Pray don't talk of reclaiming; that sounds as if you had committed something dreadful.”

Just then there arose before Hubert Tracy's vision the sad picture of a brave young man, struggling so hard to prove his innocence when circumstances are all against him. He sees the reproachful gaze of the sorrowful eyes, and he stops his ears to keep back the sound of the reproachful tones that force themselves upon him.

But Mrs. Arnold knows it not.

“We will dispense with the word if it displeases you, Mrs. Arnold. I will do anything that you wish, even if it be impossible for you to be in a dearer relation than at present.”

“Hubert Tracy, if you succeed not, remember it is through no fault of mine. Just listen to me.”

The young man listened, and in a few short words Mrs. Arnold made known her plans.

“We will succeed or I am not what I think myself,” said Mrs. Arnold, readjusting the spray of heliotrope that was displaced in her corsage.

“Adieu for the present, dear Hubert,” said the latter, on seeing Lord Melrose advancing to claim her for the next waltz.

“Ah, my fear truant, you have given me a world of anxiety. Why do you persist in such delightful methods of torture.”

“*Torture!* Lord Melrose!” exclaimed the lady with an air of arch coquetry.

Meanwhile Marguerite Verne sat in the quiet of her own apartment. She had retired from the heated ball−room at an earlier hour than many of the guests. A wearied look rested upon the girl's face. She was heartily worn out with the excessive fatigue attending fashionable life.

“Well, it seems that I am fated for a martyr, and I must calmly submit,” said she, loosening the luxuriant mass of silken hair that had been arranged to suit the most fastidious taste of Mrs. Arnold.

Donning a loose wrapper, and exchanging the pretty white satin slippers for a pair of soft morocco ones. Marguerite threw herself into a large and inviting arm−chair.

“I will not allow myself to think. My thoughts are rebellious,” and immediately a pretty little pocket Testament found its way into the girl's hand.

A few words escaped Marguerite's lips as if an invocation was asked; then she read aloud the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians: “Though I speak with the tongue of men and angels,” etc.

The sweet voice of the reader was not heard in vain. Marguerite closed the book and remained motionless for some moments, when she fancied that there was a noise as if some one were listening at the door.

“I am so foolish. My nerves are unstrung from keeping late hours,” murmured she. Then hastily glancing towards the spot whence the sound proceeded Marguerite knelt down and prayed that an All−Merciful Providence would keep her from the temptations of fashionable society.

“God help me, I'm lost. I dare not approach that angel in disguise, else I would ask her what is meant by that Charity.”

These words were muttered by Montague Arnold, who having been unable to attend his wife to the ball, had now returned in a state of intoxication.

Had Marguerite listened she might have heard the words repeated; but she had dropped off into a quiet slumber and lay unconscious of the semi−brutal state of her dissipated brother−in−law.

The next morning brought invitations for private theatricals at the house of a distinguished foreign embassy.

The spacious mansion in St. James' Court received the grandees of every land. It was a high honor to enter “Rosemere Place.”

Mrs. Verne was almost beside herself (to use a vulgarism). She walked on air, as it were, and could talk of nothing else but the elegance and grandeur in prospect.

“I have accepted Mr. Tracy as escort, mamma,” said Mrs. Arnold, entering her drawing room with an elegant dress that had just arrived from the *modiste*.

“Now, Evelyn, have you not been a little premature? Would it not have been better to wait, for I think that Sir Arthur would in all probability have called to offer his service to Madge.”

“Sir Arthur is a horrid bore, mamma—he is intolerable. I cannot see why you encourage him. I'm sure his estates are heavily mortgaged. I don't believe he can afford to pay for the kid gloves that he nourishes on his big

brawny hands!”

“Some malicious person has been endeavoring to misrepresent Sir Arthur. I wish you would not listen to such stuff. I am certain that he is immensely wealthy, and then think of his family!”

Mrs. Verne did not wish to quarrel with her daughter; yet it seemed that a quarrel was brewing.

“You think it so important to secure a title for Madge that you would have her struggle amid shabby genteel surroundings in order to introduce her as Lady Forrester!”

“Shame, Evelyn! you forget that I am your mother,” said Mrs. Verne, raising her hand with haughty gesture and looking the embodiment of injured innocence.

“Forgive me, mamma, I did not mean to anger you,” said Mrs. Arnold with an air of deep contrition.

This act was the latter's only safeguard. She knew well the key to her mother's character, and was determined to take advantage of every point.

“You know, mamma that we must look to dear papa's interest as well. His business is in a precarious state. I heard Montague say that it is tottering, and Hubert's great riches will be at Madge's disposal.”

Mrs. Verne could not but admire the thoughtful argument of her daughter.

“True enough, child; but if Mr. Tracy hears of the circumstance he will soon throw us over, my dear,” said Mrs. Verne with something like agitation in her voice.

“Nothing of the kind, dear mamma,” said Mrs. Arnold, placing her hand caressingly upon her mother's shoulder “it is thus that I have proved the true worth of Mr. Tracy's character—he not only spoke of the matter but intimated in a delicate manner that now he could sue more boldly for Madge's hand—be in a position to place dear papa on a surer footing than, he ever was.”

“It is indeed a great blessing to know that we have such true friends,” said Mrs. Verne in a tone that showed her heart was not with the subject.

Poor Mrs. Verne!

She had, since her arrival in England, changed her views as regards a son−in−law.

Her heart was set on the baronet and she wished that the merciless Evelyn would have expatiated on his riches instead of those of former friends.

“I can never have what I want,” sighed the anxious mother as she sought her boudoir to write a letter in answer to the one which lay upon the Indian cabinet opposite.

“What on earth brings about these insolvencies is more than I can account for. One thing certain I can wash *my* hands of it. It is not *our* extravagance that will cause it.”

Mrs. Verne glanced at the surroundings hoping to see much simplicity, but the elegance of the magnificent suite of apartments were sadly at variance with her speech.

“And to think of Evelyn's opposition. She is settled and should mind her own affairs, and judging from what I can see, she will have enough to do to keep her head up. Montague Arnold is no better than he ought to be. Well, well! I suppose his money will hold out and that is all that is required—oh dear, if Sir Arthur had Hubert Tracy's money.”

The letter being finished a servant was despatched with the budget of mail, and Mrs. Verne took up a pretty design, of Kensington work that she was fashioning for a table scarf.

“I don't feel like anything to−day,” murmured the woman, throwing the work aside and yawning several times.

“Madge, I'm glad you have come. Where is that novel I saw you reading yesterday?”

“Rossmoyne, do you mean, mamma?”

“Yes, I glanced over it and think it is fascinating, and I stand sorely in need of just such a work to−day.”

Marguerite knew from her mother's fretted looks that she had been somewhat annoyed, and judging that Evelyn had something to do in the matter, said nothing, but quietly withdrew to her own apartments.

Although Mrs. Verne and her daughter spent much of their time in Mrs. Arnold's elegant suite of rooms, they occupied an exclusive suite of apartments in an aristocratic square not far distant.

Marguerite had been amusing herself in reading over some extracts from her pocket diary when a pretty young page entered with an exquisite bouquet of rare exotics.

“How lovely,” was the simple remark, as the girl took them in her hand and held them out to view, while the fragrance exhaled was almost overwhelming.

A tiny note, peeped out between a cluster of heliotrope and blush roses.

“It is provoking,” thought the maiden, as she drew forth the perfumed billet−doux and read what might be considered a declaration of love.

Sir Arthur Forrester was not a dissipated man, nor was he a disagreeable man, yet he was not what a girl of Marguerite Verne's nature would desire for a husband.

“This is just what mamma has been angling for,” thought Marguerite as she tore up the note into tiny shreds and showed more spirit than her sister Eve would have given her credit for.

“I thought as much dear Madge,” said Mrs. Verne, who on entering beheld the bouquet, “and to think that Evelyn should accept Mr. Tracy as escort when we could have Sir Arthur. It is, indeed, provoking beyond endurance. Madge you are to be congratulated upon such good luck; scores of girls would envy you the proud position as Lady Forrester, and for once I hope my child will consider well before she lets such an offer meet with refusal.”

Marguerite sat as if in a state of utter abstraction. She was too much confused to reply. “Honor thy father and mother” had been an important part of her religion. Must she now say words of dire rebellion—the thought cost a bitter pang. The tears rose to her eyes and her lips were pallid and tremulous.

“Mamma I cannot think you would ask me to encourage Sir Arthur feeling as I do at present. I respect him but nothing more, please do not mention the subject again. I do not wish to leave you and I know papa wishes me to remain always with him and make his home what it ought to be.”

The last remark was too much for Mrs. Verne's temper.

“Marguerite, lately I had begun to think that you had more sound sense than your fortunate sister but I am doomed to bitter disappointment. One need expect nothing but ingratitude from children—especially mine. Hear me, Madge: if you refuse Sir Arthur you will live to repent of it—remember my words!” and gathering up her trailing robes Mrs. Verne turned angrily away leaving Marguerite to her own sad thoughts.

CHAPTER XXII. AN INSIGHT INTO MR. VERNE'S AFFAIRS.

Summer had passed into autumn—all nature was arrayed in robes of gorgeous dye. The foliage of Sunnybank was brilliant and the leafy shrubberies had not yet begun to show signs of decay.

Mr. Verne sat in the library and beside him sat a welcome guest.

Mrs. Montgomery made several excuses for her untimely interruption and Mr. Verne received them with the best of grace—he well knew what had prompted the visit—the good kind and generous heart.

As the matronly appearance of the new comer awakened a spirit of interest in the affairs of Sunnybank so it aroused the quiet unobtrusive master. Mr. Verne thanked God from the bottom of his heart that he could sit in his office and hear the voice of a true friend in kindly counsel with the domestics.

"Ah! if Matilda were only like her, how different our lives might have been," murmured the wearied man of business, then heaving a deep sigh glanced over the latest exchange sheets, trying to find relief from the depressing thoughts that were crowding hastily through his overworked brain.

"Sooner or later it must come and God knows it is through no discrepancies on my part. Poor little Madge; she is a good child. If she were only settled I would feel more relief; but she is to be bartered for pelf, poor child. I will stand by her to the last."

Voices in the parlor now claimed Mr. Verne's attention.

"Strange too, at the very moment," murmured the latter as he closed the folios and then ran his fingers through his hair as if to prepare for some pleasing reception.

A cheery voice exclaimed "business kept me away sir, but I could stand it no longer," and shaking his host's hand with more than hearty grasp Phillip Lawson soon found himself at home in Sunnybank's elegant parlor.

The young lawyer could not fail to note the careworn look upon Mr. Verne's passive countenance, nor did he fail to note the cause, while a strange yearning feeling went straight to the warm heart.

"If it were only in my power to help him," murmured Phillip in inarticulate tones as he took up a newspaper that lay on the small table near. It was a late English paper and bore the address of Mr. Verne in a neat graceful hand.

"We have just heard from Marguerite," said Mr. Verne, attempting to be very cheerful.

"I hope all are well, sir?" ventured Mr. Lawson timidly.

"Yes, they are in good health, but I fear that Marguerite is wearied of life in gay cities. Mr. Lawson, you cannot imagine how much I miss her. It seems as if part of my life is gone from me."

Mr. Verne's voice was husky and unsteady and his eyes had a far off wistful look that struck a vibrative chord in Phillip Lawson's breast.

"I might as well make a clean breast of it at once," thought the latter, "no good comes of carrying a pent up sorrow to one's grave without trying to seek sympathy from a fellow being—and to none would I go more willingly than her father."

A slight pause ensued and Mr. Lawson spoke.

"It is pleasant for Miss Verne to see the mother country and form comparisons for herself and no doubt she will be the better for having had a change of climate."

"Yes, that was why I did not oppose her going away. I knew that her constitution was delicate, but again, that fact made it the harder for me to associate Marguerite with late hours and all the inconveniences of fashionable life. I tell you what it is Mr. Lawson I am no advocate of fast living and I thank God that my daughter is only playing a part in which her heart has no interest."

"Miss Verne has a mind far above such things," said Mr. Lawson with some warmth.

Mrs. Montgomery had adroitly slipped out unobserved and was busying herself over some mending which was needed.

She could hear the hum of the voices and could almost distinguish the words being said.

"If Stephen Verne is not a downright fool he will straighten matters up yet," thought the woman as she put away the work−basket and began to plan work for the following day.

Conversation still went on briskly and Mr. Verne seemed himself once more. His burden felt light in the

presence of the young lawyer and from the depths of his soul he longed for a closer intimacy—that bond of true sympathy which cements hearts forever.

Phillip Lawson partly realized the fact: the barriers of conventionalism were fearlessly torn down as he took courage to speak out.

“Mr. Verne you do not surely think that a man of sense can be blind to the inestimable and rare qualities which he sees in Miss Verne's character. If we had more woman like her what a different world it would be!”

“God bless you, my boy,” said Mr. Verne fervently.

“Amen,” responded a voice from another apartment but unheard in the parlor.

What invisible, subtle power prevented the young man from falling on his knees and confessing his love for the pure Marguerite?

What invisible presence laid a pressure upon Phillip Lawson's lips and sealed them fast?

What invisible force turned the conversation into another and entirely different source, yet did not weaken the bond already established.

Mr. Verne communicated many proofs of his entire confidence and the thought gave to his young friend more courage.

“It is indeed a trying season sir, but I trust you will keep abreast of the times. Many of our establishments are said to be in a shaky condition.”

“If they give me time I am all right, if not I am gone.”

Phillip Lawson was a poor man. What right had he to offer consolation? He said nothing, but inwardly prayed that the storm might pass over and all would be brighter than the May morn.

“I challenge you to a game of dominoes, gentlemen,” cried Mrs. Montgomery who now felt that her presence was necessary.

“We are only too happy Mrs. Montgomery,” said Phillip rising from his seat and placing a chair for her.

Mr. Verne also being seated the time honored game of muggins was soon in active operation and, as is often the cape, the lady being the best player was sadly worsted but submitted with a grace that was amusing.

“Come in often, Mr. Lawson; I am going to remain for three or four weeks and we need all the companionship we can muster,” said the lively and unceremonious matron as she bade good−night to the former with an air of interest in every look and gesture—a something which seemed to say “depend on me.”

Nor was the warm pressure of Mr. Verne's hand lost upon the susceptible nature of Phillip Lawson.

“If I had Hubert Tracy's riches what an amount of good I could accomplish; but what's the use.” And for once the Christian spirit of the young man underwent sore temptation. He was wondering why it was that prodigals and spendthrifts, with no special ability but that of wasting other people's earnings, should have means inexhaustible while other poor fellows with fair ability should have to toil all their days for the means of subsistence and never have the wherewith to relieve their suffering fellow mortals or follow the yearnings of their impassionate hearts!

Mrs. Montgomery stood on the terrace and watched the receding figure of Phillip Lawson until he had crossed Queen Square and turned Charlotte street. She then returned to the parlor, and finding Mr. Verne sitting as if in deep study, was about to retire when he quietly motioned her to a seat.

“Sit down here. Our young friend has gone, and it seems as if he took all the sunshine with him, for I feel more prosy than ever.”

“You need not try to hide your feelings from me, Stephen; it is of no use. I am here to help you all I can, and much as it will cost you I must hear your trouble. Heaven knows I would gladly do all that lies within my power.”

Mrs. Montgomery's bustling and blustering nature had now become calm and gentle as a child as she sat beside her brother−in−law and poured into his ear such words of sympathy and encouragement as she could honestly give.

“We will not blame her altogether,” said Mr. Verne. “She was young and fond of gaiety, and I thought that in course of time our natures should blend together, but sad to say, with coming years the breach widened. She went into society and I took refuge in seclusion.”

“Stephen, you need not try to smooth matters!” exclaimed Mrs. Montgomery, allowing her temper to get aroused. “She is all to blame. Matilda is a fool, and I would tell her so if she stood face to face with me to−night!”

Mr. Verne did not raise his eyes, for he did not wish his companion to see the look of desperation settled there.

"And to think of the manner in which poor Marguerite is dragged over the continent for the sake of hunting up a grand match is something beyond endurance."

"It is all too true, Hester," moaned the grief−stricken husband. "It is all too true."

"And I would oppose it to the bitter end, Stephen. Yes, I would face poverty a thousand times rather than see a child of mine subjected to such indignity. I have watched Matilda's high−handed work with keen interest, I have noted everything, and if she thinks she has hoodwinked me I pity her delusion."

"The truth is I have been too much immersed in business to attend to much else, Hester, but at times I have not liked the manner in which things were going on. I never gave consent to Evelyn's marriage, I could not sanction it, but the girl seemed bent upon it, and I made no opposition in the matter."

"Montague Arnold is a dissipated man and immoral in every sense of the word, but that matters not in good society."

Mrs. Montgomery's face was indeed severe as she took from her pocket a piece of knitting and began making stitches rapidly.

"It is one of the many enigmas of fashionable society which I can never account for: why the most worthless, debauched and dissipated young men are fawned upon, lionized and courted by the most respectable mothers and matrons, and allowed the full liberty of their ball−rooms, drawing−rooms, salons, &c., claiming the most virtuous maidens for their amusement and pastime! And further, an honest−minded young man, who leads a strictly moral life, and labors hard to gain a reputation for himself, is cast aside or scorned as a mere nobody!"

"It is too true, Hester, I can fully endorse what you say. I have indeed turned away in disgust from fashionable resorts when I have seen young men of the most vicious habits contaminating the very air with their dissoluteness, flirting and dancing with the pure−minded girls who would have shrunk away in loathing could they hare seen the same young men at a later hour in dens of iniquity."

Mr. Verne was excited; he thought of his lovely Marguerite, and a pang shot through his heart, causing his face and lips to become ashy white.

"It is a disagreeable subject to broach, but I cannot help it, Stephen—I mean Hubert Tracy," said Mrs. Montgomery, in suppressed and measured tones. "You are not blind, Stephen, to the fact that Matilda and Evelyn are conspiring to find a son−in−law for you, and that one is Mr. Tracy?"

"God forbid!" said Mr. Verne, springing to his feet as if stung by an adder.

"As true as my name is what it is, Stephen, you will see it—that is—if you do not try to prevent it."

"My Marguerite will never sacrifice herself in that way," said Mr. Verne, vehemently—"never!"

"She will be talked into it. Marguerite will do anything rather than incur her mother's ill−will; for depend upon it, Matilda will lead her a sorry life if she shows opposition to her will."

"I have been too careless, Hester. It is yet time enough, thank God! When Marguerite is once more safe in my sheltering arms she will neer be subjected to the importunities of disagreeable suitors."

"Evelyn has too much diplomacy in her character. Marguerite cannot cope with her ingenious allurements, depend upon it, but I hope everything may turn out for the best yet," said Mrs. Montgomery, with a wistful look upon her countenance.

"Hester, I have much to think of. Sometimes my thoughts are almost insupportable, I almost sink—I believe I would if it were not for Marguerite. She is my ministering angel—and I miss her so much."

It was only on this evening that Mr. Verne had become communicative. He was always looked upon as a cold, reticent man, who had no sympathy with humanity in general; but there were those who could say "God bless you, Mr. Verne," from the bottom of their hearts. Who will presume to say that those grateful invocations were lost upon the winds—that they were not wafted to the Throne of Mercy, and received the plaudits of the King of Kings?

"I have long been thinking of having a talk with you, Stephen, and I feel now is the time," said Mrs. Montgomery, in confidential tone, yet betraying some hesitation. "We all know Stephen, that your family is living beyond your means, and that you are robbing yourself of health, strength and peace of mind to keep up an extravagant appearance. I ask you if that is right?"

"Hester, it is this that is killing me by inches, yet I cannot prevent it. What can I do? I cannot breast the current that is carrying along everything with it in maddening fury. One day I must make the plunge!"

Mr. Verne buried his face in his hands and wept like a child, while Mrs. Montgomery sat motionless, her eyes

fixed upon the quaintly carved case of the eight day clock, whose solemn tick made the stillness more oppressive.

Mrs. Montgomery was the first to speak. “Stephen, it is not too late to straighten up matters. Take my advice, and if you are not more prosperous a year hence I will give you the deed of 'Gladswood.'—a present on your next birthday.”

Mr. Verne forced a smile, and grasping the woman's hand, exclaimed, “Hester, you are, indeed, a friend in the hour of need. I feel stronger already.”

“It is growing late, Stephen, and you need rest; we will talk over the matter to−morrow,” and bidding good−night, Mrs. Montgomery arose and retired to her own apartments, while Mr. Verne sat buried in thought until the clock struck the hour of midnight; then slowly he arose, and, with languid step, turned a sad face towards the door, musing, “It is all sent for some good. Teach me, oh God, to see things as I ought.”

CHAPTER XXIII. MRS. MONTGOMERY'S IDEAS OF SOCIETY, ETC.

Next morning Mr. Verne was astir at a very early hour. The rest of the household apparently wrapped in deep slumber, while the wearied man of business sat at his desk, his features fixed and immovable as the bronze productions of the inimitable Lysippus who had won the favor of the Great Alexander.

Scratch! scratch! scratch! went the pen over the lines with inconceivable rapidity, the writer occasionally glancing over his left arm at the document he was copying. The tortoise−shell cat sat at her master's feet with an air of self−importance and a look which seemed to say, “woe be to him who dare to drive me hence.”

But there was another within the walls of Sunnybank who was also awake—Mrs. Montgomery.

She leaned on the side of her couch and listened to the faint sound that at intervals came from the office: “Well, well; what will be the end God alone knows! Matilda Verne, you will one day see the fruits of your folly and taste them in all their bitterness!”

“I must divert him from such work. It is killing the man by inches; surely there is some way out of the difficulty—where there's a will there's a way.'“

Mrs. Montgomery said the last words with a will—aye, with the spirit of a Leonidas, and hastily arranging her toilet descended to the silent, deserted parlors. She evinced no surprise when confronted by Mr. Verne. She had been calmly awaiting his presence.

“It is too early for you to be astir, Hester. I would think you might take things easy when you could. I'm sure there's nothing to get you up here—no milking and farm work as at 'Gladswood.'“

“It's second nature with me and I can't help it any more than you can help getting up with the sun and poring over those tedious papers; Stephen, I would think you ought to get sick of such work.”

“So I do, Hester, but I must not let myself feel so; there may be an end far too soon.”

“Stephen you are getting a monomaniac on these things. I tell you what it is if William Montgomery were in your shoes he would not last a week. Thank God, he is a farmer—there's no life like it.”

“True, indeed, Hester; I wish I had become a sturdy yeoman before I gave myself up to this business. Ah! it's nothing but uncertainty.”

“Listen to me Stephen; the quiet of the hour prompts me to say something which I have been thinking of for some time past—it is of Mr. Lawson.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Verne, in a manner that seemed to say that he knew what was coming, “he is a worthy young man!”

“Worthy, did you say, Stephen? There is no words in the English language sufficient to speak his praise. He is a man such as the Creator premeditated before the world rose out of chaos—a man in the true image of his Maker!”

Could Phillip Lawson then have looked upon this woman as she sat there and spoke such holy thoughts—how simple and yet how eloquent—could he then have heard the tenderhearted matron plead for him what a flood of gratitude would have welled out from his honest heart!

“I have invited Phillip Lawson to 'Gladswood' purposely to study him through and through, and each time I find something nobler in him to admire.”

“I believe it,” said Mr. Verne, gravely.

“Then pledge yourself with me to bestow upon him all that can give him the only earthly happiness he desires. Stephen, you are not blind—you know he loves your child—make the way brighter for him— give him your confidence, your encouragement, and before a twelvemonth has passed away you will be happier, Madge will be happier, and Phillip Lawson will bless you while he lives!”

Mr. Verne turned uneasily in his chair. He felt somewhat guilty of not seeking the young man's confidence the previous evening when he made allusion to Marguerite.

“Stephen, I'm no fool; I can sometimes see more than some people would like me to see—but I care little for people's opinions,” said Mrs. Montgomery in a defiant mood, “I am here to say what I think is right—I care for nobody.”

“I know that the young man admires Madge, but we have proof of nothing further.”

"You surely cannot say *that*, Stephen, and note the interest which Mr. Lawson takes in your affairs. Ah, we women can see you men through and through—you don't mean what you say."

It did not take much persuasion to gain Mr. Verne as an ally to the cause so dear to the woman's heart.

Now what suggestions Mrs. Montgomery made to her brother−in−law and his acquiescence, the whole−hearted management and cleverness, also delicacy of plans, we do not care to reveal, suffice to say, that the plans were matured and put into execution from that hour, and that there were those who lived to thank Mrs. Montgomery with all the fervor of their hearts.

Mr. Verne was indeed happier from the light−hearted manner in which Mrs. Montgomery strove to entertain him and relieve the monotony of his busy life. "Sunnybank" had been closed from society for several months. No guests desecrated the stillness of the deserted drawing−room, and save the occasional calls of a few business men, "all around was quietness."

"I will make a change," said Mrs. Montgomery, and a change was made. Phillip Lawson found time to drop in two or three evenings of the week, and when the gentlemen were engaged over their game of chess, there would suddenly steal upon their senses a fragrance that portended hot delicious coffee, not to speak of the choice rolls and delicate cheesecake.

Mr. Lawson was truly at home in Mrs. Montgomery's society. He admired her independent spirit and correct judgment as to what should constitute society in its wholesome state; he listened with eagerness to her exposition of the shame and rottenness of good form and the consequent evils arising from them.

One evening they were enjoying the refreshing breeze that stirred the leafy shrubberies at "Sunnybank." Coolness reigned everywhere, within and without. The halls were redolent with heliotrope, and breath of roses, the hour was inviting and the conversation was spirited.

Mrs. Montgomery, clad in her silken gown, was indeed fitted to pass close criticism. She was sensible looking, neat and respectable, and her genial warmth of manner formed no secondary consideration.

"It is disgraceful to society to tolerate it," said Mrs. Montgomery. "I should like to see a girl of mine receive attention from such a man, and to think of his going to Mrs. M.'s company utterly incapable. Had I been there I would have insulted him before the company."

"It is just as well that you were not," said Mr. Verne, smiling.

"We country people are verdant, Stephen, but thank heaven we escape your *good−form* style that is ruinous both to body and soul," said Mrs. Montgomery with considerable vehemence. "Our young women are educated to a sense of their position, and to demand that respect which they ought. Ugh! just for one moment imagine a young man of loose immoral habits seated in *our* parlor. Why the very thought of it makes one sicken with disgust."

"Hester, if we had a few such women as you there would be a sweeping moral reform throughout our land," said Mr. Verne, vehemently. "Yes, we would have such a wholesome state of things as would entail a world of happiness to succeeding generations."

"I tell you one thing, Stephen, there would be no living beyond one's means; neither this abominable keeping up of appearances, which has possessed two−thirds of our people, and which is the cause of nearly all the misery and degradation that we hear of every day of our lives—and those mothers and daughters will be held responsible for the souls of the suicides who were goaded to the rash deed by their doings! Yes, Stephen, I say it, and hold to it, that it is our women who are at the root and bottom of these horrible misdeeds."

"It is true in a great measure, Hester," said Mr. Verne, his face betraying evident emotion—his voice strange and his manner altogether changed.

Mrs. Montgomery's words had a powerful effect. They took deeper root than she intended and the woman felt a strange misgiving at her heart. "What if he might seek refuge in such," thought she, and a feeling of revulsion passed through her which was in nowise comforting.

Mr. Verne seemed to anticipate her thoughts. "It is an unpleasant subject, and can do little good for either," said he, trying to force a smile.

"Yes, Stephen; I can bear your reproof, for I am too hot−headed. I need a strong pull in the opposite direction to set me right."

The sound of domestics astir suggested employment, and Mrs. Montgomery set forth to superintend affairs with more concern than the real mistress. In fact, there had been a sad want of attention to matters in general. There was an apparent lack of system and good management that only such an one as Mrs. Montgomery could set

right.

“I want you to do it this way,” was her order, and it was done.

An untidy chambermaid had been dismissed, and the cook was given her choice to retrench in the enormous waste or find a new field for such extravagance.

It was indeed surprising what a change had been wrought during Mrs. Montgomery's first week at “Sunnybank.”

“And to think of her coming from such charitable motives. The woman is a host in herself.” Such was Mr. Verne's comment as he began to see how affairs were managed on the reconstruction plan, when even the parlor seemed to admit the beneficial change.

“I shall have to attend a meeting of the Board of Trade this evening; and thinking it would be dull here, I asked Mr. Lawson to come in and bring Lottie. You know the poor child idolizes him, and it is a shame to keep him from her.”

“How kind of you, Stephen. I shall be delighted to see Lottie; she is a sweet child. It really does me good to see the young man pet his little charge and minister to her wants with the delicacy of a woman. I tell you there are few men that will compare with Phillip Lawson.”

Mrs. Montgomery was determined that she would let no opportunity escape when she could say a word in her friend's praise. “They will thank me one day for it,” said she to herself, as she turned leisurely towards a pot of heliotrope and stood inhaling the sweet fragrance.

“The Board of Trade to−night. No rest for the overwrought brain! What a pity that our women, Instead of decking themselves out for hours before a life−sized mirror, and when arrayed like peacocks amble into drawing−rooms or conservatories to listen for so many hours to the idiotic, half−formed expressions of the semi−monkeys who answer to the fashionable appellation of dudes, should not give themselves some fit employment. Oh, dear me! thank Heaven I'm not a society woman, and still better, that none of my family can lay claim to the title.”

As Mrs. Montgomery made the last part of her remark, she thought of her first−born, the sweet, but bright−spirited Jennie, who was always ready for fun and amusement and never was happier than when administering to the wants of her fellow creatures.

Jennie Montgomery was also a maiden of sound intellectual ability. Her fund of reading was extensive. She never allowed a day to pass without devoting two hours to good solid reading. Pope was a constant friend, as was also Wordsworth, and few could give a better exposition of the mental depth of this metaphysical poet, his self−knowledge and his keen realization of the depth of such knowledge.

But of the expected guests. It was indeed a red−letter day for Lottie Lawson when Phillip announced his intention of taking her to “Sunnybank.”

“Oh! Phillip,” cried she in ecstasies of delight, her saucy curls dancing around the pretty head, “and I shall see Mrs. Montgomery; was there ever such a lucky girl as I?” and the bright eyes danced with joy and eagerness. “Goodness gracious! it's almost too good news to be true. Phillip, what shall I wear? Dear me, if I had only known I would have made Kitty do up my white lawn.”

The little maiden's countenance had suddenly changed from great joy to dismay, and the indulgent brother was much amused.

“I don't think it will make much difference to Mrs. Montgomery, so long as your dress is neat,” said he smiling, then added, “I hope my little sister has not commenced to be vain already. It is too soon, my dear.”

“Indeed I am not quarter as bad as the other girls,” replied the little miss. “I wish you could see how they dress for school; why Nellie Bliss wears a different dress every afternoon, and to−day she had one with the greatest lot of lace ruffles.”

“Well, well, my dear, let Nellie enjoy her ruffles, and Lottie Lawson be a sensible little girl.”

As the brother fondled the fairy−like child, he thought of the inherent weakness that showed itself thus and exclaimed as the little form was beyond hearing, “the ruling passion truly,” he paused, then added, “with most women.”

To say that Lottie Lawson enjoyed herself at “Sunnybank” would be speaking too mildly. Even the dogs gave her welcome, romping, playing and frisking till warned to restrain their unwonted hilarity.

An oil painting of Marguerite Verne made the child clap her hands with delight.

“Oh, it is just like her! It seems as if Miss Verne were speaking to us,” cried she, getting as near to the portrait as she possibly could. “I can imagine myself in Sunday−school now and our dear teacher among us. When do you expect her, Mrs. Montgomery?”

The bright eyes had a wistful look and gave the piquant face a thoughtful tone.

“I cannot say, my dear, but we hope we may expect her soon.”

The eager eyes favored the portrait with occasional glances while the white fingers ran over the keys of the piano.

A pleasant evening was thus spent and Lottie was delighted when it was arranged that she would be allowed to pass many such pleasant hours during Mrs. Montgomery's stay at “Sunnybank.”

“How thoughtful,” was Mr. Verne's comment as he heard the voices in the parlor on his return.

Phillip Lawson with a pang at his heart could not but notice the wearied look upon Mr. Verne's face, also the stooping form which once had been erect and majestic, and his sympathetic look could not escape the eagle eye of Mrs. Montgomery.

“Business is business, my boy,” said Mr. Verne as he bade his guests good−night.

“Yes sir, it is all business these hard times. Business is business,” and musing thus Phillip Lawson went on his way, so busied in thought that he scarce heeded the prattle of the child at his side.

CHAPTER XXIV. A COMBINATION OF EVENTS.

Four weeks had passed away and Mrs. Montgomery still presided at “Sunnybank.” The days were spent in a variety of ways that tended to one grand end and that for the best.

Lottie Lawson was blithe as a bee, humming little snatches of song and often cheering the rooms by her presence.

An important functionary among the domestics was Melindy Jane Thrasher, the happy *fiancee* of Mr. Moses Spriggins.

Melindy Jane took much pride in informing her fellow−laborers that “she had been engaged to work with the Verneses all through the Montgomeryses, for she had seen the first Miss Verne along with her intended up to the upper neighborhood at church, and she and a hull lot of the young folks came out from Mill Crossin' to go, and when they seed the grand folks, they'd inquired and found out all about him. Then, what do you think? dad saw an advertisement in the paper, and he rit right away and got this situation; and here I am ever since, and s'pose will be for a *leetle longer*” and with a knowing look Melindy Jane would draw her hearers' attention to Mr. Spriggins, and by a series of phases expatiate on her lover's manly form and weighty principles, not forgetting his importance among the good folks of Mill Crossing.

Marguerite Verne had often listened to these speeches, and stimulated Melindy Jane's eloquence by her earnest attention, and for such kindness she was eulogized in the presence of Mr. Spriggins, until the latter vowed that “that 'ere Miss Verne hadn't an equal in the Dominion.”

It so happened that Melindy Jane one evening asked for an hour or two out, and the request being granted a few minutes later the happy rubicund face of Moses, beaming with smiles, illuminated the gateway as he passed through, hand−in−hand with his *fiancee*.

Mrs. Montgomery was a lover of fun, and she enjoyed the sight with evident relish. Mr. Lawson's voice soon after interrupted her thoughts.

“I came near being run down by one of your family, and an old friend of mine,” cried he, his manner bright and cheerful, “I did not know that Mr. Spriggins was paying his addresses to anyone in this house.”

“If you saw him, Mr. Lawson, you would soon be convinced of his honorable intentions. Indeed, Mr. Spriggins is an attentive lover, and in every way worthy of Melindy.”

“He is one of the best fellows I ever met,” said Mr. Lawson, with much enthusiasm.

“You have reason to know him?” said Mrs. Montgomery, with evident surprise.

“He did me a very great service, Mrs. Montgomery, and one I can never adequately repay.”

This was indeed a sudden revelation, but the lady showed good taste in her replies, and was much pleased with the knowledge that Phillip Lawson's character was made up of gratitude.

Mr. Moses Spriggins thought proper to spend a dollar or two upon Melindy “each time he came to town,” and on this evening in question the happy pair might be seen on Charlotte street making glad the heart of the grocer by the extensive purchase of peanuts, peaches, pears, bananas, and every choice confection that was appreciated by Miss Melindy.

“I tell yer what, Melindy, if I was a−livin' in town I'd live. I'd buy them fellars out in less than no time,” exclaimed Moses, as a fair−sized banana disappeared from view at one gasp. “Tell you what it is, Melindy, them fellars makes a fortin' out of this stuff; by golly, it's good.” A fact which was evident from the gusto resorted to in mastication.

“Thunder! what's that purty thing a−hangin' out in front of that 'ere stoppin' place? Look Melindy.”

“Why you goosey, that is the Royal Hotel light—the electric light.”

Melindy pronounced the three words with an air of pride, which indeed seemed to say “please bear in mind that I am no ignoramus.”

“Wal, I do declare, if that aint the highfalutin' light they were a−tellin' about up to Wiggleses t'other night.”

This was an unlucky speech for Mr. Spriggins. Melindy's face was black as Erebus in less than a minute and her eyes fairly darted fire.

“Don't mention those Wiggleses agin Mose, or as sure as my name is Melindy Jane Thrasher, I'll never speak

to you agin!”

“Now, listen to me, Melindy, I was a−goin' to tell you that I only went up to Wiggleses to borrow a crosscut from Josiar. True as I live I w'ant inside the gate for I met Josiar a−comin' out o' the milkin' yard and I then and there ups and tells him what I was arter.”

During this conversation the unconscious pair had gained the foot of King street and turned up Prince William street toward Chipman's Hill where they took a stand.

“And you got the crosscut at the gate?” asked the perturbed Melindy, rather timidly.

“I did, you dear old gal. Now, what's the use of you gettin' jealors of me and Josiar? I'm darned shure I don't be a−courtin' him.”

“Don't talk so simple, Mose,” said Melindy, giving her affianced an affectionate push against a large building that stood on the corner.

“If I w'ant skeered of them 'ere police chaps I do believe I'd feel tempted to kiss you in this very place!” exclaimed Moses in very pathetic style.

“I'd like to see you, Mose Spriggins, forgit yourself in such a manner—it would be the last time you would act so in my presence,” returned Melindy Jane in simply bewitching tones and more bewitching gestures.

“Well, just you wait till we get back to Sunflower Dale.”

“'Sunflower', a nice name to be callin' our place. I wish that Mrs. Verne heard you Moses, it would be the last time you'd poke your nose in there, I can tell ye Mister Mosey.”

“Well, now see here, Melindy. I see town is makin' you too toney, what's the use of cuttin' a fellar up so when he makes a little mistake?”

“Well, say Sunnybank, and I won't be findin' any more fault.”

“Well, Sunnybank! Aint that right Melindy?”

“Leave out the *well*, and all will be well,” said Melindy, spitefully.

“Melindy Jane Thrasher, you are a gettin' too cute for anything. That was the cutest sayin' I've heerd for a long time. If you stay in town much longer you will be able to talk with any of them lawyers that's around as thick as thieves.”

“Moses be keerful what you say, for some of the same fellars might have you hauled up for definition of character, and some of them can afford to do it too, for I believe there are honest ones among 'em. Indeed, I know of one.”

“And I bet I know the same chap,” said Moses, jumping at the conclusion, with an accompanying exhibition of elasticity, not unworthy of the bygone arena, and then added, “and we both of us seed him this 'ere evenin'. Aint that so, eh, Melindy?”

“There, don't be silly, Moses,” said the half−indignant Melindy, pouting her ripe red lips, and trying to look very prim.

When Melindy wished to administer reproof to her betrothed she always addressed him as Moses, a circumstance which had a very chilling effect upon the offender.

“Well, I vow if it aint—speak of the old fellar and he's sure to appear,” cried Moses. And instantly they were recognized by the stalwart young lawyer who was on his way homeward.

“He didn't stay long. Perhaps the missus ain't in very good humor to−night,” surmised Melindy.

“Perhap's he's too busy hisself. Like as not he's off on some law scrape now. That's just it, for Court's a settin' all this week. Well I hope Mr. Lawson will get a good share of the pickins, for he's as honest as the sun, and when a fellar goes to him for advice he gets it in good English law, and no runnin' roundabout way that would puzzle a chap till his hair would turn gray.”

Doubtless Mr. Spriggins would have expatiated on his friend's good qualities for a much longer time, but Melindy was not inclined to have him waste so many eulogistic speeches at her expense.

“How time goes! Well, it seems no time since we left, and here we are back agin,” said Melindy, glancing up at the grand facade of “Sunnybank,” which looked as pretentious as its neighbors on the same imposing terrace.

Mr. Spriggins was annoyed to think that it was only nine o'clock, and he must part with Melindy.

“You know what we used to learn in the little yellar book at home,” said the latter.

“Yes, that's all very fine when a fellar hasn't anything better to do, but when a feller has sich good company, he don't think of being healthy, wealthy and wise, eh, Melindy.”

“We'll not quarrel about it, anyhow,” said Melindy, evidently well pleased at being reckoned such good company, then instantly exclaimed, “What time are you agoin' to start in the mornin'; perhaps you can run down, and I may have somethin' to send the folks.”

A step upon the gravelled walk warned the lovers to retreat, and ere long Mr. Spriggins was wending his steps up Sydney street, muttering imprecations upon the unknown person who had so unceremoniously broken up their rendezvous.

Meanwhile Phillip Lawson was enjoying the quiet of his cosy back parlor. He was seated in his huge arm−chair enjoying the *Evening Globe* and a choice cigar.

Lottie Lawson had once remarked that brother Phillip might go without his tea, but he could not sleep without seeing the *Globe*. And the little maid was right, for nothing is more inviting for the hurried man of business, the politician, the professional or the student than the perusal of the evening paper. Look into the counting−rooms, the offices, the libraries—aye, even the brilliantly−illuminated parlors—and you will in each find your answer.

But we must turn to our legal friend. As Mr. Spriggins surmised, it was court week, and a very busy one for Mr. Lawson. Brighter prospects were now in store. Prosperity had dawned upon the untiring student, and he looked forward with encouraging hopes.

“Thank God I am here yet,” was the young man's exclamation, as he threw aside the paper and began to ruminate upon his prospects in general.

Strange to say he did not harbor ill−will to Hubert Tracy. He pitied him with a tender pity, and mourned for the wreck of a life that had such a good beginning. But Mr. Lawson had a feeling of enmity towards his contemporaries in the far west. He could ill repress the angry feelings that arose when the scheme presented itself in all its horrid reality.

“What ground for bringing the gang to the scratch and making a startling expose of our legal brethren; yes, nice brethren too.”

No wonder that Mr. Lawson felt ashamed of his fraternity. If the shades of Coke and Blackstone could only arise—what a reckoning would be made. What a scene—aye, one that would need a Milton to describe.

Thoughts akin to these were passing through the young lawyer's mind when he suddenly recalled the cause. The heavy brows are contracted and a scowl appears. “The wicked flourish for a season and so may you, my happy friends, but your happiness is not of the enduring kind.” Another scowl. “But if he succeeds I am miserable,” muttered Phillip Lawson, his countenance betraying deep agitation. “But I will not suffer her to become a sacrifice. Heaven forbid.”

There was determination in the tone and in the gesture which accompanied it.

There was indeed to be a struggle between right and wrong, and a bitter struggle, too, but an All−Wise Providence rules over all, and disposes of events in an inscrutable order, and in the way He foreordains for His own glory.

It is necessary to explain how matters stood between Hubert Tracy and the Winnipeg solicitor.

The latter had entered heartily into the affair and was looking forward to the big bonanza that he would gain. But some weeks passed and hearing nothing further Mr. Sharpley resolved to test the matter. Receiving no answer to the first letter he despatched a second and was surprised to receive it re−addressed to himself. What did it mean? Had Mr. Lawson removed to another field or had Hubert Tracy played false?

The solicitor then wrote an acquaintance making some modest inquiries concerning Mr. Lawson's whereabouts and was further surprised to find that he was still in St. John, also that he was prospering in the profession and would one day rank as one of the leading practitioners there.

Mr. Sharpley then directed his interrogations across the sea and much chagrined charged Mr. Tracy with duplicity. But it was the latter who felt the most non−plussed. He cursed Phillip Lawson from the bottom of his heart and hoped that he might live to crush him in the dust.

“Fool that I was to listen to his palaver!” cried he, “when I could have contrived some means to silence him most effectually. It is just what I deserve. He will dog my steps to the bitter end if I cannot accomplish my work very soon.”

It was while Hubert Tracy was being thus humiliated that he received a summons from Mrs. Montague Arnold and hailed it as an omen of success.

The interview was lengthy and boded no good to Marguerite.

“Depend upon me, Hubert,” cried the heartless young matron as she graciously extended the tips of her taper fingers and smiled her most enchanting smile which the young gallant more than graciously acknowledged as he sprang into the cab awaiting him at the end of the court−yard.

A few moments later he was at the club, and surrounded by a host of the most abandoned profligates he joined in the ribaldry and obscene jests with a zeal that betrayed the utter depravity of his habits, and also shewed that he had taken a headlong plunge into the vortex and must soon become a hopeless wreck. And yet a short time ago, so fair to look upon, Hubert Tracy had been indeed prepossessing in appearance. His neat, well built figure, graceful but manly carriage, agreeable address and fine manners gave him a significant tone and made him much sought after in society.

There was even a pleasing expression in the young man's face that was really attractive. His chestnut locks of silken hair clustering in luxuriant ringlets were indeed the envy of the many less favored youth, while the hazel dreamy eyes, soft and expressive as a woman's, seemed to suggest that they had once been the pride of an indulgent mother and kind friends.

“Zounds, Tracy my fellow, you're going all to sticks! What the devil is up? Why, you look as if you had been trailed through seven cities—got the blues,—eh?”

“Worse than that, Turpin. I'm in a fair way for the Old Bailey.”

“The deuce you are!” exclaimed the latter, who owing to several sharp feats performed upon some members of the club, was dubbed Turpin.

Mr. Turpin was a lucky kind of mortal who had a propensity for living on the funds of his more fortunate friends and always kept an eye to Mr. Tracy.

The latter was lavish in expenditure and thought it a streak of luck to have an individual like Turpin to cater to his caprice and assist in making his every day life free from remorse or anything approaching to it.

“'Jordan is a hard road to travel,' eh Dick?” said Hubert Tracy as he raised the cocktail to view and stood gazing upon it, then swallowing the contents, as if anxious to get through the job, exclaimed, “Heavens Dick, I wish that were the last drink on this side of Jordan,” and after a desperate effort to appear at ease the young man left his rollicking set and sought his apartments in Regent Square.

CHAPTER XXV. MR. SPRIGGINS INTERVIEWS MR. VERNE.

While Mr. Verne sat in his office in Water street, busy as usual on his exchanges, etc, an individual was making his way thither at a rapid gait, which, in fact, bore more closely to business than grace.

The individual was Mr. Spriggins of Mill Crossing. Any one keeping close behind the said gentleman might have heard the following soliloquy.

“Well, sir, I'm deuced glad I didn't let on to Melindy, for like all wimen she'd be a peekin' to see what it was. It's terrible queer that not one of 'em is better than another. Still we can't get along without 'em, nohow.”

Here Mr. Spriggins emphasized the remark by a shrug of his herculean shoulders, and allowed himself to think what a blank this world would be without Melindy.

“Wal, I reckon them bisness fellars have so many papers, round that its 'tarnal queer they don't loose money, but ten to one this 'ere thing don't amount to a goose egg.”

Mr. Spriggins had now gained the office, and with smiling countenance inquired for Mr. Verne.

A genial “come in” from the inner office inspired our friend with additional confidence.

Mr. Verne bowed in a respectful manner, and taking off his gold−rimmed spectacles motioned the young man to a seat.

“Good morning, sir,” said the latter, feeling somewhat embarrassed as how to begin.

“It is fine weather, indeed,” returned Mr. Verne, pleasantly.

“Its no use delayin',” thought Moses, “I'll make a bold dash,” and jumping up from his seat, exclaimed, “You're Mister Verne that lives in the big house on that high bank up there by the square?”

“Yes, sir,” said the latter, respectfully.

“Well, sir, did you ever see this 'ere piece of writin' afore, I picked it up near your house, and supposin' it were your'n I brought it here.”

Mr. Spriggins placed the document in Mr. Verne's hand, and the latter glanced at it carelessly at first, and was about to return it to his visitor, when his eye fell upon the following:

“We can make him appear so guilty that all the laws under heaven could not clear him. Two thousand dollars would be a sum sufficient to entrap him. If he is as trusting as you say, the easier will be the job to do it. At any rate, Connors can finish what I undertake— that is the silencing forever of that law sprig.”

“Just be seated for a few minutes, sir,” said Mr. Verne. “I think this is to me a very important document.”

Mr. Spriggins was now quite at home. He took in the surroundings with an air of interest, and became on terms of intimacy with the handsome spaniel that lay near him.

Mr. Verne's hand trembled violently as he re−read the letter. He was deeply agitated, but fortunately the fact escaped Mr. Spriggins' notice.

“I am deeply indebted to you, sir,” said Mr. Verne, addressing his visitor. “I trust some day I shall be able to repay you.”

There was an earnestness in the tones and also a look of gratitude that made Mr. Spriggins feel a sudden sensation in his throat—a suffocation which made it impossible to reply—the big heart was full to overflowing.

“This is an honest creature,” thought Mr. Verne as he pretended not to observe his benefactor's emotion.

Mr. Spriggins rose to go when suddenly Mr. Verne exclaimed “this is not going to be our last meeting Mr. Spriggins,” (the latter had introduced himself previous to this) “I want to see you the next time you are in the city. Remember you are welcome at my house any time that you call. Don't forget to come.”

Mr. Verne received a more than hearty grasp of Moses' iron hand and graciously escorted him to the door where he disappeared muttering along the street, “By hokey, I'm the luckiest chap in all Christendom. There's no knowin' but what I may turn out to be the biggest gun among 'em yet.”

On his way home that day the hilarity of Mr. Spriggins was unbounded. Even the canine denizens of the district through which he passed received compliments of no secondary order, and to quote his own expression “he was the happiest fellar between town and Mill Crossin'.” But we must return to Mr. Verne.

About an hour after Mr. Spriggins' departure he is seated in the library at “Sunnybank” waiting summons to luncheon.

“What is the matter with your time in the office, Stephen?” said Mrs. Montgomery with an amused look upon her face. Mr. Verne glanced at his watch.

“I made a mistake of an hour,” said he absent−mindedly. “Poor man,” thought Mrs. Montgomery, “it is no wonder,” and then hurrying off to give orders for an early meal, left him to the misery of his own thoughts.

But this time they were not distracting ones. Mr. Verne had in his possession proof of the baseness of Hubert Tracy and his legal accomplices, and the more he thought of it the more puzzled he was.

How did the letter get in the vicinity of “Sunnybank.” It certainly had been in the possession of some person or persons since it had been received by Hubert Tracy, as he had now been abroad for nearly three months. Had it fallen into Mr. Lawson's hands? Could it be possible that he had thus been warned of this conspiracy and changed his course of action?

Mr. Verne thought over the matter and a light seemed to dawn upon him. He remembered of hearing his young friend making some inquiry as regards the affairs of a well known legal firm that had left St. John and earned a well−deserved reputation in the far west. He also thought of certain transactions which went to prove that at times Mr. Lawson's prospects were indeed sadly blue, and that, doubtless, Hubert Tracy had taken advantage of those occasions to hold up the tempting bait.

“Base scoundrel,” muttered Mr. Verne with set teeth. “Providence has not allowed him to ruin a noble life.”

Mr. Verne was not blind to outward circumstances. He knew full well what had prompted the deed, and he shuddered as he thought of his guileless child associated with such a character. He was in a quandary as to what steps to take that he could ward off suspicion.

Mr. Verne wished to keep the affair a secret until he could have further ground for action. He knew that Mrs. Montgomery would be a sure ally, but second thoughts prompted him to say nothing of the matter just then, so he calmly supped his coffee at luncheon and talked over certain little plans with more than ordinary interest.

“Mr. Lawson is much engaged lately,” remarked Mrs. Montgomery, as she passed a second fragrant cup of coffee to Mr. Verne; “he only had time to make a short call last evening. I forgot to tell you before.”

“What is the matter, Stephen, you look alarmed or surprised or some such way that I cannot describe,” said the woman, glancing again at her brother−in−law.

“I must give you credit for having more of the imaginative than I thought, Hester,” said Mr. Verne, trying to cover his agitation with an accusation.

“I don't know whether to take that as a compliment or not, Stephen,” said Mrs. Montgomery helping herself to another of the delicious cheese cakes, the pride of the time−honored cook at “Sunnybank.”

“You were speaking of Mr. Lawson, Hester. What had he to say?”

“Nothing of much consequence, only that he was much occupied during the week. He seemed in such good spirits that I told him that he must have fleeced some poor mortal unmercifully.”

“Hester you are a dreadful woman. It is a good thing that people don't mind what you say.”

“It would make little difference to me whether they would or would not, Stephen. I shall always say just what my evil thoughts prompt me to say, and as you remark that is considerable.”

In justice to Mrs. Montgomery, we might as well here add, that what she said or did, was in a conscientious way. No slander could ever be traced to her nor could anything that savored of deception find a place in this honest woman's heart.

“But to return good for evil,” said Mrs. Montgomery, “I asked Mr. Lawson to let Lottie go home with me.”

“Home?” questioned Mr. Verne, in surprise.

“Yes, Stephen, I cannot stay much longer. The fall work is coming on. Jennie is a host in herself, but I must not impose upon good nature.”

“Jennie Montgomery is a rare jewel; and I least of all should insist upon your staying longer. You have, indeed, done much for me.”

“Stop, Stephen, I am not going to listen to any such stuff. Indeed, it's a pity I could not come down to amuse myself for a while without you having such notions. The fact is, I needed change of air, and now having a sufficient store to subsist upon for the next half year, think I had better make tracks.”

“Did you think of it yesterday, Hester?”

“To be honest with you, Stephen, I scarcely thought of it until the sight of good−natured Moses Spriggins reminded me I had a snug little nest in Kings County, and had better fly away to it.”

“Spriggins, did you say, Hester?” queried Mr. Verne, in a manner that showed that the name had been hitherto associated in his mind.

“Yes, sir, I said Spriggins. Did you not know that Melindy Jane Thrasher has a suitor who calls as regularly as he comes to the city?”

Mr. Verne laughed cheerily, a circumstance which was so unusual that the domestics in the basement were on the *qui vive* to see what was the matter.

“And you happened to interrupt the lovers I suppose,” remarked Mr. Verne in his quaint dry way.

“I did nothing of the kind, Stephen. I met Moses on the landing. I tell you what it is, I have great respect for Moses Spriggins. Yes, for every one of the family,” said Mrs. Montgomery in an earnest and respectful manner.

“They live near you Hester?”

“About ten miles, perhaps not so far. Simon Spriggins raised a large family, but there are only two of the boys at home now, and Nell Spriggins is a nice looking girl. I tell you their home is neat and tasteful, although not very showy.”

“It seems quite a coincidence that the same Moses Spriggins should have occasion to call at the office to−day—”

“To ask for Melindy Jane Trasher, I suppose,” cried Mrs. Montgomery, with as much merriment as a young girl.

“He was merely conveying an important message,” said Mr. Verne, “and in course of conversation I was quite interested.”

“Moses is one of the best hearted creatures for miles around. He is often imposed upon when anything in the shape of tea meetings or bazaars are on the go.”

“All's well that ends well,” said Mr. Verne, rising from the table quietly.

“Quite a digression,” murmured Mrs. Montgomery, as she touched the gong and arose from her seat.

Within the sanctity of his private apartments Mr. Verne now saw clearly how matters stood. He was convinced that Phillip Lawson had been in possession of the letter and that he had dropped it while going or coming from “Sunnybank,” and that Moses Spriggins, following in his footsteps, had picked it up.

“Truly, indeed, 'God moves in a mysterious way,'“ mused Mr. Verne as he glanced at the crumpled paper, “and to think they have been foiled in the outset. To think that I have entertained such a monster, and to have heard him applauded until I was nigh sick. Heavens! if there be a retributive justice it shall surely be meted out to that accursed viper, Hubert Tracy.”

The compressed lips and fierce scowl gave expression to the anger within, and showed that when once aroused Stephen Verne was “a foeman worthy of his steel.”

He deliberated long upon his young friend's magnanimity.

“Lawson is a man of ten thousand, else he would have had the satisfaction of seeing the whole gang reap their reward. Aye, lynching is too good for them, the scoundrels. But the time will come when they'll be found out, for they'll not stop at that,” and in clear distinct tones Mr. Verne repeated the following lines:—

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all.”

Mrs. Montgomery was not satisfied with Mr. Verne's evasiveness. Like most women she had a fair share of curiosity, and now she was doubly curious.

“It's no earthly use to try to sift Stephen, for he's as firm as a granite bowlder; but one thing is certain, there's something in the wind just now—something in which Mr. Lawson and Moses Spriggins are both concerned, though either or both may be unaware of it. Let me see,” continued Mrs. Montgomery, elevating her eyebrows, and looking very much like a lawyer when he has his client's opponent in the witness stand. “Mr. Lawson was here last night and left early. Moses Spriggins was here also, and left later. Now, as to what took Moses to the office that's where the mystery is, and that there is one I am as certain as the head is on my body.”

One good trait in Mrs. Montgomery's character was that she never lost confidence in a friend until she had the most positive proof of his guilt, her honest nature was slow to believe in the worst side of humanity.

“Whatever it is,” murmured she, “it is the doings of some other parties, for both are above suspicion.”

The entrance of Mr. Verne put an end to the soliloquy, but did not drive away the subject, and when the latter was safely out of hearing, Mrs. Montgomery exclaimed to herself “I see plainly that Stephen is deeply agitated.

He seldom carries that look. It is something of an uncommon nature that has aroused him. He thinks he hides his secret whatever it be, but poor Stephen is not schooled in the ways of deception, and in the end it is better so." And repeating the words, "'tis better so," the whole−hearted woman was soon occupied over the ways and means of domestic economy.

CHAPTER XXVI. DESPONDENCY.

Much as we would like to follow other friends we cannot yet leave Phillip Lawson. He is now in great trouble having met with a loss that is great.

“I might have known that it was too much good fortune for me,” cried the young man in sad and pathetic voice. “Fool that I was to carry it about when I was so lucky for once in my life.”

Phillip Lawson was the picture of despondency. A heavy cloud had settled down just as all had promised fair and now all was darkness and gloom, not a ray of hope pierced the grim portals which had closed so suddenly upon him.

He thought of the Tuscan poet and wondered if it were possible that his bitter experience had called forth that direful inscription—

“Abandon hope all ye who enter here.”

“Ah, my life is Hades! I look for none other!” cried Phillip, his mind now in an unsettled state and ready almost to doubt truth and revelation.

“I have tried hard to lead a good moral life, to live according to the teachings of the Golden Rule and to live with God's help in accordance with the teachings of His holy doctrine, and why is it that I am thus hardly dealt with?”

We cannot blame our young friend if he be somewhat rebellious. His faith is sorely tried and he is at first found wanting; but unlike many others who have gone down under the weight of the angry billows, stems the torrent and with his eye straight for the beacon light reaches the haven in safety.

“I believe that some good may yet spring from it. Hubert Tracy will not have the power to injure my reputation. He may succeed for a time, but there is a Nemesis cruel as death.”

Phillip repeated these words as if he were the avenging Deity himself and the hoarseness of his voice made them sound doubly prophetic.

“If they could only have passed into Mr. Verne's hands instead of mine it would have been better for all parties; but what's the use of talking.”

Phillip looked sad and careworn, aye, ten years older than on the previous night, and had Mrs. Montgomery looked in upon him then she would surely have been more perplexed than ever.

“It will never do for me to be hunting around the doors at 'Sunnybank.' For the life of me I cannot see how such a thing could have happened.”

For the sake of explanation we must admit that our legal friend had a failing which often turned out disastrously for himself and at times for others—he was simply speaking—absent−minded, but bear in mind it was only outside of business matters. As a clear thinker Mr. Lawson had no superior, he was equal to any question, running over with brilliant repartee and thoughtful speech.

It was only when the office door was closed and business suspended that he was guilty of this weakness, and as it on this occasion, caused him to suffer much from the consequence we hope to prove that he had overcome it. The fact was the paper had slipped between the folds of his handkerchief when he had taken it to brush off some dust that persistently adhered to his coat sleeve. There was another view of the matter from a more jubliant source, Mr. Moses Spriggins.

The latter toiled away in the ten acre lot at Mill Crossing in the happy thought of some day being “as big a gun as the rest of 'em,” and with the kindness received from Mr. Verne the happy climax was almost reached.

“Would'nt it be great,” mused Moses as he followed the plough in the field above referred to, “if when Melindy and myself go to town that we would put up at them 'ere Verneses. Golly it would make the Wiggleses eyes stick out furder than ever. They're a jealous lot at the best o' times, and its sich a silly idear for Melindy to be a−naggin' at me for goin' there when I never go nearer than the rickety old gate.”

Mr. Spriggins was evidently taking on a few airs for he seemed quite exasperated and ready to battle against such aspersions. Instantly his face became radiant as the noonday sun, and he burst forth in rapturous strains—

“What a man I would be and what sights I would see
If I had but ten thousand a year,”

until the hills and dales in the vicinity of Mill Crossing caught up the refrain and all nature seemed to rejoice.

"What's the use of wishin'? it won't bring the ten thousand any more than I could turn that old millstream yonder tother way. But what's the odds so long as yer happy?" and once more there floated on the breeze—

"If I had but *one* thousand a year."

"Yes sir, I'd be content," exclaimed Mr. Spriggins, as he finished the last stanza and took a vigorous pull at his pipe as means of reconciliation with his present circumstances.

"And, by−the−bye, I must go up to Ned Joneses to−night and talk him into that business. It aint any sense for Ned and me to be a keepin' up spite 'cause the old folks want ter. No sir, not this child, anyhow."

Between eulogizing and soliloquizing Moses' morning wore into evening and having hitched up the old mare he set off for the post office—a spot doubly endeared to him since Melindy Jane Thrasher went to service, since which time there regularly arrived every Monday evening a suspicious letter addressed:—

MR. MOSES SPRIGGINS, Mill Crossin', Kings County, N. B. In haste.

Imagine the surprise of our friend on being presented with three whole letters—nothing more, nothing less—and one was addressed "Moses Spriggins, Esq."

"I wouldn't take that as a joke, nohow, Mose," said a lugubrious looking individual, whose face looked as if it had been playing "I spy" with a tallow candle and got the worst of the battle.

"Bet your life on it it's no joke; you're jest right Zeb, it's real down airnest; the fellow that rit that ain't one of your jokin' consarns."

Mr. Spriggins glanced over Melindy's letter to see if she was in good "speerits," and being more than satisfied, broke open the seal of the second one, which was from Mr. Verne.

It was written in a large and legible hand, and was couched in the most simple language, and ended with a request that the finding of the paper should be kept secret until such time as he (Mr. Verne) should see fit to acknowledge it. "I do not doubt you, Mr. Spriggins, only you might carelessly let it be made known among your friends."

When Moses read these lines he was more than delighted. They expressed such confidence in him that he felt so proud, to quote his own expression, "that he wouldn't claim relationship with the Attorney Gin'ral."

The third letter which drew our friend's attention, was a notice from the Dominion Safety Fund Company, which almost gave as much pleasure as the other, for in it lay, as Moses expressed it, "a big bonanzer one of these days."

But Moses was not destined to live many days in a perpetual ray of sunshine.

Mrs. Spriggins was a motherly and kind woman, careful, industrious and economical, but she had one bad habit—that of scolding.

"Mother could no more live without scoldin' than dad could live without his tobaccer," was Moses' frequent comment when beyond the old lady's hearing.

The happy first−born was dear to Mrs. Spriggins as "the apple of her eye," but he always came in for a decent share of the scolding.

"Now, what that critter is a galavantin' to town and gettin' so many letters is mor'n I can tell. Seems to me he must be neglectin' sumthin', for I tell ye things won't git along without puttin' your shoulder to the wheel." (Mrs. Spriggins had evidently heard of the fable of Sisyphus, and gave it an original translation.)

"That's all right Jerushy, but I don't think there is any danger of our Moses. He's as stiddy as a rock."

"Don't let him hear you say so, Simon, for its the worst thing in the world to be a−praisin' your own children, and a−tellin' them they're so smart, and good lookin', it makes them so ever−lastin' conseity."

Mr. Spriggins, Sr., was going to remark that there was no danger of *her* children getting spoilt, but he knew what was best for himself, and kept a quiet tongue in his head.

The next evening after Moses had been to the post office, he became aware of the startling fact that his mother had been peeking into his trousers pocket while she rearranged his neat little room, and made it look more spicy by the addition of a set of snow−white curtains.

"'Pears to me Moses you have a lot of business agoin' on. Hope you ain't writin' to any girls but Melindy. You know anything I despise is a young man a−flirtin' with every girl he sees, and besides its not what any honest man would do. It's well enough for them 'ere city chaps that thinks no more of their word than eating their supper, to be runnin' arter every piece of calicer they see, but I tell you none of the Spriggins is agoin' to do it."

Mrs. Spriggins evidently meant what she said if one could judge from her vehemence, her snapping eyes and sharp tongue.

“Don't be skeered of me a flirtin' mother, I'll stick to Melindy while there's a button to my coat,” said Moses trying hard to look very dignified.

“Well, what is all of 'em letters about?”

“What letters mother?” queried Moses, with the evident delight of extorting a confession.

“Why as I was a−hangin' up your Sunday trousers some of 'em fell out and I couldn't help a−lookin' at the writin' on the back.

“From as fine a gentleman as ever walked the streets of St. John,” cried Moses quite emphatically.

“What's comin' next! You, Moses Spriggins of Mill Crossin', a ritin' letters to a gentleman. Let's hear all about it.

“I'm not at liberty to tell you jest now mother, I'm sorry to say, but it's all right.”

“Am I in my sober senses or am I in a nightmare? (No, there's Mose as nateral as life.)” Then pointing her finger at the supposed culprit Mrs. Spriggins exclaimed: “I tell you what it is Moses Spriggins it's nothin' very good that you're ahidin' from your own mother. Got into them lawyer's clutches at last? Ye used ter say ye liked law and if I'm as good a prophet as I think I ort to be you'll get enough of it. Like as not the farm and the stock and all the utensils will go afore long. Oh dear me!”

Mrs. Spriggins now stopped for want of breath and fawning herself violently with the bottom of her blue gingham apron made a second onslaught.

“I tell ye what it is Mose there is no good comin' of this 'ere gallivantin' to town every t'other day, anyhow.”

“Mother, if you would only have patience a few minits I might make some explanation, but you seem to want to have it your own way,” said Moses, who had now determined to venture a word or two in his defence.

“Be keerful, Moses, how you speak to your own mother. It's time I *had* everything my own way, when other folks can't manage their own affairs,” said Mrs. Spriggins, with an angry toss of her head.

“Now jest listen a minit, mother, and if I'm wrong I'll give in,” said Moses, trying to effect a compromise.

“Well, let's hear what you have to say for yourself; but remember, you must not palaver it up to suit yourself, or I'll soon find out—sure as my name is Jerushy Ann Spriggins.”

Moses had, to a certain extent, allayed Mrs. Spriggins' fears, and brought matters to a satisfactory close, when a load knock at the front door caused the latter to utter a startling exclamation, and then run to the glass to see if her hair was parted straight.

“Gracious goodness, mother, if there ain't the greatest crowd you ever saw. There's Mister and Missus Squires and Deacon Rider, and Missus Rider and little Joe Rider, and there's Huldey Ameliar Dickson and Marthy Ann, and a hull lot more.”

“Moses Spriggins, are you a−takin' leave of your senses to be a−standin' gapin' with your mouth open instead of runnin' to the door and a−showin' 'em into the best room, and I'm not fit to be seen. It's allus the way. If I had all my fixin's on there'd not be a soul to come, but let one sit in their old rags, and the hull country side will pop in.”

Moses had not heard the last part of the speech, for in less than a minute he was at the front door, doing the honors with all the grace imaginable.

“Nell has gone to the store, but mother will be here in a few minutes, so make yourselves to hum,” cried the genial host, showing the female guests the way into the spare room “to take off their bunits.”

When Mrs. Spriggins appeared not a trace of the recent encounter was visible.

“Wal, Mrs. Spriggins, yer growin' younger lookin' every day,” said the good old deacon as he glanced at the hostess in her best gown and black lace cap, not forgetting to admire the coquettish white linen stomacher that completed the costume.

“Deacon Rider, I'm afraid you are guilty of sayin' little fibs as well as the rest of the folks. What do *you* think, Mr. Squires?”

Mrs. Spriggins' appeal placed the minister in a trying position, and his better half came boldly to the rescue. “I tell you what it is, Mrs. Spriggins, I'm not going to allow you to get all the compliments. Just think of it, Deacon Rider drove all the way over, and never paid one of us a compliment.”

“Well, well, if here ain't all the folks,” exclaimed good natured Simon Spriggins, bursting into the best room

with several straws clinging to his trousers—a practical illustration of attraction of adhesion.

“Missus Squires, I do declare! Why, it does one's eyes good to see you. And Missus Rider, too—I haven't seen her for an age. Why it makes me feel young agin to see one of my old beaux around. Eh, Jerushy.”

“A pretty thing you, to be a−talkin' of beaux. Better go and get off your old clothes first, for you'd scare the crows.”

Mrs. Spriggins then became deeply interested in the affairs of her visitors and began bustling about at a great rate, and making hosts of excuses for things “not a−lookin' as nice as they had orter, for Nell had been a−spinnin,' and they had extry work besides.”

“Come, come, mother, you needn't be a−puttin' on airs now, for the folks won't believe you, nohow.”

At this sally from Moses Spriggins the younger visitors set up a laugh, and the older ones smiled and said “Moses is full of fun.” And after a few such preliminaries the party were ensconced in the best room, enjoying the unbounded hospitality proverbial to the Sprigginses, while Moses went up to his room to have another spell at the important letter, and as he read over for the seventh time the neatly rounded sentences, he felt that he could well afford to bear reproof for the sake of having the good will of such a man.

CHAPTER XXVII. VISITORS AT “GLADSWOOD”—THE FISHING EXCURSION.

An interesting trio graced the cosey parlor of “Gladswood” on this glorious September eve. The balmy breeze stole softly through, the open casement of the old−fashioned lattice window, and shed its fragrance profusely.

“Really, Jennie, this is more like an evening in June than September. Why one seems to think there must surely be some of the roses around.”

“And so there are, my dear,” said Jennie Montgomery, taking Helen Rushton by the arm and pointing to a small flower stand whereon sat a fragrant rose bush crowned with tea roses.

“They are indeed magnificent, Jennie, but I meant the little June roses that made such a gorgeous sight the morning that Madge and I arrived *sans ceremonie*.”

“You prefer wild flowers to the more brilliant sisterhood of the hothouse, Miss Rushton,” exclaimed Mr. Lawson with an air of interest.

“I must confess that I do Mr. Lawson, they seem so natural, so pure and so unaffected. They are always associated with life as it should be, and not as it is.”

“Helen you are a darling,” cried Jennie Montgomery, “those are just my ideas too. How is it possible that a refined city girl can foster such sentiments when surrounded by such opposite and antagonistic elements.”

“Jennie, my dear, you must not infer from this that I do not approve of the forms and usages of society, for I *do*, but my society is common sense society, if I may be allowed the expression.”

“You are quite right, Miss Rushton. Halifax will never lose her prestige while she sends out women gifted with such ideas of true worth.”

Helen slightly changed color but felt no embarrassment.

Mr. Lawson had listened to her clearly advanced views and was pleased with the style she argued and his last remark he considered as no flattery.

“What a pity Marguerite is not here,” said Helen enthusiastically.

“And Josie Jordan to enliven the scene,” returned Jennie with a look of mischief in her bright sparkling eyes.

“Yes, and make one feel as if always eager and ready for the fray,” said Helen, “for commence as meekly as a saint that girl will have a pitched battle before one gets half through.”

Jennie Montgomery's voice rang out in peals of hearty laughter and ended by infecting her companions.

“Poor Josie,” exclaimed Jennie when the laugh subsided, “she is as Charlie Verne says, 'a regular romp,' but she has a big tender heart.”

“I think her manner is becoming much more subdued than when I first saw her,” said Phillip Lawson who had seen much of the wilful Josie at the Rutherford mansion, whither he often spent a quiet hour in the company of his friend Herbert Rutherford.

Helen Rushton was truly fond of the hoyden girl and it was only from a desire to get the others' opinion that caused her to make the above remarks.

“We need just such girls as Josie, Mr. Lawson, to keep the world in a healthy state. I'm sure it would never do to have all wiseacres like a certain young woman of my acquaintance.”

“And of mine too, Miss Rushton,” cried a voice from the adjoining hall.

“Josie Jordan,” cried both girls in amazement on beholding the subject of their remarks standing upon the threshold, hat in hand, and her hair in wild disorder about her neck, adding:

“Yes, Josie Jordan, if you please. What's all the fuss about. Can't I run up here without making your eyes stick out like rabbits'?”

Phillip Lawson being almost concealed behind the window curtains now betrayed his presence by a hearty laugh.

“*You're* not surprised at all, Mr. Lawson, and as the children say, I'm not going to play pretend,” exclaimed Josie, shaking the young man heartily by the hand, then giving him a vigorous push in the direction of the door, added, “Run out and see for yourself.”

The girls now indulged in hearty embraces, and Josie breathless with delight went on to tell how she had

planned the surprise and the manner by which she effected her escape from her aunt's house.

"It's no use, Josie, I believe you are capable of doing anything after this," said Helen Rushton, raising her hands in holy horror at the thought of the escapade.

"I am not a party in the matter at all, young ladies," exclaimed Herbert Rutherford, who now entered with Phillip Lawson, looking as handsome as a prince with his large dark eyes and brilliant brunette skin, with the least possible tinge of ruddy carmine exquisitely blended.

"Don't tell me that women can't keep a secret after this," cried Josie, rocking to and fro in paroxysms of laughter. And in the straggling explanations that followed they learned that Mr. Montgomery had been concerned in the plot.

"I couldn't stay down there back of sundown when I heard there was such lots of company up here. No indeed; talk of solitude, I believe Robinson Crusoe lied when he said he liked it. Yes, and Old Friday too, if he said so."

"Oh! Josie, you are beginning to disgrace a fellow already," cried Herbert, alternating the words with genuine laughter.

"Auntie will be weeping and wailing my absence. Poor old soul; she don't deserve it, but I couldn't stay. Good gracious, there would have been the expense of a funeral, and I'm sure that's something to consider up in Brookville."

Mr. Montgomery had now joined the company, and with Josie's enlivening speeches it had a merry tone.

"I cannot see how friend Herb should be so opportune," said Mr. Lawson, with an arch glance at the incorrigible Josie.

"Defend yourself, Sir Knight," cried the latter, in her pretty artful way, that made the wavy ringlets play hide−and−seek with the utmost *abandon*.

"I was on my way to the fishing grounds, and you can imagine my surprise on being hailed in this wise:—'I say, mister, can you take a passenger?' On looking around I espied a young lady and bundle waiting for transportation to Sussex, five miles out of my way. Just think of it, and I had to stop, and here you see the passenger, while your humble servant is without doubt the subject of a few prayers from the boys who are anxiously awaiting a further supply of rations."

"They'll not starve till morning, Mr. Rutherford, and I think we had better all form a party and go with you," exclaimed Mr. Montgomery, who now occupied a seat beside Josie, and was as much a youth as his fourteen−year−old son who had entered unobserved while the conversation was going on.

"Won't that be glorious!" cried Josie, springing from her seat and clapping her hands with delight.

"And I suppose the pantry must suffer for it," said the cheery hostess, who had overheard her husband's suggestion.

"Well, mother, I think you can afford us a good supply, and not suffer the inconvenience of hunger either," said Jennie, placing her hand caressingly upon her mother's shoulder, and thinking in the meantime of the delicious pumpkin pies, tempting doughnuts and soft gingerbread that were piled upon the pantry shelves in a manner that, to quote a younger scion of the Montgomery family, "would make a fellow's teeth water."

The evening was indeed a jolly one at "Gladswood." Josie being sufficient entertainment for a much larger company made the most of her time, and the most shrewd observer could not detect anything like gloom in Phillip Lawson's manner as he laughed and chatted among the happy party.

As the hour was growing late Helen Rushton requested that Josie would sing something for them to "dream on."

The latter possessed a soft, rich and musical voice of much flexibility and easily adapted to meet the tastes of her audience.

"What shall I sing?" cried she in imploring tones as her eyes instinctively met those of Mr. Lawson.

"Anything you like," replied several voices.

As the girl took her seat at the piano she looked everything but a hoyden. A sweet native grace possessed every movement and gave dignity to every gesture. The pretty fingers, somewhat browned by recent exposure, ran over the keys and a prelude soft and bewitching floated around the room, then the bird−like notes warbled forth that well−known song—

"'Tis evening brings my heart to thee."

A solemn stillness prevailed. An exquisite sadness seemed to possess each member of the company, but there

was one who felt it keenly.

As Phillip Lawson sat there listlessly turning over the leaves of a handsomely−bound portfolio who could tell of the deep agitation that almost unmanned him? Not a muscle moved, not a sigh was heard, not a look was conveyed, yet deep down in his heart was a fierce conflict.

“My God,” thought the young man in the bitterness of his heart, “will the dead past never bury its dead? Why does it come forth from its shallow sepulchre and meet me on the most trifling occasions? Even that romping girl has power to unearth the mystic presence.”

The last notes had died away and Jennie Montgomery cast a quick glance at the young lawyer. Her intuitive nature was sadly alive to the effect produced upon her friend. “Poor Phillip,” thought she, “he thinks he is secure, that none intrude upon the sanctity of his thoughts. Poor Phillip, I would wish him happier things.”

“Such a song to amuse a company,” exclaimed Herbert Rutherford. “If Maude was here you might expect a crying match, and judging by the rest of the faces I think we could count upon a pretty fair exhibition of the pathetic.”

“Well, Herb, it is not for your individual benefit,” cried Josie, closing the book and rising from the piano.

She was about to say something further when a glance from Mr. Lawson caused her to stammer and blush in sad confusion. “What have I done?” thought the girl. “He is angry at me.” And whenever she turned the reproachful eyes seemed to confront her.

Was there any real cause for such alarm?

Josie Jordan was of a highly−wrought, imaginative mind, quick to suspect, impulsive and full of vagaries and oftentimes those susceptibilities led many a wild−goose chase. There was another that interpreted the look from a different standpoint. Jennie Montgomery learned to realize Phillip Lawson's thoughts, and she felt that a yearning sympathy had arisen within herself; yet, she knew full well that her friend Josie was ignorant of anything which would suggest the song, and as she was going to ask the hitter for one of her favorites, Mr. Lawson came and stood beside Josie, exclaiming in the softest and most gentle tone, “You sing well, Miss Josie, I'm afraid that you have got yourself into trouble, for I am a lover of song and—”

“Have become a perfect bore,” cried Josie, “there I have done you the service to finish the sentence, Mr. Lawson.”

“Look here, Miss Jordan, the genial atmosphere of Kings County has not any beneficial effect upon your good behaviour,” cried Herbert Rutherford, glancing at the pretty half−grown child with an air of much gravity, and wondering if she will be a child−woman as well.

“I like Mr. Lawson only he has a strange way of looking at you,” was Josie's comment as the girls sought a snug little nook upstairs to have a quiet chat before retiring.

“Mr. Lawson is a deep thinker, and ever in his brown−study his eyes may happen to be riveted on you or any other object, yet he sees it not. He is looking upon a picture perhaps fairer, perhaps less fair, as circumstances may suggest, but depend upon it, he is lost to all outward surroundings.”

The words had no sooner escaped Jennie Montgomery's lips than she regretted them, but happily her remarks did not take deep root in the minds of her girl companions.

The many little tidbits of girlish gossip and jokes were followed by merry laughter until the heavy stroke of the old clock of the household suggested that if they wished a good day's sport they must first have refreshing sleep, and soon all was still within the quaint sleeping−rooms, wherein the merry maidens dreamt their girlhood dreams. But in the snowy white chamber hitherto described in a preceding chapter there were subdued sounds which betrayed the disturbed state of the occupant.

Phillip Lawson's couch was yet bedecked in its snowy draperies and its perfect folds showed that no hand had marred its effect by actual contact.

The heavy hunting−case watch lying upon the dressing−case pointed to the wee small hours. Yet it mattered not. The song was ringing in the young man's ears. Ever and anon the beautiful refrain sounded through the quiet room with increasing volume.

“Why am I such a fool?” murmured the young man as he leaned upon the window−sill and looked out upon the beautiful scene below.

“Why are not my thoughts in harmony with this glorious picture— this realization of a poet's dream. Ah, truly, the heart is an unruly pupil. It is ever rebellious against the teaching of the stern monitress—Duty.”

Phillip Lawson heaved a sigh and then continued: “Whatever the future will bring God only knows; whatever is is all for the best.”

A hush fell upon the troubled heart, and taking up the Book of Prayers, the young man read the beautiful and sublime Evening Service of the Episcopal Church, of which he was a consistent and conscientious member, and in whose prosperity he took an active interest, laboring hard both by his purse and by his personal influence to increase its growth, and cherish sacred those memories of the bye−gone past. But of the incoming morn. An unusual babble and hurry−scurry time was going on long ere Herbert Rutherford had thought fit to arouse his friend.

“I say, Lawson, what in the mischief is the matter? Why, the folk downstairs have been kicking up the biggest fuss for the last three hours. How could you sleep? Gracious, how those girls are tearing around—no allowance for nerves here.”

Phillip Lawson laughed and soon began to make his morning toilet, while Herbert Rutherford betook himself to the stable to see if everything was in readiness to start. To the latter's surprise he espied Jennie Montgomery coming across the field with her favorite spaniel close in pursuit.

“Good morning, Miss Montgomery. What errand of mercy has demands upon you at this early hour, for certainly it can be nothing less,” and the glance at the substantial errand basket was significant of the interpretation.

“I am the errand boy on particular occasions,” said Jennie, her face aglow with the healthful exercise.

Herbert Rutherford looked at the beaming face and then at the trim but graceful figure in neat print frock just of a length to show a well−formed foot encased in heavy−soled shoes.

“Talk of your city girls—there is a match for any of them,” muttered the young man as he saw the maiden spring over the opposite stile and then throw back one of her sweetest smiles.

* * * * *

“A pretty fellow, by Jove,” said one.

“A nice commissariat,” said a second.

“Why didn't you wait until you came to pick up our bones?” shouted another, with force sufficient to show that starvation had not yet attacked the camp.

“You're all right yet, I guess,” said Herbert Rutherford, reining up the pretty and spirited animal beside an old hut that served as dining−hall for the party.

“Herb, say, hope you didn't forget the corkscrew this time,” shouted a voice from behind an old stump.

“Caesar and Anthony!” was the exclamation as the smiling maidens and their attendants came in sight.

“Josie Jordan!” cried a trio and the congratulations that followed need not be repeated.

A jollier party never fished in that well−known brook and better appetites never were known than when the table was thrice set and thrice cleared of the most tempting dishes that ever graced a festive board.

“Who would have ever thought of meeting you here, old bookworm?” exclaimed a happy−looking youth hailing from a shipper's office on the South Wharf.

“Well sir, I would as soon have expected to see old Herodotus stalking along with his wonderful Nine,” roared another, slapping Mr. Lawson with more force than elegance.

“And I haven't steered across you since that night at Verne's. Quite a change there since then, eh Lawson? Have you heard the latest news?”

Phillip had now drawn the speaker aside. He learned with regret that Mr. Verne had suspended payment but had been granted extension.

“It may turn out better than people think,” returned Phillip.

“Not a ghost of a chance for him. He's sure to go and a big smash it will make.”

“It will go hard with Mr. Verne,” remarked the former.

“It will go harder with his fool of a wife,” returned the other, “she worked for it sure and is not to be pitied; but there is one I do feel for—that is Marguerite.”

Phillip Lawson's reply was inaudible for the merry group came on at a rapid rate and surrounded them with all the fishing apparatus conceivable.

“Poor Marguerite,” muttered Phillip and he went on with his work as if nothing had happened to mar his day's sport or divert his thoughts across a wider stream.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE LOVERS' MISUNDERSTANDING MADE UP—MOSES KEEPS HIS SECRET.

On the evening after his arrival in the city Phillip Lawson found his way to “Sunnybank.” As he stood on the vestibule his thoughts reverted to the missing paper.

“It was so important; and now that I could have more hope than before.”

It must not be presumed that the young man exulted over the reported insolvency. He fervently prayed that Marguerite Verne should have moral courage to bear up under the pressure of circumstances that must necessarily follow, but he hoped that a life of usefulness would be more acceptable than that of luxury hitherto enjoyed.

“If it were only in my power to pay off every farthing of those enormous debts gladly I would do it for her sake though she might never know who was her benefactor.”

Such were the tenor of Mr. Lawson's thoughts as he advanced towards Mr. Verne and received a hearty welcome—almost an ovation.

“Mr. Lawson, you cannot imagine how much I missed you, else you surely could not have stayed so long!” exclaimed the host springing from his chair like a boy of sixteen.

“Only five days in all, sir, since I was here.”

“Five days!” cried Mr. Verne drawing his hand across his furrowed forehead as if to gain clearer perception, “five days! dear me, it seems like five months—five months.”

Mr. Verne seemed for a moment or so to have forgotten that he had a guest for he was lost in thought. Presently his mind cleared.

“How did you leave all at 'Gladswood.' In fact I forgot that you were there.”

Mr. Lawson then gave a brief description of the days spent at the farmhouse and was pleased to note the very great interest with which Mr. Verne listened.

The solicitor was puzzled. He expected to find his friend in a state of deep dejection, but instead he was more cheerful than usual, and seemed to be exulting over some secret or newly−found joy.

“He may be rejoicing in the thought that his child is soon to be in a position which his reverses cannot affect.”

Phillip Lawson had no sooner uttered these words in an undertone, than a deep chill seemed to paralyze his muscular frame.

“Just as if that should be of import to a poor beggar like me, who has no more than can keep the wolf from the door.”

Strictly speaking the last remark was somewhat hyperbolical, for as we have hitherto been informed the young solicitor's professional emoluments were now anything but scanty, but it was in the bitterness of spirit that he made use of the words.

“Have you heard from Mrs. and Miss Verne, sir.”

“There, I would have forgotten! It seems to me I am getting old fast—nothing tells on a man like that,” said Mr. Verne, smiling and drawing from the pigeon−hole of a small desk a neatly−folded letter.

“My little girl refers to you—listen to this”—and the fond father read a portion of the letter, in which she referred to the young lawyer, and begged that her father would convey her thanks for the very great thoughtfulness of Mr. Lawson in trying to cheer him in her absence and filling up the vacant place beside him.

“Tell him, dear papa, I shall never forget him for it—never.”

Mr. Verne was deeply affected as he read the last sentence; also was his visitor.

“My Marguerite, she cares yet for her doting father. Yes, Mr. Lawson, my child worships those who are kind to me.”

“You can never fully express Miss Verne's worth, sir. I am only too happy to do anything that would secure her good wishes, for coming, as they do from one so good, they most certainly result in good.”

“The man is honest,” thought Phillip Lawson; “he does not wish me to think that his daughter has any other feeling than that of gratitude, and I honor him for it.”

The young man glanced around the elegant parlor with its glittering furniture and costly *vertu*, and felt sad at the thought of the great change that was in store for the delicate girl who had been reared in the lap of luxury. He

wished to refer to business, but Mr. Verne evaded him at every turn, and when he rose to go, felt somewhat uneasy and disappointed.

"There is something astir," thought Phillip, as he passed down Mecklenburg street and turned up Carmarthen, on his way home. "There is something in the wind. I can already feel it in my bones," exclaimed the young man, striding along with a rate of velocity equal to that of his thoughts.

A sudden fancy seized him. Quick as lightning it darted through every nerve and electrified him with pain.

"It must be so! Fool that I was not to see it before. Tracy has proposed in the nick of time. He has had an accomplice whom it is easy to guess. It's all up with me now, and she can send kind wishes without a feeling of restraint"

Phillip Lawson was indeed sore at heart. He reasoned long and argued the ease to the best of his ability; but love is one thing and law is another—the two abstracts cannot coincide any more than can a parallelogram coincide with an equilateral triangle. "But must I stand calmly by and make no effort to save her from such a fate. Merciful heavens! There's no clue for me to prove what I had already known. Why was I so unfortunate. Surely heaven will not suffer Hubert Tracy to accomplish his designs. I wish him no bodily harm, but I trust that he may yet atone for his deeds, and live to see the error of his ways."

By the time the solicitor reached his home he was calm and collected.

"Brother Phillip," was the first exclamation he heard; "look, are not these beautiful. Josie Jordan brought them this afternoon. She kept me laughing nearly all the time she was here telling about the fun she had at 'Gladswood'."

"Ah! the ferns are from Jennie Montgomery, I presume," said the brother, giving them a second glance of admiration.

"Yes, and the sweetest little letter you ever saw beside. Isn't she lovely, Brother Phillip?"

The *petite* little maiden had now nestled closely in her brother's arms; her flaxen curls showered around her in sad disorder, while one plump little arm was entwined around his neck.

"You must be dreaming, Brother Phillip. Why, you never heard my question."

"I beg your pardon, little one, for this time. Miss Jennie is all that you think her to be," replied the brother, somewhat gravely.

"Do you know what I was thinking of, you dear old brother," said Lottie, emphasizing the speech with an affectionate hugging. "I was thinking of all the nice young ladies you are acquainted with, and wondering which one I would like you to marry."

"What put such notions into your head, you silly child. Have I not a little wife already. But let me hear the rest of it."

Phillip Lawson indulged his pet sister in all her pastimes, and was now an attentive listener to her proposals.

"You know, Brother Phillip, there is Miss Verne—."

"Yes—go on," said the brother in a quick, nervous manner.

"And there's Jennie Montgomery and Louise Rutherford and Miss Rushton and Josie Jordan, and—"

"I think you have got enough now to decide from."

"Well," continued Lottie, not appearing to notice the interruption. "There is Miss Marguerite. I love her dearly. I feel like kissing her picture every time I see it—well she is an angel, Brother Phillip, and sometimes I think she is too good to marry anyone."

"A compliment to the sterner sex," remarked Phillip, in an undertone, then he exclaimed, "Child, where did you get such ideas?"

"Oh, I hear the girls in school nearly every day, and yesterday Belle Morris asked me if I would like you to get married."

"I think the young ladies might find more profitable employment during study hours."

"Oh, we don't talk only at recess. Now please don't be angry, Brother Phillip, for I never said anything."

"Thank you little Miss Discretion. I am very glad that you do not indulge in gossip. Listen to what Solomon says," and going to the book−case Phillip took therefrom a Bible, and read from Proverbs xvii. 9,—

"He that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends."

Lottie saw that her brother did not wish to hear more on the subject, and she again took up the bunch of pressed ferns which had arrived from "Gladswood."

“I wish that I could be as good as Jennie Montgomery. Why she's scarcely ever idle one moment during the whole day, and she never seems happy but when she is helping some person. Do you know Brother Phillip the oldest people around love her, and she goes and reads to the sick and runs all the errands for the sick herself.”

“I am glad you observed so closely my dear, and I hope Lottie Lawson may one day be as good a woman as friend Jennie,” said Phillip very earnestly.

“Oh, I know I never can have the happy way of setting everything right that is wrong, and taking the tangles out of the most common affairs the same way that Jennie does. Oh, no, Brother Phillip, don't expect me to be anything like that.”

The fond brother could not fail to see that there was a vein of good sense running all through the child's remarks, and he also noted her quaint style of application.

The appearance of Kitty, the housemaid, interrupted further reply. With a respectful air the domestic made known to her master that, owing to the death of a near relative, she had to remove to the country to take charge of a family of small children.

“Indeed, Mr. Lawson, you have been a good, kind master to me, and that angel there”—pointing to Lottie—“the likes of her is not in St. John. But I'll hear from yous often and when Tim is in town he'll run in to see how yous are gettin' on.”

“And you must go immediately, I suppose?” said the young man who indeed regretted the loss of an industrious and honest domestic.

“Next Saturday, sir, Tim will be after me, and the children is a sufferin' between whiles.”

“Very well, Kitty, we must do the best we can,” and Mr. Lawson was already prospecting over a trip to Mrs. Lee's Intelligence Office to procure a successor to the lamented Kitty.

“Look here Brother Phillip, I believe that I can get a new girl without any trouble.”

“You little one!” cried the young man, laughing at the idea of such a grave responsibility being associated with the child.

“Wait a moment until I come back,” said the latter who in a very short time reappeared, breathless with anticipation.

“Yes indeed, Melindy Thrasher is going to leave Mr. Verne's—Kitty says so. Please let me go down and see. You know I am growing quite old now and ought to be able to do lots of things.”

“As you wish, Lottie; but remember you must first find out if Mr. Verne is aware of the fact.”

Within a week Melindy Thrasher was duly installed as general servant in the Lawson cottage, a fact which is worthy of mention as it is connected with other important matters relative to the affairs of the solicitor.

The new help gave general satisfaction and Lottie was much amused with the girl's primitive manners, which even the associations of “Sunny bank” could not altogether affect.

One bright morning as the former was getting ready for school, she was accosted by Melindy in the following strain:

“Law sakes, Miss Lottie, how things do come 'round. Jest to think that you and the young lady that was up to Mr. Montgomery's happenin' to be the same identical one, and I was up to meetin' the same Sunday. It seems so queer that of all places I should happen to get here. But as I say there's no tellin' what may happen.”

“What a coincidence it is,” thought Phillip, laughing as on passing through the back parlor he overheard Melindy's remark.

He had gone to the post−office on that morning and as he took out the contents of the well−filled box discovered a letter which on opening he saw was from Marguerite.

“What can have prompted her to write. It would seem as if some one else had written it. Marguerite Verne would as soon think of cutting her right hand off as to write me unsolicited. And for what is she grateful. It seems so ridiculous when all that I have done was to entertain myself.”

The young lawyer once more read over the precious missive which was written in the most simple, yet graceful style. It stirred him deeply.

It recalled the fair girl in all her *spirituelle* beauty, and made him doubly rebellious over the circumstances that thwarted all his hopes.

“Why was I not some heir to an earldom, for nothing less is befitting such a one,” thought the young man, feeling all the bitterness that a heart can feel.

Strange indeed, that from the moment Phillip Lawson uttered these words he was a richer man, though he knew it not. He had to drink deeper of the dregs of adversity ere he shall have cause for rejoicing.

Marguerite gave short pithy accounts of her visit, and was quite enthusiastic over the wonderful sights that she saw on every hand; also, the walks, drives and various places of entertainment.

“It's no use to think any more about it. They have at length succeeded in making her what I would have one time sworn that she never would be—a woman of the world. Ah truly 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Six months ago I never could have believed that Marguerite Verne would have yielded to such worldly influence. She seemed an angel among sinners. And she speaks of Hubert Tracy in such a gushing style—so foreign to the modest high−toned sentiments which always inspired me with a love of truth.”

“Can it be possible that Marguerite Verne wrote that letter?” exclaimed Phillip Lawson, holding it up before him and scrutinizing every line. Then throwing it aside, added, with a deep tone of resentment, “Is it possible that one must lose all faith in humanity?” Then, as if some good spirit had whispered better things, He raised his eyes and faintly exclaimed, “Father forgive me, I have been sorely tempted,” and set about some work with a fiercer determination than ever to make his will subservient to his reason.

Melindy Thrasher had not seen more than a fortnight's service in the Lawson family when Mr. Spriggins made it convenient to stay and spend the evening.

Phillip being called away upon business the happy pair solaced themselves in the inviting back parlor, and whiled away the hour in the way that only such lovers can when one takes into consideration the candies and peanuts that were conspicuous on this occasion.

When the latch−key turned in the front door all was quiet within, and the back parlor in perfect order. Faint sounds beneath the window told the indulgent master that Melindy was taking leave of her lover.

Mr. Lawson was not guilty of eavesdropping, but what could he do—the voices became more distinct.

“I tell you what it is, Moses Spriggins, there hain't been no secrets between us afore this, and I'd like to know why you can't tell me what business took you to Mr. Verne's office. Now you know you was there just as well as you know the head is on your body.”

“Come, come, Melindy—I ain't got no secrets from you. It's only a little bit of bisness that I was a−doin' for 'Squire Verne—(Mr. Spriggins had a habit of addressing all men of any importance by such appellation)—and it's his secret, not mine, and you can't blame a fellar for a−keepin' it when he is asked to do it, can you, Melindy?”

At this declaration the said Melindy was somewhat mollified, but muttered something about the two being one.

“Wal, never mind now,” said Moses, “that's a dear Melindy; let's make up,” and suiting the action to the word the lovers made up, and Melindy was satisfied that the secret did not belong to her affianced.

“But hold on, Melindy, how did you hear that I was at the office? That's the stickin' pint; eh, Melindy, I've got you now.”

“I ain't a−goin' to tell you, Moses Spriggins; that's my secret,” said Melindy, affecting an air of disdain.

“Now you've been a−listenin', that's a sure thing, Melindy, and I think it's a−cryin' out shame to do sich a mean thing.”

“Now look here, Moses Spriggins; I'm not a'goin' to stand no lecturin' from you, for if you don't like it, you can git as soon as you like, for there's Ben Buckler would give his eye tooth to cut you out!”

“Come, come, Melindy; we won't say anything more about it. We ain't a−goin' to be quarrelin' over nothin'.” And very soon the lovers made up a second time, while the solicitor turned away, indulging in the same amount of curiosity as expressed by Melindy Jane Thrasher.

“It is strange, indeed. Moses is truthful. Mr. Verne has some secret, and he could have no more trustworthy confidante than the self−same Mr. Moses Spriggins,” and soliloquizing thus Phillip Lawson sought the land of dreams—

“Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep.”

CHAPTER XXIX. A CHARACTER IS LUCK.

“Truly an interesting girl. There is a vein of good sense about her that I admire. New Brunswick sends us some fine specimens of females.”

The man who made these remarks was not a gallant of the ninety−ninth degree, but was a sober, intellectual man of threescore−and−ten and, judging from the clear, penetrative eye, one who had seen much of the world as it is.

“From St John did you say, Mr. Metcalfe?”

“Yes, sir. Her father is engaged in the shipping business there, and I am told is a very fine sort of fellow. I have met Miss Verne several times and each time am more interested,” said the old gentleman, rubbing his gold−rimmed spectacles in a way that implied “now for business.”

“By the way, sir; that reminds me of a case I have on hand. The McGregor heirs are at a discount around here and our object is to hunt up a branch of the family who emigrated to New Brunswick some forty years ago.

“Old Hugh McGregor, from whom the bulk of the property comes, was an ironmonger who at one time did a large business in Glasgow, after which he removed to Manchester, and resided there until his death in 1829.

“His son Robert succeeded in the establishment and was prosperous, living in good style in a suburban residence five miles from Manchester.

“As Robert McGregor had no children the nearest heir was his sister, Jessie McGregor, who unfortunately fell in love with a young student who attended the same institution as herself. Her parents becoming acquainted with the facts had her removed and forbade all intercourse; but love is stronger than bolts and bars, and the fair Jessie set out to face the world with no visible means of support but her husband's blandishments. But love is strong and the fair maiden managed to eke out a subsistence and by untiring effort they were at least in comfortable circumstances, and succeeded in educating their first−born for the ministry, but ere the talented young minister had preached a season his health gave way and he was called away to reap the reward of the faithful.

“The remaining child, a sweet girl of fourteen, was now the only solace of the bereaved parents, and fearing that they would also be deprived of their only joy, sold out their small property and emigrated to New Brunswick, where they purchased some land, and also by carrying on some other speculation were once more in prosperity.

“Now,” said the old lawyer, glancing up over his spectacles, “our object is to trace this girl, who is the only surviving heir of the McGregor estate.”

“But on what ground do you ignore Jessie McGregor, who may yet be alive? She cannot be a centenarian yet, sir.”

“True,” replied the former, “but Robert McGregor was aware of the fact of his sister's death some years ago. The latter was too proud to ask forgiveness for her rash act, and all intimacy ceased when she left her parent's protection, for old Hugh McGregor was a harsh, unrelenting man, whom if once thwarted could never be conciliated.”

“And how do you intend to proceed? Have you any further information?”

“None, sir—except that by some intelligence from New Brunswick about ten years ago, Robert McGregor heard that his sister's child married a farmer and was comfortably settled.”

“There is little trouble in finding the heirs then. Is the property a valuable one?”

“Real and personal estate amounts to something in the vicinity of forty thousand dollars.”

“Not a bad heritage, I assure you, sir,” said the other, with the least perceptible smile.

A month after the above conversation took place the lawyer was interviewed by the same individual.

“Yes, indeed, I immediately forwarded the notice to the St. John *Daily Telegraph* and to the *Daily Sun*, two leading journals of that city, and yesterday was rewarded by a letter from a young solicitor of that city making such inquiries about the McGregor family that evidently shows that he is in possession of all the facts that we wish to become acquainted with.”

“Are you at liberty to give his name. I am acquainted with the majority of St. John lawyers,” said the other, feeling a lively interest in the subject.

“Not at present, if I were really disposed to do so,” said the lawyer in the most good−natured manner. “The

fact is I am not exactly in the writer's confidence myself. He wishes, no doubt, to communicate farther with some of the family in question ere he gives himself publicity."

"A sensible young man, indeed," ventured the New Brunswicker, for such he evidently was in his unconventional aspect and easy−going habits.

On the evening of the same day the same gentlemen held a second conversation, but this time it was not in a dingy lawyer's office. The scene was a neat and pretty drawing−room, with all the necessary adornments native to such an apartment, and also a higher class of adornment—that of several interesting and fascinating women.

"Home, sweet home," exclaimed Mr. Metcalfe, taking up the newspaper which Marguerite Verne had just laid aside. "I see you don't forget our old sheets. Well, they *do* look familiar."

"I must be very deeply engaged when I cannot find time to run over the *Telegraph* and *Sun*—the former I have read since I was able to spell the words. It occupies a warm spot in my affections," said Marguerite, smiling, while the soft roseate blushes rose in sweet confusion upon her face.

"You are a Grit, I presume, Miss Verne," said the host. "I see that your favorite journal advocates that policy?"

"I cannot say that I am, Mr. Stanhope. I have many friends on that side, but really my sympathies go with the present government."

"Then you should transfer your affections to its leading New Brunswick organ, Miss Verne," said the New Brunswicker.

"I admire it upon principle, sir. But pardon me, I am not versed in politics, and cannot express myself upon the subject," exclaimed Marguerite, taking up the *Sun* to have a second glance at the locals which graced its columns.

"Not versed in politics, Marguerite! Do I hear aright?" cried a vivacious and interesting maiden of medium height and fair proportion, with an air of hauteur in her bearing characteristic of a model English girl.

The speaker was the lawyer's only daughter—a clever conversationalist and well read in all those branches of literature which elevate and ennoble the mind, and if applied to the female character make woman more than a kind of being that can only talk about what she eats, drinks, and more than all, what she wears and what her neighbor wears; discuss the latest bit of scandal and take a superficial view of everything upon which she languidly condescends to pass judgment.

"Miss Verne is an out−and−out Conservative, I can assure you," said Mr. Metcalfe, who now came to the relief of his countrywoman with a feeling of pride. "She can advocate the National Policy in a manner that would gain over the most stubborn Grit."

"Ah! Mr. Metcalfe, please do not over−rate my abilities in that respect," said Marguerite in a manner which coolly implied that she did not wish to get up such an argument as she certainly must if confronted by the strong Grit views of her interesting and witty companion.

"Never mind, Marguerite, we will not measure weapons this time," cried the former, "But I must try to shake some of the Tory off before we have done with you. Remember I have made more than one staunch Liberal convert."

Marguerite laughed at the girl's spirit of enthusiasm and thought "what a power is woman when her energies are directed aright?" Then her thoughts took rapid flight to another and different subject. She was thinking if it were possible for woman to exert her influence in the manner she would like that the end would justify the means.

"Not that exactly," mused the maiden as she thought of—but, perhaps, it is better we do not unearth Marguerite Verne's thoughts at that moment. She is doubtless sensitive, let us act accordingly and turn to other subjects. There was a sweet simplicity in her attire on this evening. Her dress of pale−blue bunting was plain indeed, and save the silver bracelets upon her beautifully−rounded arms, there was no other attempt at ornament.

Her cheeks were pale, and a shade thinner than usual, and to this fact the girl may attribute her liberty or rather freedom from the giddy rounds of dissipation into which she was reluctantly forced from morn to dewy eve and from dewy eve to rising morn.

Mrs. Verne had to acknowledge that her daughter's health was getting impaired, and that nothing but rest would restore her former strength, therefore consented that Marguerite should spend a few days with the young lady whom she met and became on intimate terms during a short time spent on one of the steamers plying between Liverpool and Belfast.

Edith Stanhope, as we have hitherto intimated, was a bright, witty English girl, and her companionship was healthful and invigorating.

She admired the gentle, winning, child−like ways of the New Brunswick maiden, and together they formed a pretty picture.

Mr. Stanhope had been a widower for many years, his household affairs being managed by a maiden sister, whose affection for the child Edith increased as the latter grew to womanhood, and nowhere could be found a more peaceful, inviting and cosy little nest than that of the much esteemed and venerable lawyer—Charles Stanhope, of Cheapside.

Edith Stanhope had reached the age of twenty−one, and still “in maiden meditation fancy free.” Her life was an undisturbed and peaceful dream—her days an enjoyable round of simple domestic pleasure, broken in upon now and then by a few of the young schoolmates or companions of her childhood.

How keenly Marguerite then felt the difference of their respective positions as she glanced up from the newspaper and saw the real happiness that shone so steadily upon the girl's countenance, while she, wearied with the gaieties of life, was yearning—oh! so longingly—for the real domestic happiness that she must never realize.

“Marguerite Verne, am I to attribute that gaze to fond admiration or pertinent curiosity?” cried Edith, going up to her friend and playfully shaking her by the shoulders.

“To neither, Edith,” said Marguerite, almost sadly, “but to a worse trait in my character—to jealousy,” and the short sigh fell faintly upon Edith's quick and acute ear.

“To jealousy, you minx,” cried the latter, who had a habit of repeating the speaker's words, which, in many cases, gave more effect to her arguments.

“To jealousy, indeed. Is it because I have the audacity to address your countryman, 'whose way of life is fallen into the sere, and yellow leaf',” replied she, her eyes sparkling with animation and keen enjoyment.

“Thank you for the quotation, Edith,” said Marguerite, running her small, delicate fingers through the meshes of her friend's golden−brown hair.

The reply was interrupted by an exclamation of the New Brunswicker. “Miss Verne I presume you have read both editorials. Is it not amusing how each goes for the other.”

“Yes, Mr. Metcalfe, but I must confess that I am somewhat like a lady whom I once heard say, 'Well, dear me, I think everything in the *Telegraph* is all gospel until I take up the *Sun* and it upsets every speck of belief as fast as it went up. Dear me, I wish I knew which side was genuine, for both cannot be truth.'“

A general laugh followed and Edith Stanhope exclaimed, “I think that your friend must have been on the fence, Marguerite.”

“Yes, and watching to see which side to jump on in the coming election,” cried the old lawyer who had hitherto remained a listener.

A burst of merriment arose from the trio on the other side of the room and rang out in peals of laughter.

“Oh, papa, you naughty man to make such an unscrupulous remark about one of our sex,” cried Edith, assuming an air of injured innocence and trying to look very severe.

“I take it all back my dear. Come let us have some music. It is too bad to be wasting so much time when one has an opportunity of having so much ability on hand.”

“Do you allude to Marguerite or myself, papa,” cried Edith gaily, while she arose and playfully led her companion, to the piano.

“It is dangerous to say much here unless one very carefully considers ere he speaks,” said the fond father, casting a glance at his daughter that was worthy of the most ardent lover.

“Well, well, papa, you will go scot−free this time. Of course Marguerite will favor us.”

The latter needed no coaxing. She played a selection of old−fashioned airs that were more appreciated than the most brilliant fantasia or classic opera. Then followed a few of the songs she used to sing for her father and one which had caused the heart of Phillip Lawson to beat wildly as he stood listening to the voice he loved so well and bitterly thought of the world that lay between him and his buried love.

“Miss Verne, you have certainly much power of expression,” said the New Brunswick gentleman as the last note had died away, and, Edith Stanhope sat silent as if fearing to break the spell.

“I seldom sing except to amuse my father, and the class of music I practise is simple,” was the quiet reply.

A young girl attended by a gentleman several years her senior, now entered the room. The former was Edith

Stanhope's favorite cousin, and the latter was a distant relative, who was home on a vacation from a neighboring town, where he held a responsible position in a banking establishment.

"Ah, my fair cousin; and you have condescended to come at last," ejaculated Edith, embracing the latter, and then extending her hand to the gentleman, exclaimed, "and you, Frank, it is time that you presented yourself. Just think, you have been here nearly a week—"

"Not so hard, cousin Edith. Your humble servant arrived on Monday, and this, I believe, is Wednesday."

"That's right, my boy, defend yourself," said Mr. Stanhope, looking proudly upon the fair group around him.

As conversation set in lively and amusement was the order of the day, Mr. Stanhope and his friend quietly sat and looked on, occasionally answering to some of the sallies sent off at their expense.

A servant now entered with the evening mail, and assorting the pile Mr. Stanhope passed to Mr. Metcalfe the two provincial dailies.

"The very information I was seeking," cried the latter in excited tones. "Just read that."

Mr. Stanhope glanced at the article in question and seemed lost in amazement; then hastily exclaimed: "It is wonderful how these fellows get things so soon. The matter has indeed gained publicity, and the young fellow need hesitate no longer."

"Miss Verne will no doubt be able to give you much information, as the young lawyer is quite popular in her native city. I may have known of him, but I'm inclined to think he has established himself since I left St. John."

Mr. Stanhope passed the newspaper to Marguerite, who, for some unaccountable reason, felt more curiosity than she was willing to acknowledge.

As she silently read the paragraph a tremor passed through her frame, and her heart began to throb wildly, but no emotion was visible.

"I am quite well acquainted with Mr. Lawson. He is a very great friend of my father's," were the words that rose to the girl's lips when she had gained courage to speak.

"That is splendid," exclaimed Edith, who now became interested in the matter; "I suppose he is young, and handsome beside," added she in a different tone.

"Keep that part of it to yourself, Miss Verne," said Mr. Metcalfe, in a tantalizing manner; "Miss Edith is not going to rob New Brunswick's daughters of what is theirs by right."

"But if the fortune be forthcoming here we should insist that the heir give some fair one here the benefit of it," cried Edith, who thought she had the best side of the argument.

"Don't quarrel over this matter, I pray," said the distant relative with a merry twinkle in his eye, "I am going to ship for St. John one of these days, and will, if possible, visit the McGregor heir and make him acquainted with the designs of my fair Saxon Edith."

"And you will exonerate Miss Verne from any complicity in the matter."

"Most certainly I do," said the relative, while Marguerite Verne hurried carelessly away to hide the tell−tale blushes which sooner or later would betray her.

CHAPTER XXX. FINANCIAL EMBARRASSMENT.

And now let us turn to Mr. Verne, who is in a sad state of physical prostration.

The financial storm which overhung his daily prospect has at last swooped down upon him in merciless fury, hurling down every hope that hitherto buoyed him up and whispered encouraging words as he struggled on.

Mr. Verne had shut himself in his private apartments and asked that he might be left alone.

But ere long he was besieged by interviewers. Reporters, anxious to give the full benefit of the sad disaster to the clamoring public, who must know to a farthing the amount of the liabilities, and, of course, the assets.

But before "morning wore into evening" Mr. Verne had the comforting assurance of a sympathetic heart. Mrs. Montgomery had a telegram conveying news of the assignment, and in a few hours she was at home in "Sunnybank," trying every means within her power to console her stricken brother−in−law.

"It will never do to allow him to give up in this manner," said the true−hearted woman in a conversation with an old and tried friend of the family. "Something must be done to rouse him."

On the same evening a *Globe* containing the news of the failure was handed to Mr. Verne as he sat with bowed head gazing mechanically at the list of figures before him. The notice was favorable to the man of business. It spoke of the sterling integrity of Stephen Verne, and showed that the disastrous crash was from circumstances over which he had no control.

The cause of the assignment, it said, was due to the uncertainty of the moneys due him. The liabilities were large, but the assets would nearly cover them, and one thing was certain, the estate would not hold back one cent.

"Thank God," cried Mr. Verne as he threw down the paper and once more folded his arms across his breast, looking, as indeed he was, a total physical wreck.

But human charity is not common to the general public, nor among the weaker sex.

"What will the Vernes do now without their grand carriages and retinue of servants? That stuck up old Mrs. Verne will have to go into the work herself, and do as other people, and not be sticking on any more airs or she will get snubbed up pretty often."

"Yes, and I wonder how she will manage her trains now going through the kitchen when it was almost impossible for her to get along the aisle in Trinity."

"Pride always has a fall," chimed in another.

It was indeed a noteworthy fact that throughout the whole range of uncharitable remarks made upon the matter not one syllable was uttered against Marguerite.

On the contrary she excited the compassion of the most callous−hearted. "Poor Marguerite, she will feel it bitterly."

"Yes, most of all, for she loved her father dearly. It will almost break her heart to see him looking so ill."

"It was none of her doings I assure you. I have seen much of Miss Verne, and have learned that her tastes are of the most simple kind, and if she had her own way they would have lived in a more quiet style than that of Sunnybank."

The speaker was an intelligent woman of the middle class, whose business brought her in daily contact with the young lady, and she had thus formed a correct opinion of her.

Mrs. Montgomery did not wish to intrude upon the privacy of the stricken man, but she saw that he must be aroused from his apathy.

"It will kill him sooner or later," thought she, "but he must live to see a change for the better."

"Stephen, you have not written Matilda. It is better that she should know at once," said the woman, taking a seat beside her brother−in−law, and placing her hand upon his shoulder as gently as if he were an infant.

"God bless you, Hester, I am not alone; I yet have warm friends, let the world say what it will."

Mr. Verne's frame shook with emotion, and the tears stood in his eyes—a pitiable sight to the friend beside him.

"The world may say that you are an unfortunate man, Stephen, but it cannot say that you are a dishonest one," said the woman, cheerily; "and remember, Stephen," added she, "it is partly to the delinquency of others that you owe this."

“True, indeed, Hester,” said Mr. Verne, brightening up, “had they given me time I would have redeemed every dollar of my common debts, but as it is now, every cent's worth of property I own shall go into the assignee's possession as assets, for the benefit of each and every creditor.”

“Why, then, take such a gloomy view of the affair, Stephen? Hundreds have been in the same position and came out all right in the end, and I see no reason why you should form an exception.”

“That is true enough, Hester, but I feel that I am going downward.” And as Mr. Verne spoke he shut his teeth very firmly as if suffering intense pain.

Mrs. Montgomery was quick to detect the cause, but she made no comment upon it.

Prom the woman's heart went up a fervent prayer that Heaven would avert the threatening blow, and that quiet and content would yet reign in the now desolate home.

It was only by the utmost persuasion that Mr. Verne could be induced to eat a morsel of food.

“You are doing yourself a great injustice, Stephen. Think what you owe to your family. Think of Marguerite. Surely you will break her heart.”

“Ah, Hester, you have spoken truly. I must bear up for the sake of my child; but oh God, it is hard to be branded in the eyes of the world as a rogue and a scoundrel. Mothers will curse me, and the orphan's wail will haunt me throughout time and eternity!”

Once more Mr. Verne placed his hand against his breast as if to ease the spasmodic pain which had then seized him.

“He is going fast,” murmured Mrs. Montgomery, as she noted the livid lips and pallid face that followed the spasm.

“This cup of coffee will tempt anybody, and the rolls are delicious; just taste one, Stephen.”

“I was thinking of my darling child, Hester; how do you think she will bear the news? And to think of her being exposed to the scoffs of the world. Hester, I can stand anything but that,” and the groans that followed were agonizing.

“Stephen, I have more faith in Marguerite than you have. If you think she will mope and worry herself to death you are sadly mistaken.” Then in assuring tones added, “I do not wish to hurt your feelings, Stephen, but I firmly believe that as regards the financial trouble, Marguerite will not care a straw. She is not one of your namby−pamby girls, whom you could dress up and put under a glass case to look at. No, Marguerite is a rational, human being, capable of taking her place in the world, and looking misfortune in the face with a determination to succeed in whatever she may attempt.”

“Hester, you are a student of human nature. You are capable of judging aright. God grant that my child may meet this trouble as you predict,” said Mr. Verne, as he tried to swallow the food which had been so temptingly prepared by the ministering angel who now strove to make smooth the hard, rough pathway over which he now daily trod.

It was Mrs. Montgomery's hard, strong hand, that penned the lines conveying the news to Marguerite. “I11 news comes soon enough.” was the former's remark, “and we can afford to await the next mail.”

As the important missive is on its way across the broad waters of the Atlantic, let us take the liberty of intruding upon the privacy of the mother and daughter who are still occupying their handsome suite of apartments in Picadilly Square.

Marguerite had returned from “Ivy Cottage,” the pretty little home of the Stanhope family, feeling much stronger and looking brighter and more cheerful.

“Mamma,” exclaimed the girl looking intently into the handsome face. “I have been thinking so much of home lately that it seems as if I had room for no other thoughts, and, oh, you cannot imagine how much I want to see papa.”

Marguerite made a striking picture reclining beside her mother, and one arm resting on her knee. Her delicate morning wrapper lay in graceful folds around her, and reminded one of the draperies of a Venus de Medici.

What a world of expression was in the violet eyes as they pleaded for the return to the dreary cheerless home. What a depth of meaning lay in the purely oval face so beautifully defined in every lineament. What nature could withstand Marguerite Verne's entreaties?

“My dear, I am thinking just as much about home as you are, but I keep it to myself. It is impossible for us to go for another month, and you know we have promised Sir Arthur to make a visit at his country seat—a beautiful

spot I am told."

"Surely mamma, you did not expect me to go there. I cannot endure the thoughts of coming in contact with that disagreeable man," and Marguerite shrugged her shoulders in unaffected disgust.

"Marguerite, I am ashamed to think that I have a child capable of such ingratitude. It is enough for Evelyn to become obstinate and oppose me in everything, but, really, I did not expect it of you."

At this point Mrs. Verne became deeply affected, and very much inclined to cry, but she thought such a course inopportune and availed farther provocation.

"Has Eve been here lately, mamma," asked Marguerite, suddenly.

"If you have any respect to me please don't mention her to me again, Madge. I have done everything for that girl that a fond, idolized mother could do, and what is my reward? Base ingratitude of the worst kind. Talk of mothers; what do they live for; and Mrs. Verne stood with clenched hands, looking, indeed, a living representation of one of the Three Furies.

"Mamma, dear, do not look like that, I cannot bear to see you thus," cried Marguerite, catching hold of the fold of the cashmere gown and attempting to draw her mother towards her.

"I cannot help it, Madge, when my children are so disobedient. Surely you cannot have forgotten the teachings of that Book, which says, 'Children obey your parents in the Lord' for this is the first commandment with promise. Oh, it is so hard to think that my children have such unchristian spirits."

"Come mamma, let us think of something else for a little while, and then we will both act differently," said Marguerite, trying to appear more cheerful than the circumstance would admit.

"I may just as well tell you once for all, Madge, that nothing will conciliate me but your acceptance of Sir Arthur's kind invitation which we can forward without delay."

Marguerite remained in silence for some moments. She was sorely tried, yet she brought reason to bear upon every point at issue. "If I go," reasoned she, "Sir Arthur will think that I give him encouragement, and that would be acting dishonestly, and again if I do not go mamma will have her feelings so deeply outraged that I fear the consequence. Oh! that I were once more in the protecting arms of my dear, dear father." The girl then thought of the lonely, silent man, plodding on so patiently amid the daily straggles of life, and her heart went out in deep fervent sympathy.

Presently her mind was made up. Going straight to her mother's dressing room, whither the latter had retreated in a state bordering on madness, Marguerite threw her arms out in imploring gesture and stood for a moment, then exclaimed between tears and sobs, "Mamma, do not judge me harshly, I want to do what is right—but it is so hard."

Mrs. Verne saw that her daughter was relenting, and uttered not a word.

"Mamma, dear, give me time and I will prove a dutiful daughter." She was going to say more when a servant entered with a note, which from its negligent appearance was evidently written in much haste. It was from Mrs. Montague Arnold, and contained only a few hurried sentences, so unintelligible that Marguerite did not attempt to interpret them.

"I will go at once, mamma," said the latter, "and see what is the trouble. Poor Eve, she seems always in some fuss."

As Mr. Arnold's residence was only a short distance, Marguerite was there in a very few minutes after the delivery of the note.

"Oh, Madge, how can I tell you; I know it will break your heart. Oh, poor papa? Oh! Madge—is it not dreadful?"

"What do you mean, Eve?" cried Marguerite, her ashen face sufficient proof of the shock she had already undergone. "Speak, Eve; for heaven's sake tell me the worst. Is papa dead?"

"Oh worse than that, Madge—worse than that. Death is nothing in comparison!"

"Eve, I cannot stand this horrible suspense; for mercy sake, I implore you tell me the truth," cried the girl, her bosom heaving wildly and her limbs trembling so that she had to grasp the mantel beside her for support.

Mrs. Arnold then pulled the bell−rope and a servant, or rather page, answered the summons.

"Bring me that package of letters lying on the small cabinet in my boudoir," said she, with as much nonchalance as if nothing of any importance occupied her thoughts.

The boy returned and presented the desired package on a small and unique silver salver, lined with gold and

enamel.

“Here it is, Madge,” said Mrs. Arnold, passing a somewhat lengthy telegram into the girl's hand.

The latter run her eye hastily over the contents and turned deathly pale. “Poor, dear, papa!” were all the words she could say, when an icy chill ran through the delicate frame, and the tender−hearted daughter fell into a deadly swoon.

Mrs. Arnold did feel something akin to pity when she saw the graceful form prostrate at her feet, and as she stooped down and took the cold hand in hers, murmured “poor little Madge—you were not fashioned for this decidedly calculating world. Your heart is too tender—far too tender.”

“You must be brave, Madge,” said Mrs. Arnold, on seeing Marguerite restored to something of her former self. “I'm afraid you would be more of a drawback to papa at present than a help.”

But Marguerite was of a different opinion. “Oh! if I were only near him, to comfort him,” thought she, “I could indeed do something. My sadness to−day was but a presentiment of this. Oh, dear! will I ever see papa alive again!”

“Papa will be all right, Madge. It is to yourself you must now look, for more depends upon you now than you at present realize.”

“You speak in enigmas, Eve. Tell me what you mean,” cried Marguerite, in a bewildered sort of way.

“I will wait until you are a little stronger, Madge. Go home now and tell mamma what has happened; I know she will act like a sensible woman. You know, Madge, she is always composed. I verily believe,” added Mrs. Arnold, “that mamma would feel at ease if all the friends she had committed suicide, or died from some fearful epidemic.”

“Don't talk about mamma in that way, Eve; I cannot bear to listen.”

Mrs. Arnold thought just then that the girl would listen to something, perhaps to her, far more disagreeable, but she held her peace.

Poor Marguerite. All prospect of happiness had now fled from her vision. She saw instead sorrow, disappointment, and, perhaps, death. “If papa survives the shock I will face the world, and, amid poverty, and the slights of my former companions, I will toil—yes, I will work at anything that I can do in honesty.” And with this high resolve Marguerite set forth to break the sad news to her worldly−minded mother.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE STORM THICKENS.

It would be much easier to imagine than describe the violent paroxysms of grief (if we may use the expression) which seized upon Mrs. Verne when Marguerite calmly broke the unwelcome news. Grief did we say—yes—"not the grief that saps the mind," but grief for the deprivation of those luxuries which the woman had considered as part and parcel of herself.

"It is just what one might have expected from the loose way in which your father has been transacting his business," cried Mrs. Verne, wringing her hands, and lamenting wildly; and then turning upon her daughter the full benefit of her penetrating eyes, added, "and it is not himself that will suffer the most, but think of us Madge. How nice you will look going out to earn your living, perhaps, behind some counter, or worse still, apprenticed to a dressmaker and blinding yourself over such rags as we would not condescend to put on, nor, more than that, recognize the people to whom they belonged."

After this harangue, Mrs. Verne threw herself into the elegant fauteuil of carved ebony and oriental tapestry, and poured forth another volume of tears more prolific than the first.

"Mamma, dear, what is the use of all this. The affair is bad enough, but it might be a great deal worse. Papa is still alive and we can live just as happily on a small income as indulging in such luxury. Really, my dear mamma, I feel that we are going to be much happier. I need not, as you remarked, have to submit to any great drudgery, I can teach music and painting, thanks to those kind instructors who took such pains in my education, and if I fail to make that kind of work remunerative, why I can easily fit myself for a school−teacher."

"Marguerite Verne!" cried the horrified mother, raising her hands in gestures of dismay, "You will drive me mad! A daughter of mine a school−teacher! Oh! dear, did I ever think I would raise a child to inherit such plebeian ideas. Bad as Evelyn is with all her faults she would not hurt my feelings in such a manner."

Marguerite looked at her mother with a feeling of compassion, yet there were rebellious thoughts in her mind.

"Is it possible that mamma forgets poor dear papa, who is most to be pitied?" murmured she, as she strove to hide the tears that would flow in spite of all her efforts.

"And only to think of your papa's slackness. I shouldn't wonder one bit if he gave up every cent's worth of property, and all the furniture into the bargain. It is just such a trick as he would do, for the sake of being called an honest man. Yes, it is very nice to hear people talking of 'honesty being the best of policy' where no one is concerned in the matter; but when it comes home, I say a man's first honesty is to his family."

"Pray, mamma dear, do not worry over our worldly loss; it will all come right," whispered Marguerite, in tones of endearment, and stroking the luxuriant mass of silken hair that crowned the pretty, classic−shaped head.

"Well, I hope so, Madge; but I am sorry that I cannot entertain your very convenient sort of opinion," returned Mrs. Verne, in a half angry and petulant mood; then rising from her seat, took up a piece of crewel embroidery, saying, "I suppose if I have to turn out and earn my living I had better begin at once," and suiting the action to the word, was soon busily engaged in making some pretty stitches upon the handsome panel of rich garnet−colored velvet.

While Marguerite sat buried in deep thought, turning over and over in her mind what she must do, an attendant arrived with a letter.

"It is from Aunt Hester," cried she, as she broke the seal and eagerly devoured its contents.

"It's just like her," said Mrs. Verne, as Marguerite passed the letter for her to read. "Yes, she is one of Job's comforters, and will make your papa feel a great deal worse than there is any need. Of course, she will be preaching day and night of our extravagance, and make him believe that we alone are the cause of all his misfortune—I should say, mismanagement."

"I think it was very kind of Aunt Hester to come to papa when he was so lonely," replied Marguerite, with a choking sensation in her throat.

"Yes, and it is a great wonder she did not say that *her friend, Mr. Lawson*, was one of the company, for it seems that not one of the whole Montgomery family can exist without him."

Mrs. Verne had emphasized the word friend in a very uncharitable manner, and her tone was spiteful in the extreme.

"Of course that letter means come home at once, but I think it would make us appear very ridiculous to go until some settlement was made and the gossips had their nine days' wonder over," said she in a very cool and decided manner.

"Mamma, dear, let us not delay one hour more than is necessary," cried Marguerite clinging to her mother's arm as if to gain assent. "We surely can be ready for the next steamer of the Anchor Line (the Olympian) which sails on Saturday."

"What nonsense, Marguerite! and only think of Sir Arthur's disappointment! Poor man! It is such a pity, and we have received such kindness." Mrs. Verne drew a long sigh and then added in an altered tone: "If your papa insists upon our return we shall go, but I cannot see why your Aunt Hester should take upon herself to dictate to us."

"We will, no doubt, hear from papa as well. You know, mamma, he owes me a letter now," said Marguerite, hopefully.

A caller was now announced and Lady Gertrude Fortescue, in her beauty and amiability, was ushered in with all the deference due her rank and position.

Mrs. Verne was intoxicated with delight as she thought of the great honor thus conferred upon her, and she soon forgot all her recent trouble in the sunshine of her ladyship's smiles.

"Miss Verne is certainly deserving of our most bitter hate!" cried the latter in affected severity. "You know we English women cannot tolerate a rival and this clever little Canadian (pointing to Marguerite) has outshone us all."

Marguerite was indulging in thoughts of a different nature, but she managed to reply to her ladyship, and occasionally ventured a remark upon some trivial matters.

"You will be at the reception to−night, my dear?" exclaimed the blonde beauty as she rose to go.

Mrs. Verne glanced at her daughter for answer and was pained to see the utter serenity of the pale but interesting face.

"Miss Verne has been slightly indisposed to−day and I fear that she will plead that as excuse to remain with Muggins."

"You naughty little thing," said her ladyship, poking the said Muggins with the top of her parasol and exciting lively responses from his poodleship, then turning to Mrs. Verne exclaimed, "Mrs. Arnold is looking well. It really seems to me that you Canadians have found the long−sought elixir of youth and beauty."

"You are inclined to flattery Lady Gertrude, but if you should ever visit New Brunswick you will find many pretty women."

"Now, my dear Mrs. Verne, *you* are inclined to teaze," cried her ladyship. You know full well that it is the gentlemen in whom I am solely interested. What have you to say in *their* behalf."

"New Brunswick can boast of many handsome, brave and clever men," was the reply, and this time Mrs. Verne spoke the truth.

"Oh well, I shall, perhaps, go and see for myself. Good−bye Mrs. Verne, and you my little rival, adieu until we meet again."

Her ladyship pressed the tips of her dainty fingers and playfully threw a kiss to Marguerite as she leaned against the balustrade and watched her visitor depart.

"What a sweet but sad face," thought the latter, as she was being assisted into the grand old family coach with its richly−caparisoned steeds and gay trappings.

"To Hyde Park, James," then leaning back amid the luxurious cushions the almond−eyed beauty murmured "that girl has a tender spot in her heart which all the pleasures and gaiety of a thousand worlds like this can never heal. Ah, well we women must endure," and with the last remark there arose a sad and weary look that would seem strangely at variance the gay, sporting butterfly who talked and chatted of airy nothings in Mrs. Verne's drawing−room.

And now to Marguerite. She has donned her tasteful gray walking costume and accompanied by Muggins is on the way to Mrs. Arnold's residence, not far distant.

"I am so glad you have come, Madge, I was just going to send for you. My head has ached all morning. I can think of nothing but dear papa. Just imagine him without a cent in the world, and at his age. Oh, it is too horrible for anything."

Mrs. Arnold now drew her elegant lace handkerchief across her eyes to arrest the falling tears.

Marguerite was accustomed to her sister's demonstrations, and was not at all affected as she should be.

“Madge, you are aware, I suppose, of the trouble between mamma and me, and now I have no one but you to offer any sympathy.”

Marguerite looked at her sister in surprise.

“You need not look that way, Madge, I mean it, and when you have—“ Mrs. Arnold checked herself. She was on the eve of a declaration which she must at all hazards supress. “I say it is most cruel of mamma to treat me in the way that she does. Really, Madge, it makes me feel terribly; and oh! poor, dear, papa! I don't know why it should affect me so strangely, but really, Madge, I cannot get it out of my head but that papa is going to die.”

“Oh, Eve!” cried Marguerite, clinging to her chair for support, “pray do not say such a dreadful thing.”

“Well, you know, Madge, that grief will sap all the vitality of stronger constitutions than papa's.”

Mrs. Arnold sat watching the effect of her words upon her sister, and tried to be engaged assorting some letters that had been misplaced in her desk.

“If it were only in my power to save papa such trouble I would make any sacrifice,” cried the latter, suddenly glancing at Marguerite.

“And would I not, too? Oh! Eve,” said the girl, with an eager, hungry look upon her face.

“You can *now*, if you wish, Madge,” said Mrs. Arnold, in the coolest possible manner.

“Eve, this is too serious a matter for jesting. You know not what you say,” cried Marguerite, wildly.

“I know that you can pay every cent of papa's debts if you will only marry Hubert Tracy!”

“Eve! Spare me!” exclaimed Marguerite, turning deadly pale.

“Yes, my dear—I knew full well that you could not make such a sacrifice. Why did I mention it. Forgive me, dear Madge, I shall never mention the subject again. I told Hubert that I knew it was useless for him to urge the suit.”

“And he has spoken of it lately?” cried Marguerite.

“Not later than this morning, my dear. He called a few moments after you went away, and seemed to be in great distress at papa's misfortune. Poor fellow, he was deeply moved, and said that if you would only consent to be his wife that his immense fortune would be at your entire control. What a pity, dear Madge, that you cannot treat him as he deserves—he is such a generous−hearted fellow.”

Marguerite Verne was, indeed, an object of pity as she sat with her eyes fixed upon the wall opposite, while a look of anguish now settled down upon her features, and made them rigid as death.

“Don't worry, darling. I cannot bear to see you thus. If Hubert Tracy is not willing to settle papa's affairs without sacrificing your happiness, why let it go. Papa may get over it, and if he has to face the world and earn his living by drudgery, it may do him good in the end; if not, we cannot help it, my dear: So don't worry any longer.” And Mrs. Arnold swept across the room with the air of an empress, while with her lace handkerchief she wiped the tears from Marguerite's eyes.

“Has Hubert Tracy the full control of his estates, Eve?”

“Yes, Madge. He has had ever since his uncle died, which was more than three months ago.”

“Poor dear papa,” murmured the girl in very bitterness of soul.

“She will come to it yet,” thought Mrs. Arnold, “nothing succeeds like moderation,” and with the most consummate adroitness commenced asking questions concerning her mother.

“You know, Madge, that mamma is so much wrapped up in Sir Arthur, the ugly old bore, that she can listen to no one else, and for no other reason than to have you addressed as 'my lady.'“

“Oh Eve, do not say that.”

“I *will* say it Madge, and more than that I will say that mamma has no more respect for her children's feeling than for those of her meanest servant. She would think it splendid to marry you to a gouty old baronet old enough to be your father, yes your grandfather, while I would not insist upon your favoring a handsome young man with wealth and a large heart into the bargain.”

“Eve, you do mamma a great injustice,” cried Marguerite, who be it said to her credit, always defended the absent one, “she already knows my feelings towards Sir Arthur and has used no coercion since and now that we are soon going home there is no need of referring to the affair.”

Marguerite was annoyed and her sister saw that she had said enough, so with diplomatic tact, she became

doubly tractable and tried to appear in sympathy with every word that the girl uttered.

"Are you going to accompany us to the opera this evening, Madge? My amiable husband, anxious to make reparation for past neglect, has formed a set and I must certainly go."

Marguerite was pained at her sister's composure and thought of the protestations of grief she had hitherto exhibited.

"Is it possible," thought she, "that Eve can dissemble so much?" Then turning to her sister she exclaimed: "Eve, I cannot go; I am miserable enough already and—"

"I see how it is, Madge, you are inclined to be selfish, and cannot bear to see the happiness of others."

"Happiness!" murmured the girl, "as if there is much happiness under all this false glittering surface." But Mrs. Arnold heeded not the remark and added:

"Poor mamma, I know she feels badly, I will ask Montague to call and invite her to join us. I know I did wrong to say so much, but at times you know, dear Madge, I have an ungovernable temper."

"I am going now," said Marguerite rising and holding out her hand to Mrs. Arnold.

"I know Madge well enough to perceive that she will have no peace of mind this night. How she will brood over what I nave said!" and turning to the spacious mirror Mrs. Arnold exclaimed, "Ah! madame, you can dupe more clever minds than that of your confiding little sister."

In the quiet of her own room Marguerite Verne gave full vent to her pent−up feelings in an outburst of tears. Hers was not a nature that could endure with fortitude the ills that oftentimes befall humanity; but like the fragile reed that bends with the storm, and when the force of nature has spent itself raises its head heavenward.

And now the girl was prostrated, and bowed her head in keenest agony. She wished not the interruption of mother or friends, but remained silent and preoccupied.

On the third day in question a reaction set in, and Marguerite had made up her mind to act.

"I am reconciled to my fate," murmured the girl, as she carefully arranged her pretty morning toilet, and then went to her mother's apartments to receive the extremely conventional style of endearment.

"You should have been with us, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Verne, as she glanced at the interesting maiden, and thought that grief, if anything, made her more bewitching.

"You should have been there, dear," cried she in ecstasies of unfeigned delight. "It was such a charming little coterie, and the dear girl has such a happy knack of making her friends appear at ease, while Montague is so attentive that with all his faults one can forgive him, and admire his highly−polished manners. And you should have seen Lady Gertrude, my dear. She looked radiant in that *eau de nil* satin and honiton−lace flounces, but really I think that her ladyship is very forward, as she certainly was making love to Mr. Tracy and using all her blandishments with a master stroke."

"And what matters that to me," thought Marguerite, though she expressed it not She was puzzled to know what had wrought such a change in her mother, as the latter talked of dear Eve and Mr. Tracy in one breath and seemed enthusiastic over each particular.

In order to explain the cause of Mrs. Verne's altered manner we would have to repeat a conversation which a few hours earlier took place in Mrs. Montague Arnold's boudoir with mother and daughter as occupants. Suffice it to say that a reconciliation was effected, and that Mrs. Verne agreed to everything advanced by her daughter, also that they were now united in a common cause, and that Sir Arthur Fonister was ruthlessly cast aside for a more profitable consideration, and one which would gratify the wants and wishes of both.

"But enough of this for the present, my dear," said Mrs. Verne, then instantly changing look, tone and manner, exclaimed, "It is strange that we have not heard from home. Madge, I trust, things are not growing worse. Indeed, I feel uneasy, but we must be prepared; nothing seems improbable nowadays."

It was Marguerite's turn now to speak. Looking steadily into her mother's face she asked, "Mamma, did Eve tell you what had passed between her and Mr. Tracy?"

"Yes, dearest, and I begged that she would think no more of the matter. When she declared that she would make double such sacrifice for her dear papa, I told her that I believed she would, but that she was of a different disposition from you, and would suit herself to circumstances, and besides she is of a strong mind and possessed of much will, and is capable of smoothing all difficulties, while you, my dear Madge, are a tender, sensitive creature, whom it would be more than cruel to submit to anything contrary to your wishes."

"Mamma, I am capable of more than you think. I have never looked upon Hubert Tracy otherwise than a

friend. Indeed I have friends whom I like very much better, but I will receive him as my future husband, and try to do the best I can to repay him for unreciprocated love.”

With these words died all the hopes that Marguerite hitherto vainly cherished, and as she received her mother's warm embrace, her heart seemed to have suddenly turned to ice, and her breath more chilling than the piercing blasts of the frigid zone.

CHAPTER XXXII. MONTAGUE ARNOLD IN DIFFICULTY.

Scene, a London club−room. It is an early hour and the dons of the gay metropolis have not yet put in an appearance. The handsomely−furnished rooms are almost silent while the endless array of porters and waiters are on the alert, and cooks are busy in getting up the various epicurean compounds for which they are noted and to which the gay votaries of these resorts are ever ready to pay devoted attention.

“What! here already, chum? You've kept your word for once.” Montague Arnold was somewhat inebriated but still in full possession of his senses.

Hubert Tracy glanced moodily at his companion and muttered something in the fashion of an oath, then exclaimed, “and a deuced hard time I had to get here.”

He was dressed in the most elaborate style and notwithstanding his irregular habits was a prepossessing young man. His chestnut curls gave a romantic look to his well−shaped head and would have elicited the admiration of many a fair maiden. “Let us have what you want to say, Mont.”

“I'm afraid that you're not in the listening humor, boy,” said the other with an ill−at−ease look and manner.

“I ought to be pretty well used to it by this time,” was the reply.

“Well, the truth of it is I'm on the rocks again and you must get me off somehow. Cursed fool that I was to risk my last ten thousand!”

“Yes, and a kind of a fool that never sees his folly until too late,” exclaimed Hubert Tracy, in anything but sympathetic tones.

“Heap on the agony, my boy! I can stand more than that!” said the other taking a cigar from the elaborate case and puffing the fantastic wreath of smoke into all visible space.

“It's no use for you to be fighting against fate any longer. You can't keep up this thing forever. Mont, your last venture was a failure. What do you expect from this?”

“As true as the heavens are above us you will be more than repaid. I have spoken to Eve and she says that you can count on her sure. Yes, sir, you're one of the family already.”

“Remember, Mont Arnold, if you fail now, when I need you most, there will be the devil to pay.”

The young man gave his companion a look that almost startled him, then added, “If I am fooled, Mont, there will be a just retribution.”

“Good−heavens! don't look like that, boy; you would freeze a fellow to the very joints and marrow; besides, there is no need of it now, when you have everything your own way. Why, man, the old dame has thrown over Sir Arthur.”

“Egad, I thought as much, from the way the old clown, glared at me last night at the Plough and Harrow.”

“Plough and Harrow! what the deuce took you *there*?”

“To see the country lasses have a glass of hot punch, and hear the orations of the country squires.”

“And my would−be brother was representing his fair estate.”

“Representing the gout, more like, for as he got tipsy I could see him wince, and when an old yeoman, with a big red head, made light by the whiskey, fell over our friend, he roared louder than a calf.”

“It's all up with him and my precious mother, at any rate,” said Montague Arnold, twisting his waxed moustache into the most artistic style, and laughing vociferously.

Wine was now passed around, and both gentlemen became extremely amiable. Family matters were discussed and confidences were exchanged, and Montague Arnold received a cheque for *five* thousand dollars “to straighten him out once more,” as he expressed it, until he could make some settlement of his own financial resources.

Montague Arnold was not in want. He was possessed of a large income, but owing to his extravagant living and dissipated habits, his demands were daily becoming more pressing; and when he had staked ten thousand dollars at the gambling table and lost, nothing but the helping hand of Hubert Tracy could save him.

The dissipated husband became very happy and at the same time very garrulous. He discussed several of Mrs. Verne's qualities both as negative and positive quantities, but more particularly the former, and then referred to Marguerite.

It may be said in justice to Montague Arnold that he considered her the living embodiment of womanly

perfection, and though leading a fast life and seeing much of the grosser side of human nature, he still considered pure, noble−minded women the most exquisite production of God's handiwork.

“Mont,” exclaimed Tracy interrupting his companion, “if I can only secure Marguerite Verne as my wife I will give up all my vices and follies. I will lead a different life. Oh! if I had reformed years ago I might have had no rival; but then, there is Lawson and he has all along had the inside track.”

“And as poor as a church mouse; bah! No fear of Madame Verne allowing her daughter to wed a penniless lawyer. Man, the chances now are all in your favor.”

“The old lady was charmingly condescending last evening, I could almost feel her smiles,” said Hubert, becoming more buoyant in spirits as the wine took effect.

Other members of the club began to drop in and Montague Arnold being a general favorite soon forgot his former straitened circumstances. His spirits rose to an almost uncontrollable degree, while his companion complaining of headache sought the outer air.

As the club−room was situated in the fashionable West End of the city, the young man turned his steps in the direction of Regent Park, and sought the delightful shade of its sheltering foliage.

Like Rotten Row, Hyde Park had also its favorite resort and in this delightful spot Hubert Tracy sat him down to rest. He had not long remained thus when he heard voices; and presently the rustling of leaves showed that the speakers had taken seats on the other side of the shrubbery.

“She is one of the sweetest creatures I ever beheld,” exclaimed a lady rapturously.

The voice and style of expression indicated the speaker as a woman of rank, and from the outline of her form Hubert Tracy could discern she was also a woman of taste and fashion, also that she was young and exceedingly graceful.

“Lady Gertrude is greatly in love with her, and she says that she is the most interesting girl she ever met.”

“I am of the opinion of her ladyship,” said the other, who also appeared to be of rank and culture, “but I cannot say that I would rave over Mrs. Arnold, as the most of our gallants do. In my eyes Miss Verne is far above her sister.”

Hubert Tracy now felt a nervous sensation which made him uneasy, and yet he was compelled to remain. His curiosity was aroused, and he leaned eagerly forward where he could almost feel the speaker's breath upon his cheeks.

“It was reported that Mrs. Verne was very anxious to secure Sir Arthur Forrister for Miss Marguerite, but it was hinted at Mrs. Arnold's drawing−room, not many evenings since, that Mr. Tracy is the lucky man.”

“What—not that young fellow who is so much in the company of Arnold?”

“Yes, the very one, Ernest. It is to be hoped that he will give up his bad habits, for if all reports be true he is not a proper husband for Miss Verne.”

“Who the deuce can they be?” thought Hubert, as he tried to get a better view of the pair. Lovers they certainly were not. As he listened he further learned that they were brother and sister, who had met after some weeks of absence—the former being a cadet in a military school in a neighboring borough.

“Egad, my young fellow, if it were you who made the speech there would be some fan before you shouldered your knapsack again,” muttered Hubert Tracy, as he sat eyeing the pair with no very great affection; then adding, spitefully, “curse the women; they are first and last in everything,” stealthily crept out and was soon in the open walk, jostled in turn by every pedestrian that crossed his path.

Not more than an hour had intervened when Hubert Tracy found himself chatting at his ease and listening to the pretty society talk of Mrs. Montague Arnold. She was attired in robes befitting a princess, and diamonds flashed from the superb necklace of antique design.

“You recreant!” exclaimed the beauty, throwing down the novel which had occupied the moments intervening the completion of the extravagant toilet and the arrival of an admirer. “I feel very much inclined to impose severe punishment upon you. Is it becoming a suitor to play truant when he wishes to hear favorably from his 'ladye fayre'?”

Hubert Tracy's eye brightened with expectation, and possessing himself of an elegant lounge, reclined in real oriental style.

“I was at mamma's not an hour ago, and she is delighted at the change I have made in Marguerite. She says that I am to have the whole credit of her conversion. Really, Hubert, I am more than delighted, and Madge is such

a deaf good girl."

"She is too good for me," thought the young man, but he deemed it best to maintain a spirit of independence.

Presently Mrs. Verne arrived, and also Marguerite, the latter smiling and apparently cheerful, but very pale. She was dressed in the utmost simplicity, and looked more childish and confiding than ever. As her eyes met those of Hubert Tracy, a deathlike chill seized her, but was unnoticed by the company.

"Madge has been indulged in idleness quite long enough, now we are to have some music," and sweeping across the room to the music−stand Mrs. Arnold began selecting her favorite pieces.

"Anything except conversation," thought Marguerite, and she played some exquisite, old Scotch selections, which under any other circumstances would act as a healing balm to a sore heart.

She thought of the hours when she had no audience save the quiet, silent man whom she loved so tenderly—that dear parent who had sacrificed so much for his family, and the thought was almost more than she could endure.

"Why can I live on and pass through this dreadful ordeal, when so many with bright, happy lives are suddenly cut off? But it is all for his sake, and he has suffered more for me. Yes, papa, I will make you happy, and you shall never know that I made any sacrifice for your dear sake."

As the hours crept stealthily on, Hubert Tracy was determined to offer his heart and hand to the woman of his choice.

Marguerite felt that her freedom was now gone forever, and resolved to appear at her best, and on the following morning, when her mother entered the breakfast−room, wreathed in smiles, and informed her that Mr. Tracy had gained her permission to urge his suit, she dreamily nodded assent, and tried hard to wear a bright and reassuring smile.

"Strength is given us from heaven," cried the girl when once the privacy of her own room was gained, "and if ever I needed such it is now. Merciful God, teach, me thy ways. Oh, give me the light of thy countenance to brighten my darkened path." A handsomely−bound volume lay on the dressing−case. It was the Book of Common Prayer.

Marguerite lifted it in reverential tenderness. It was a keepsake from her beloved parent, and she cherished it as something too sacred for other hands to touch.

As she opened it her eyes fell upon the collect for the eighth Sunday after Trinity, commencing thus:——"O, God, whose never−failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth."

"Precious truth," cried Marguerite as she read the words over several times, then murmured, "How simple of me to repine when it is my Heavenly Father who ordereth all things," and from that moment Marguerite Verne found strength given from above, as she bowed her head in meek submission, and resolved to lead a higher and better life.

"Madge, my child, you are looking radiant," cried the worldly mother, as she glanced at her daughter, for no other reason than to admire the style of the dress she had chosen for the reception of Mr. Tracy.

"And that corsage is so becoming, my darling. It alone would be enough to charm the most prosaic suitor, and that bracelet shows off so prettily on your white arm. I am so glad you put it on."

"Mamma, please be less lavish of your compliments, I cannot stand flattery. I would rather you would see some of my failings, and teach me how to do what is right."

Marguerite meant not to convey a reproof, but if Mrs. Verne had been at all sensitive, she would have felt somewhat uneasy. She would have felt that she had not given a thought to anything that concerned the proper guidance of her children, and she would have felt that the beauty of Marguerite's character was alone due to the inherent goodness that possessed her and made her in all respects a true, noble and beautiful woman.

Marguerite has now made up her mind and she will not swerve from the duty that lies nearest her. She meets Hubert Tracy with a calm composure and a steady light in her soft expressive eyes and when she had listened to his ardent declaration of love calmly replied:—"Hubert Tracy I will be your wife but only on these conditions—you will save my father from bankruptcy and ruin. Yes, save and protect his gray hairs and I will bless you until my dying hour."

"I will do that and more Marguerite, if you will only promise to love me—give me your whole and undivided thoughts," and falling down upon his knees before her Hubert Tracy for once meant what he said.

True indeed the redeeming trait in his character was his love for Marguerite Verne and any goodness that

remained was now visible upon his brow. Some trace of true manhood still lingered there and arrested the gaze of the pure−minded maiden as she looked upon him and prayed that the Omnipotent One would obliterate the earthy incrustations so firmly impressed there and instead cause His image to shine with undimmed lustre.

The young man divined the maiden's thoughts and he bent forward exclaiming:—“Madge, I am undeserving of you, God knows, but I will try and be worthy of you. Will you trust me?”

“Put your trust in God, Hubert. He alone can give you the support you need,” cried the girl in earnest tones.

“God bless you, my precious darling. It is hard for you now, but remember ere long you will bless the hour that you promised to be my wife.”

Marguerite Verne now felt the pressure of her lover's embrace and listened to his renewed protestations of love with a sad aching void at her heart which she had hitherto never felt and she dared not question herself as to the cause.

None knew it better than her affianced husband, but in the great selfishness of his nature he could look on with proud indifference and stifle his badly seared conscience with the thought that one day Marguerite would be the happier for her present choice.

Truly it may be said—

“God moves in a mysterious way.”

Ah, Marguerite never once dreamt that a destiny was before her other than that she had pictured out in frightfully vivid character. She little thought that in a certain sense Hubert Tracy's predictions should come true, and that she could one day exclaim—

“How natural is joy, my heart,
How easy after sorrow!
For once, the best has come that hope
Promised them to−morrow.”

CHAPTER XXXIII. DARK DAYS AT “SUNNYBANK.”

As Marguerite received the congratulations of her friends, who can paint the suffering which the heroic maiden was trying to live through. With pallid lips and thoughtful brow she received her affianced, and permitted his endearments with a passiveness that piqued him sorely; yet he comforted himself with the thought that, like all other girls, she would soon get over it, and he would be the subject of her entire devotion.

Hubert Tracy knew full well that Marguerite had a secret recess within her heart, where was hid away a very dear picture, but he knew she was too conscientious to allow herself to look into that chamber when the step she had now taken forbade all communication.

He fully trusted her, and well he might. Marguerite had written her father informing him of her betrothal and asking for his blessing.

The letter was hopeful, and referred to the generosity of her future husband in such a manner that one not in the possession of such proof of Hubert Tracy's villainy would have gladly welcomed him with a “God bless you, my son. Take my child and keep her happy until death do you part.”

Mr. Verne clutched the missive within his trembling hands and sat crouching over it an object of pity.

“My God! is it possible that my child loves the demon? Oh, heavens! am I spared to wreck her happiness as well as my own? Why did I not die ere this fatal news had reached me? It may be all for the best, but it is hard for me to bear. I must, and will, revenge the dreadful wrong done to Phillip Lawson, and I must save my child from what is worse than death! Death, did I say?” exclaimed Mr. Verne, in hysterical tones. “I could see her decked in the robes of the grave without a murmur, and strew flowers over her form without a sigh—but to give her up to that monster of deception. Oh, God! it is dreadful!” And the heart−broken man uttered a groan that would have aroused the pity of the most callous wretch that ever−breathed.

Dead silence reigned, and the affectionate spaniel looked into his master's face with a sympathetic look in his eyes, and then began to lick the weary trembling hands that were crossed upon the troubled breast.

“Poor brute, you feel for me,” said Mr. Verne caressing the animal, and being aroused to a sense of feeling.

“It must never be—no never,” and glancing at his watch he arose and staggered to the other side of the room.

“I shall see Phillip, God helping me. I now see the error in keeping the fact from him so long, but it may be all for the best God keep us faithful.”

It was well that Mr. Verne made that prayer, for his faith was growing weak, and the words gave him strength, and as he wends his way to Phillip Lawson's office, smiling upon each acquaintance that he meets, none would suspect the desperate state into which he was so suddenly plunged.

“Phillip will help me,” murmured he with a hopeful gleam in his eye. “Yes, Phillip will help me—he is my good angel, he will not forsake me now!”

Great was Mr. Verne's disappointment on hearing that the young lawyer had gone out of town on business, and would not return until the following day.

“God keep me faithful,” again murmured the man, as he stole softly up to his chamber, and quietly shut himself in, giving strict orders that none be allowed to gain admission.

But how often do we deceive ourselves; how often do we find that all our plans come to naught, and we prove ourselves miserable failures—altogether unfitted to accomplish the great task we have so vainly aspired to.

Mr. Verne had a worthy project in view, but he was not equal to the effort.

A domestic of “Sunnybank” being engaged at work in the upper hall heard a faint noise in the direction of Mr. Verne's dressing room. With feelings of alarm she ran to the spot and summoning all her courage entered and found her much respected master in a swoon his eyes wide open and his face rigid as death.

Within a few moments the entire household were trying to administer such restoratives as they deemed proper while awaiting the family physician who had been telephoned for with all haste.

When Mr. Verne gained consciousness he did not gain speech and when his physician arrived it was found that he had been prostrated by paralysis.

“It is indeed a sad case,” said the venerable looking physician as he stood beside the afflicted man and read in the passive face and benumbed limbs the story of an injured and cruelly outraged man.

It was not the first time that the sharp but kind bluish eyes looked down on such a wreck, and as they shed a silent tear we noiselessly steal away.

With the next day came the well tried friend Phillip Lawson. Sadly he stood and watched the half−conscious man. A gentle pressure of the hand was the only recognition, yet the young lawyer cherished hopes that were solely attributive to himself. “He will yet come around all right, sir?” said Phillip questioningly, but a grave shake of the hoary head was the physician's only reply.

Mrs. Montgomery (dear good soul) had now arrived and her presence seemed to bring cheer into the house of gloom.

At intervals the patient would watch her as she flitted noiselessly in and out unceasing in her labors of love, and a faint smile would light up his pallid face as if in recognition of such devotion.

It was the hour preceding midnight and Mrs. Montgomery had been persuaded to take a few hours rest while Phillip Lawson took her place beside the bedside.

Something in the wan face arrested the watcher's attention and stooping closely down he saw that the man was trying to communicate something that was on his mind.

“Is it anything that I know of,” cried Phillip in almost desperate tones; “anything that I can do for you?”

Mr. Verne gazed wildly upon him, then tried to raise his hand, but he was unable for the task, and relapsed into his former state of unconsciousness.

“I will make another trial,” thought Phillip, “when he becomes himself again. Poor man! whatever it may be I'm afraid the secret will die with him,” and the silent watcher was indeed sad at the thought.

The young man's reverie was indeed a painful one. It had lasted for more than an hour when he was aroused by a servant who now approached him, bearing a tray upon which was a cup of delicious coffee and some tempting cakes, which Mrs. Montgomery had thoughtfully ordered ere she sought repose.

“Such women are never half appreciated,” thought Phillip as he sat over the contents of the tray wondering why it was that two sister could be of such opposite nature; then he thought of the still great difference between mother and child—Mrs. Verne and the peerless Marguerite. It were well known that he knew not of the circumstances which had been the cause of the sudden prostration.

Providence had been kind to Philip Lawson through the sacrifice of a friend, yet the former knew it not, and when he had puzzled his brains in every conceivable manner to assist Mr. Verne in communicating to him the important message, he little knew it was the hand of mercy that kept it back.

What fervent prayers went up at that bedside; what supplications to the throne of God; what anxious enquiries.

Day after day found Phillip Lawson wending his way to “Sunnybank.” What a mockery the name seemed to convey. The golden sunshine was afraid to enter, save by stealthy glimpses through the barred windows and closed doors.

“If Marguerite can only get here soon,” said Mrs. Montgomery in impatient tones. “You know Mr. Lawson it is the only remedy. Poor man, it will either kill or cure. Poor Stephen, we must hope for the best, but I'm afraid he has seen the best of his days,” and the corner of the linen handkerchief stayed the falling tears.

“Poor girl,” replied the young man, “she will take it very hard, but Miss Verne is not one who will easily succumb.”

“Far from it, Mr. Lawson. She has the spirit of a martyr. I am not afraid to say that Marguerite Verne would put us all to shame. Many a time I have studied her character, and each time I found some new beauties to admire.”

“There is just such a mixture of poetry and romance as is appreciable,” said Mr. Lawson, a slight color betraying his interest.

“Though I am a practical, matter−of−fact woman, I really admire the vein of superstitious fervour that gives coloring to her many daily acts.”

“I remember one day,” added Mrs. Montgomery, “of asking her why she wore such an ugly looking bracelet when she had so many pretty ones. I can see the graceful figure, and the sweet smiling face, as the girl turned upon me the full force of her powerfully magnetic eyes, and with great earnestness replied: 'Dear Auntie, there is a story attached to that bracelet, and you shall hear it,” and taking a seat beside me she began——

“Mamma always told us that you were an apt student in history, and of course you know the story of James the Fourth of Scotland and his iron belt, and how each year he added an ounce to its weight, that it might inflict

the greater penance."

"I then said that when I was twelve years of age I had read the Lady of the Lake for the sixth time, and that I had made Fitz James my greatest hero, and notwithstanding his many short−comings, I yet looked upon the benefactor of the noble Douglas, and the lovely Ellen, with fond admiration."

"What a glow kindled in Marguerite's cheek," added Mrs. Montgomery, as she listened, and then with exclamation of delight she cried, "Aunt Hester, I really adore Scott, and I think that I outdo you, for I have committed to memory nearly all of the Lady of the Lake."

"But about the bracelet," I said, remindingly.

"Well, you know, Aunt Hester, I was not at all times a very good girl," said Marguerite, with a sympathetic glance, "and, indeed, found opportunity to make myself very disagreeable. It is indeed true, Auntie. Well, one day papa brought in a very handsome bracelet as a birthday present for Evelyn. It was a cluster of garnets in gold setting, and at night time, when the light fell upon it, shone brilliantly. I envied Eve her pretty bauble, and as I saw my sister, many admirers glanced upon it. I felt uncharitable. Why could papa not have given me one as well, I thought; and bitter feelings were cherished against my dear papa, and indeed, Aunt Hester," exclaimed the girl in all humility, "they might have rankled there, and made me worse than I would care to acknowledge, when a little circumstance, or trivial accident, came to my aid and taught me to rise above it. Like you, Aunt Hester, I am fond of history, and being out of reading matter, came across a volume entitled Tales from Scottish History."

"The very thing I have been seeking for months," I exclaimed, taking down the work from the bookshelf, and admiring the substantial binding of heavy dark blue morocco. Then I thought of the donor. I turned to the title page and saw my name neatly inscribed in papa's own handwriting.

"My darling papa, I exclaimed he sees every want. Not a wish of mine but is gratified; he has overheard me saying I should like just such a work, and has lost no time in getting it.

"I secured my favorite nook in the library and sitting down, the first thing that caught my eye was an adventure of James the Fourth—Scotland's Coeur−de−Lion in very deed. I read the story, and it filled me with remorse. The prince, was guilty of rebellious acts against his father, and I am guilty of rebellious *thoughts*. He wore an iron belt as a reminder of the sad fact. Well, my dearest and best of fathers, I shall have something likewise to remind me of my ingratitude."

"And you bought that homely bracelet, my child?" I said smiling at her earnestness.

"I did Aunt Hester, and when I feel that I am not doing what is right I just run to my dressing case and slip that on my arm," pointing at the same moment to the curious construction of bronze and steel that encircled her alabaster−like arm.

"And why are you wearing it to−day, my dear?" I asked.

"I felt inclined to be moody, Aunt Hester."

"I never remember of seeing such a bracelet worn by Miss Verne," ventured Mr. Lawson who had hitherto remained a silent listener.

"The occasion to which I refer, happened more than three years ago. I remember sometime afterward of asking Marguerite if she had her moody fits yet, and she smilingly said that the bracelet had been consigned to a resting place among her store of relics."

"Miss Verne now looks to a higher source. She needs no such talisman," said Mr. Lawson with an air of deep reverence.

"Yes, I believe Marguerite Verne is a Christian, though she makes no loud demonstration of the fact. No one possessing the sweet simplicity of character, the truly charitable spirit, and that universal good will to her fellow creatures can be otherwise than a Christian."

Mrs. Montgomery had given emphasis to her speech, as she never was weary in extolling the virtues of her favorite niece.

A slight movement on the part of the prostrate man called Phillip to the bedside.

Mr. Verne had awoke to consciousness, and no doubt had listened to the words so lately uttered.

A smile was upon his face as he extended his left hand to Mr. Lawson, and tried hard to regain his speech.

"Do not exert yourself, sir," said the latter putting his arm around the invalid with the tenderness of a woman. "All you must do is try to get a little stronger before Miss Verne arrives, after that you will be all right. It is enough to make any one sick to be alone in this big house."

Mrs. Montgomery watched the effect of the speech and felt sore at heart. “Poor man,” thought she, “he will never live to see it,” and as she looked a second time saw that Mr. Verne had suddenly relapsed into that comatose state sadly akin to death.

“Thy will be done,” murmured the watcher, and tenderly replacing the coverlid committed the prostrate form to the mercy of an Almighty Father.

CHAPTER XXXIV. DARK HOURS INDEED.

It is nearly midnight. Mrs. Verne had been prevailed upon (to use her own words) to attend a musical soiree given by a fashionable young matron in honor of her fifth wedding anniversary.

Hubert Tracy now danced attendance upon his mother−in−law, elect and on the present occasion was her beau chevalier.

He had taken leave of Marguerite with much reluctance. Her wearied and sadly pale face upbraided him but he kept stifling his conscience with the thought that she would be happier when the first impressions wore off.

“I am beginning to believe all women are alike,” exclaimed he petulantly as he was awaiting Mrs. Verne's appearance, “made up of April showers and ready to transfer themselves into a vale of tears whenever they think of their boy lovers but when they've made a good haul in the matrimonial net once and forever they forget all their swains and live for one grand purpose—to impress their friends with the greatness of their position. And I'm not going to be fooled either I tell you, Miss Marguerite. You've got to toe the mark too. None of your groaning over that chuckle−headed fool of a Lawson who has no more sense than he needs.”

“I beg pardon Hubert, for the detention,” exclaimed Mrs. Verne who now made her appearance rustling in gros grain silk and sparkling with superb brilliants, while the cleverly artistic touches administered to deface the inroad of merciless Time would lead one at first glimpse to suppose that the radiant matron was none other than a pretty woman of twenty.

“There is not the slightest need for apology,” said the young man bowing to the lady with the grace of a Crichton.

“I grieve to leave Madge this evening, but you know, my dear Hubert, that society is a merciless tyrant. Its mandates are cruel in the extreme,” and affecting the air of an injured woman Mrs. Verne ensconsed herself amid the luxuriant cushions.

“Marguerite is not looking well,” said the affianced glancing; at his companion to see that all was settled for her comforts.

“The poor child has such severe headaches, but in confidence, my dear, Hubert, I sometimes think she brings them on herself, for you know that she is too much given to reading, not that kind of reading that is needed or recreation, but works beyond what a woman should attempt.”

Hubert Tracy was not altogether in a talking mood, and was glad that his companion had claimed the floor.

“I for one do not believe in women making such a display in the literary line. There is no sense in it, Hubert.”

“You never yet saw a man in love with a literary star of the first magnitude. Literature is not for women, and when I see one setting up with an air of importance, and discussing science, history, biography, aye, and even religion, I just think, well, my lady, if you could see yourself as other see you, you would not get off your stuff in that style. To tell the truth I despise literary women, and if I had my way I would consign them to some seventh−class place of refuge, where they could howl and shout until they become what they generally end in—nothing.”

“I fear you would not make a bad attempt in that sort of business yourself,” said the young man much amused at the adroit manner which Mrs. Verne sought to gain a compliment.

“Heaven forbid it my dear, Hubert. From a child I always had a holy horror of blue stockings, and when I looked upon their coarse masculine faces I always experienced a feeling of disgust that I must confess increased with the years.”

“And you have met many I presume.”

“I merely refer to the works of the photographer or the artist, such, as you see on the vignette of their works. I am sure that they are ugly enough to frighten any sensitive child.”

“But Marguerite is not one of that class,” said the young man, lazily readjusting a cushion that had slipped out beneath his head.

“She is an exception so far as appearance is concerned, but that does not excuse her,” said Mrs. Verne, with a haughty toss of the head, then suddenly changing her voice to a very tender and confidential tone, exclaimed, “My dear Hubert, I am going to give you a little bit of advice, and I know you will receive it kindly, as you value my

child's happiness. I wish you to have a warm interest in everything that tends to her comfort; but above all things, do not encourage in her that desire to be in seclusion, and to mope and groan over imaginary grievances. It is, I am sorry to say, a failing which she has inherited from her father; and though I do not wish to speak disparagingly of my dear husband, I must say that he is in many respects a very peculiar man. It is, indeed, very discouraging for a woman to find that she has married a man who takes not the least interest in society and prefers to remain, night after night shut up in his own rooms, with no companion but a musty old ledger and a filthy pipe. Ugh! the very thought make me sick."

As Mrs. Verne's speech was accompanied by expressions of contempt and disgust, the impression made upon Hubert Tracy was not of the most flattering kind. He merely smiled, but gave no expression to his thoughts. They were not what would please his mother−in−law elect, and he had enough policy to conceal them.

And now for a second scene. The carriage had rolled away and Mrs. Verne had ascended the lofty stairway. As she stood in the corridor to throw aside the heavy wrap that enfolded her, she heard a confused din of voices. It startled her and caused her heart to beat violently.

"What a fool I am to get in such a state for nothing," but just as the last word was uttered, a servant opened the door leading from the inner hall. It was Marguerite's waiting maid.

The girl's face spoke sad news.

"In heaven's name what is the matter, Maria?" cried Mrs. Verne, thinking that a murder had taken place in their midst.

"It is Miss Verne, ma'am; but she is some better now. Oh! I thought, ma'am, that you would never come—and she was asking for you."

The poor girl was deeply attached to her young mistress and was nearly bereft of her senses when she found the latter lying upon the sofa in an apparently lifeless condition.

A physician had been summoned, who pronounced the girl in no imminent danger, but said that there was some anxiety to be feared as regards nervous prostration.

Marguerite had been quickly restored to consciousness, but she was white as the coverlid that overspread the luxurious bed upon which she lay so calm and still.

"My child, what has done this," exclaimed Mrs. Verne looking wildly around her as if for answer from some other than those that stood about.

"Don't be alarmed, mamma, I am better," said the girl, attempting to raise herself upon the pillow, but she fell back exhausted, and closed her eyelids, looking sad and wretched.

Mrs. Verne was ill at ease as she watched at Marguerite's bedside. Remorse for once seized upon her as she pictured herself moving about the gay throng, and her child, perhaps, on the verge of death.

"I might have known that she did not look herself, for those great circles around her mouth and eyes ought to have told me of her illness; but I trust she will soon be all right."

Mrs. Verne took a second glance at the pale face to gain more assurance and hope, and as she stood there tried hard to impute her daughter's present indisposition to every source, but the real one.

"The poor girl is fretting herself to death over her father's failure, for she knows that it will affect his reputation in society. She will not acknowledge it, but I am certain that she would feel the snubs of our most intimate friends more titan I would. Indeed, they would kill the poor sensitive Madge; and to think that Stephen Verne brought all this upon his family by his own slackness. Talk about honesty! It makes fools of people. A man who is so honest that he must trust every other man he meets is a fool, and worse than a fool, he's not only a fool towards himself, but a fool towards his family."

Such was an outline of the woman's soliloquy. She considered herself the most unfortunate woman in the whole world, and wondered why it was that some people are born to trouble while others never have a care to ruffle their placid brow.

The kind−hearted physician watched with deep interest the welfare of his patient.

He admired the sweet, pure face and the *spirituelle* eyes awaiting his coming with eager anticipation.

"You must have brooded over some mental trouble my child, and you know *that* is not what brings the roses to a maiden's cheek," and the disciple of Aesculapius once more patted the pale cheek to force back the roseate blush of youth and beauty.

"Doctor, you surely cannot say that I am to remain here many days longer when I am so anxious to see my

father. I know that he will get better if I can only be near him to become his nurse."

"I see where part of the trouble is, but there is a greater one beneath that," thought the doctor as he sat writing out a prescription.

But like that great student of human nature he could not help exclaiming, though in undertone, "'who can minister to a mind diseased.' This is indeed one of the stubborn cases that I often have to deal with—administer drugs and pills *ad infinitum* when the gentle pressure of a sympathetic hand or the soft tender glances of a bright eye would act more effectually than all the compounds which the London dispensaries can boast of."

A bouquet of exquisite beauty had arrived and with it a nicely folded note.

Marguerite took the flowers within her trembling fingers and inhaled the rich fragrance with a sort of reverence. Nature claimed a large share of the girl's sympathies. She worshipped it as only the student of nature should. She

"Looked from Nature up to Nature's God."

But when she had unfolded the delicate looking missive and looked at the neatly formed letters not a ray of feeling was emitted from the expressive face.

"I see how it is," mused the man of experience; "poor child your's has not been the only aching heart. You think one way and your aspirations run another, or worse than that they accord and leave you to the tender mercies of worldly and narrow−minded parents whose sole motive is the accomplishment of their own sordid ends."

Mrs. Verne's entrance solved the problem, to the entire satisfaction of the physician. She had been detained in the drawing−room, and now came to offer apology for delaying in the sick chamber.

"Don't worry, mamma. I really am not so ill as you imagine," said the girl, hopefully.

"The invigorating New Brunswick breeze is the best tonic I can prescribe," exclaimed the doctor, eyeing Mrs. Verne with close study, "but this one must be taken first."

A merry twinkle of the keen blue eye was directed upon Marguerite, who now took the proffered slip of paper, and, to the very great amusement of the practitioner, noted the Latin abbreviation.

"Don't be too modest over it," said the latter, laughing. "I begin to think my patient has been drawn into the mysteries of our lore."

Marguerite reached out her hand to receive the kind goodbye, and how pale and wan that little hand?

Poor child, murmured the genial−hearted man as he shut the door so softly and went forth in his daily rounds whenever and anon the sweet face would rise up before him and shut out all the visible surroundings.

"The old, old story—poor thing—many such have I prescribed for in vain, but it has been so from the beginning, and I suppose, will be so to the end."

But Dr. Refern's soliloquy was lost upon a desert air, and as he pronounced Miss Verne convalescent he felt a tender pity in his large, warm heart, and fervently prayed that the girl's future might be made brighter and happier, and that she yet might return thanks for his interest in her recovery.

* * * * *

"My Father!"

What a scene.

Marguerite is once more with her idolized parent, but the poor girl is almost overcome with grief as she looked upon the altered looks of the prostrate form.

"My darling father," she murmurs, and vainly attempts to gain a look of fond recognition.

"Oh! father! try to speak to me," she cried, sobbing like a child, "speak to your own Marguerite."

It was a scene too sacred for other eyes, and Mrs. Montgomery turned away.

"Father in heaven," prayed the girl with arms uplifted and her eyes raised in devout supplication, "forsake me not now; oh, give me back my father—the father to whom I owe so much; Oh, grant that his senses be restored, and I can hear his voice once more." Marguerite threw herself prostrate beside the bed, and remained for some moments in fervent meditation.

The silence was indeed impressive, when suddenly Marguerite cast a glance at the loved form, and a half−smothered cry burst from her lips.

Another glance and a murmured "Thank God," Marguerite Verne's prayer was answered.

"Marguerite."

“My father.”

What comfort in these words? What tongue could tell of the happiness that now filled the maiden's heart. She could not utter another word, but put her arms around her father's neck and pressed upon his wasted lips one long lingering kiss—so tender, so pure and so sacred that it might well have accorded with the salutation of the angels in heaven!

And Marguerite Verne clad in robes of dazzling whiteness was indeed a fit representation of an angelic being, whose sole mission on earth was the doing of good and making others happy, but at a great sacrifice, the greatest sacrifice that a maiden can endure—the sacrifice of all her earthly hope.

Yes, Marguerite could and would make such a sacrifice. She had strength given her from the highest source, and she had faith in her heavenly father. He would carry her through all she had now undertaken.

Mr. Verne had rallied sufficiently to recognize his child. He gazed into the face he loved so well, and a faint smile overspread his countenance. He lay with his hands clasped in those of his child and seemed supremely happy.

“It is almost a pity that he should be aroused from this happy, trance−like state,” said Mrs. Montgomery as she quietly raised the sick man to administer the medicine that had been consigned to her care.

Marguerite once more pressed the thin lips and stood at a distance, as if trying to think whether it were reality or dreamland.

Other eyes looked upon the maiden and other hands clasped in prayer were indeed very near.

What subtle power caused Marguerite to look around? What subtle power caused her to hold her breath as if oppressed with some invisible presence?

“Miss Verne, I'm glad you are here.”

“Thank you Mr. Lawson,” was the quiet reply, but in the look there was a world of sympathy that smote deeply into Phillip Lawson's heart.

CHAPTER XXXV. A MINISTERING ANGEL—A SUDDEN REVELATION.

Phillip Lawson was not surprised at the great change which had been wrought in Marguerite Verne. She was kind and thoughtful, but there was a restraint that made him feel ill at ease.

"Poor girl," thought he, "she feels her father's failure very keenly, not I believe from a selfish view but from her relation to others."

The young man had not divined aright.

He was not aware that Marguerite was the affianced wife of Hubert Tracy. He did not know the nature of the blow that had made such dire havoc upon the constitution of Mr. Verne. He did not know that all the anxious moments of the latter were spent in vainly trying to make known the bitter truth. He did not know that within Mr. Verne's desk was concealed a document which might remain there until too late!

Mrs. Verne had arrived in a state bordering on distraction.

She did not wish to meet any of her former friends lest she would hear something that would grate harshly on her nerves. She suffered much from headache and consequently remained most of the time in her own apartments.

"If your papa were at all times conscious of our presence, my dear, there would be some sense in my remaining with him, but really Madge I think the more quiet he is kept the better."

"But mamma dear, one of us should be near so that with returning consciousness he would recognize us."

"But that is not very often, Madge."

"Aunt Hester says that he asked for me very soon after I returned last night. I am so sorry that she did not awaken me." The girl looked sad indeed and to a more sensitive woman it would have been a keen reproach, but Mrs. Verne was wrapt up in self and wished no other feeling to find a shelter within her breast.

Some days passed and no great change had taken place in Mr. Verne yet the physician did not pronounce his case as hopeless.

"We are all doing our best and I trust that there will soon be a favorable change."

Marguerite Verne heard those words with a deep sigh, yet she was calm, and composed and even smiled at the eulogism passed upon her skill in the many duties of the sick chamber.

It was only when in her own room and none were near to witness her grief that she showed the weak side of her nature.

Many weary hours she lay and prayed that God would give her strength to go through the sad and painful duty that ever and anon rose up before her with a vividness that was cruel as death.

"I cannot meet Mr. Lawson without a shudder!" she murmured between sobs of deep and poignant anguish, "and I love him as I shall never love another—but he shall never know it—ah no. I shall become the wife of Hubert Tracy and try to be happy—yes, happy. And I shall receive the warmest congratulations and I will smile as they think me so happy and look upon me with eyes of envy."

Marguerite now drew her hand across her eyes as if to shut out the reality of the scene, while a chill made her shiver as if seized with ague.

"How foolish to be so weak," she murmurs, "darling papa, I would make a sacrifice ten times as great for his dear sake," and instantly the tears were dried and the girl was calm.

"Poor, dear papa, I shall receive such glowing accounts of his perfect restoration to health, and I can visit him often. Oh! if I could live with him always!"

Marguerite instantly smothered the half−formed sigh and sought a momentary respite in carefully combing out the waves of soft, silken and luxuriant hair.

Such was the manner in which she passed the first fortnight after her arrival.

She became accustomed to the young lawyer's daily visits, and though she knew it was not right, she could not resist a desire to await his coming with all the eagerness of her nature. But further she dare not go. The civilities exchanged were of a nature that fell like lead upon the young man's honest heart, but he was attentive to every word and wish, and always appeared with a kind voice and quiet but cheery smile.

But Phillip Lawson had a more bitter draught to swallow ere many hours had passed over his head.

Mr. Verne began to show signs of recovery, which the good old physician smilingly attributed to the

“ministering angel,” as he gaily dubbed Marguerite.

The latter was quietly arranging some delicacies upon a silver tray that stood on the pretty five o'clock.

Phillip Lawson remained for a moment to contemplate the picture. The girl looked so guileless and so childlike. The pale−grey cashmere, draped in graceful folds, gave her an air peculiar to some self−sacrificing Sister of Mercy, whose presence brought life and light into the home of the afflicted ones.

As she stooped to pick up a stray rose that had fallen from the fragrant bouquet, Phillip saw the delicate hands become tremulous, while the lips parted and the beautiful eyes were raised to heaven.

“Oh, heaven!” murmured the young man “I cannot endure this,” and instantly he dashed forward with an impetuosity altogether foreign to his gentle and, at times, grave demeanor.

Marguerite was quick to detect the abruptness, but not a gesture betrayed curiosity.

“Papa has been sleeping for more than two hours—really Mr. Lawson, I have such good news. The doctor has just gone out and he says that every symptom is favorable and that he has every reason to believe that he may rally very soon.”

“God grant it Miss Verne,” said Philip, going on tiptoe towards the couch, and gazing wistfully upon the emaciated features of his old friend.

“This is my night to remain with papa, but the doctor bade me ask you to take my place. He seemed very anxious that I should do so and I am willing to do anything that may be deemed necessary.”

“Strange that I came here purposely to make the same request,” said the young man, looking gravely into the girl's face.

“How good of you, Mr. Lawson.”

But Phillip Lawson needs no praise, and Marguerite goes on with her work, occasionally glancing at the time−piece to see how long her father had been sleeping.

And we come now to the hour of midnight. Trinity had sent forth its hallowed chime, and the echoes had died away in the calm stillness of the night.

Silence reigned in “Sunnybank,” not a sound save the heavy tick of the old clock that stood at the top of the grand stairway. Phillip Lawson with book in hand was trying to while away the hours and to divert his mind from the unpleasant thoughts that now and then would arise with peculiar vividness.

A slight rustling causes him to start.

“My dear boy.”

The young man leans gently forward and supports the upraised hand.

“Phillip, I have got my prayer. Is Marguerite near?”

Mr. Verne looked agitated, and Phillip Lawson feared the result.

“But you must be very quiet now, Mr. Verne. You know that much depends upon yourself.”

“Ah, Phillip, I know it too well, but I have something to tell you, which is killing me by inches. Phillip you are the only one who must know it now. The rest will come in good time—in good time my boy!”

Phillip Lawson administered the soothing draught that had been tri−hourly prescribed, then lovingly placed his arm around the wasted form and laid him softly on the downy pillow.

Mr. Verne's voice was much stronger, and it cost him less effort to speak.

“It will do more harm than good to deny the request,” thought the young man, and he leaned forward that the voice might reach his ear with the least possible effort of the speaker.

Mr. Verne drew a heavy sigh, and then began:—“Phillip Lawson, you are one of the truest friends I ever had, and heaven will yet bless you for all you have done for me.”

The young man was about to appeal when he saw that Mr. Verne would suffer no interruption, so he calmly listened and uttered not a word.

“Phillip, it is a sad story that I have to tell, but I know you will help me to bear up. I have only you to confide in—only you.”

Mr. Verne rested for a moment, and then continued, “It was the day before I was prostrated that I called upon you but learned that you were out of town until the following day. I wished to tell you something that grieved me more than living being ever can know. I had then in my breast pocket the death warrant of all my future hope and joy—that fatal letter announcing the betrothal of my darling Marguerite to that dissolute and unprincipled young man—Hubert Tracy.”

Mr. Verne paused, then glanced at Phillip Lawson.

"Ah my son, God knows I would it were otherwise, I know that you love my child. I have cherished that secret as something sacred, and lived in the hope that all would come right some day. Phillip, my boy, I can bear *my* grief, but it is hard to see the hopes of a bright and useful life buried deep—so deep."

The young man sat like one in a mocking cruel dream. The news stunned him. It was so unexpected, and yet so true.

"You have spoken truly Mr. Verne," said Phillip sadly, "I love Marguerite as I shall never love another woman. She is lost to me forever, but I shall cherish her memory while I live. Her image shall be enshrined within my heart; my life's devotion, my guiding star; they cannot rob me of that sacred duty. It is sanctioned by heaven itself."

Phillip Lawson now turned his face toward the couch.

"I never will believe that my child loves such a man as Hubert Tracy," said Mr. Verne, closing his eyelids with sheer exhaustion. "She has been forced into it. Promise me Phillip you will help me examine the matter closely. I am regaining some of my lost strength and will be better able for the task."

"I would like to assist you Mr. Verne, but I am in a delicate position. I cannot see how Miss Verne would be entrapped into a marriage against her own wishes. You know that Mr. Tracy was always on terms of intimacy with your family, and besides he is rather prepossessing, and would in all probability win the favor of any young lady."

"Phillip, you are generous to a fault. You could not say that man is a villain and a scoundrel when you really would have proof of his villany in your possession."

"Heaven forgive me for it," mused Phillip, "it was for her sake that I spoke thus. If she loves Hubert Tracy as I love her, then would I sacrifice every feeling to do it. Would to God I could think as her father does."

The young man sat for a moment buried in deep thought. He was now finding some ground for Marguerite's restraint when in his presence, and he conjured up many imaginary doubts and fears to prove that she loved Hubert Tracy. Even the letters which spoke in glowing terms of such kind attention—did not every circumstance serve as further conviction.

Mr. Verne divined Phillip Lawson's thoughts.

"Phillip, my boy, hear me. I may never rise from off this bed, but I solemnly swear that Hubert Tracy will never place a marriage ring upon Marguerite Verne's finger—never—"

Mr. Verne now grasped Phillip Lawson's hand and held it there, while the latter became suddenly inspired with bright hope.

"This has been too much for you, Mr. Verne," said the young man, soothingly. "But I have more to tell you, Phillip—something that will stagger you."

"Wait until to−morrow, sir, you will feel stronger."

"Very well, my boy, let it be to−morrow," and Mr. Verne dropped off in a peaceful slumber—aye, gentle and peaceful as that of a child.

Phillip Lawson's thoughts were confusion manifold as he sat with his hands folded listlessly across his breast. He was questioning the genuineness of his motives in keeping from Mr. Verne a secret which deeply affected the interests and welfare of his child.

"If Marguerite loved Hubert Tracy why should I thwart her fond hopes. Hubert Tracy has wronged me, though his act failed. Have I any right to rake up the intended wrong and hunt him down as an avenging deity.

"And for what," asked Phillip, as he gazed wildly around, fearing some one should intrude upon his privacy. "It was the green−eyed monster that goaded the weak−minded Hubert to be tempted. And must I, in possession, of all my senses, retaliate from the same cause! Ah, no, Hubert. You will go free, but Heaven will not suffer you to pollute a pure and innocent being. Ah, no." And more than ever inspired with faith, in the decrees of an All−Wise Providence, Phillip Lawson fully resolved to hold his peace.

"I feel that I am doing what is right in the sight of Heaven, and that thought gives me double resolution."

Mr. Lawson's soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of a domestic who came to take his place.

Mrs. Montgomery, being anxious, had also come in to make numerous inquiries, and to see that the young man should seek some rest.

"Blessings on her kindly soul," murmured the latter, as he went into the tasteful dressing−room and threw

himself upon the lounge, where soft pillows and ample covering showed that loving hands had not forgotten his comfort.

But Phillip Lawson did not sleep. He turned listlessly from side to side. He tried to divert his thoughts to business and to many and varied subjects but through all and above all arose the words “very well, my boy, let it be to−morrow.”

What a world of thought was running through the young man's brain as he lay thus, turning over in his well−stored mind many of the intricate problems of life and trying vainly to solve those which more deeply concerned himself.

In his short career midst life's struggles there was much to be grateful for. There was indeed, as he journeyed through the wilderness, a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night and as Phillip Lawson raised his eyes heavenward they caught the reflection of that fire; his countenance glowed with a radiance that was truly heaven−born and as Mrs. Montgomery passed through the room an hour afterward there was still trace of the sacred invisible presence.

Beading low the woman exclaimed “truly a noble soul,” and with a prayer upon her lips invoking Heaven's blessing towards the sleeper she crept noiselessly away.

CHAPTER XXXVI. AN INTERESTING EVENT—SHADE AND SUNSHINE.

When Mr. Lawson called at “Sunnybank” on the following day he was pained to hear that Mr. Verne had taken a bad turn. The physician had given strict orders that none should approach him except an old nurse who had seen much service in the family.

“It has been too much for him,” murmured Phillip as he closed the doer behind him, and again the word “to−morrow” sounded prophetically in his ear.

But the solicitor was not allowed to indulge further in gloomy thought. He had scarcely seated himself at his office desk when the bright countenance of Mr. Moses Spriggins beamed upon all around.

“Good morning, Mr. Spriggins,” exclaimed Mr. Lawson heartily glad to see the face of his honest friend.

“Don't be too sure that you're glad to see me, Mr. Lawson,” (Mr. Spriggins having dropped the appellation of 'Squire) “for I've come on a kinder disagreeable errant.”

“I am sorry to hear *that*, Mr. Spriggins. But perhaps it is not so bad as you imagine,” said the solicitor very cheerily.

“It's the roughest on you, sir. I tell yer what it is, it ain't a very disagreeable piece of bus'ness for me to git married to Melindy Jane Thrasher when we've been a−courtin' mor'n two years—jest two years last hayin' time, for Melindy came to our house to help the wimmin folks and the first time I sot eyes on her I'd made up my mind.”

Mr. Spriggins was becoming very eloquent on the subject and might have said much more (not to the point) when interrupted.

“And you have come to inform us that we must give up Melindy?”

“Yes, sir, that is the hull thing in a few words,” cried Mr. Spriggins very much elated, “Isn't it a wonderful gift you fellars have of speakin' right to the pint. By hokey, I'd give a good deal if I was a lawyer—an honest, fair−square one like yerself, sir.”

“Thank you Mr. Spriggins,” said the young man trying hard to look serious.

“I was at yer place last evenin', sir, and as Melindy and me talked the thing over, she said that she felt backward of tellin' you, and says I, Melindy, I'll see Mr. Lawson meself and tell him to look out for another girl, so as you'd not be left without help.”

“And you have given us sufficient time, I hope,” said Mr. Lawson, smiling.

“We're to be spliced a fortnight from next Tuesday, sir, and if it's not askin' too much, I'd like terrible well if yerself and Miss Lottie could come up to Mill Crossin' to be present at the cer'mony.”

“If nothing prevents we will go,” said the young man quietly.

Mr. Spriggins sat for some moments and then informing the solicitor that he had some business at the insurance office rose to take leave.

“I suppose you have heard of Mr. Verne's illness?” ventured Mr. Lawson.

“Yes, sir, Melindy and meself was a−talkin' the hull thing over last night. He is a fine gentleman, sir,—and the young lady—I'm so glad she's back again. Ah! she's a fine girl, sir. I bet the old gentleman will be all right now, for the sight of her face is bettern' all the medicine in all the poth'cary consarns in St John.”

What a temptation presented itself to the young man. He could easily ask the honest−hearted fellow about his interview with Mr. Verne, and of the effect upon him; also the nature of the conversation.

That Moses Spriggins formed a connecting link in some future disclosure he was doubly convinced, but it must come about by an established order of things; and the young lawyer thanked God that he was given sufficient strength to withstand the power of the tempter.

When Mr. Lawson went home that evening he received the full benefit of the information imparted to Miss Lottie.

It had been arranged that the latter should assist in the selection of the indispensable trousseau, and this was indeed a source of delight.

Mr. Spriggins came to town many times ere he could suit himself in a brand−new suit of clothes, also some new furniture to make things look “kinder nobby.”

Nell Spriggins had been married some weeks previous, and as she had borne away her “fit out,” there were many vacant corners in the Spriggins homestead, which of course fell to the lot of Moses to restore in due order.

But Mr. Spriggins was equal to the occasion.

“It ain't every day a feller gits spliced, I can tell yer, and one orter put the best foot for'ard. Tell you what it is, mother, Melindy and me is a−goin' to make the folks' eyes stick out when we 'pear out in the Mill Crossin' meetin' house.”

The good old lady wiped her glasses and advised her son to be moderate in his ideas, “for,” said she, “I always think that a quiet beginnin' makes the best endin'“

“Endin', did you say, mother' Wal, that's very encouragin', to be a−talkin' about endin' when a fellar feels like livin' till he has to be killed off,” and Moses' big blue eyes glistened like two big china marbles.

“Now, Moses, if you *are* a−goin' to be married, you needn't be a−losin' of every speck of sense. It's enough for a bit of a boy to be a−makin' of sich light speeches.”

Mrs. Spriggins' remarks were brought to a close by Moses making an exit via the back door, and when the privacy of the sheep−house had been gained he sat down on a big log and began counting how much money he had still on hand after his trip to town on the day previous.

“Let's see—there's thirty−six dollars and one cent. Yes, every cent's a cent, and twenty−one dollars Sam Wiggles owes me, and the two loads o' hay Jim Briggs is a−takin' to town this week—that's sure cash—well, thirty−six and twenty−one is fifty−seven, and the hay—wal, it's all as good as seventy−five dollars.”

A couple of huge hogs acting upon the aggressive in appropriating a large share of hen feed, now interrupted the soliloquy, and after combating the unscrupulous animals, Moses Spriggins once more seated himself upon the log.

“Wal, seventy−five dollars won't make a bad spread, neither. I'm terrible sorry that there's trouble in the Verneses. I'd like deuced well to have that Miss Margit—now that's too highfalutin a name for me—if Melindy were here she'd git it off in good style.”

Silence reigned for a moment; then Moses took up the thread of discourse. “When a fellar's gettin' spliced hisself he wants every one else to follow. Wal, it's no use a−sayin' it, but if Mr. Lawson and Miss Verne could have both a−come to the weddin' there's no tellin' what might have happened. They'd git interested in the cer'mony, and I'd bet ten to one they'd be a−proposin' before it was over. Wal, sir, if Mr. Verne gits the leastest bit better, I'm a−goin' after Miss Verne, sure pop.”

Moses having made such resolution now carefully folded the notes in his business−like pocket−book and set off to do the work which awaited him.

It was, indeed, somewhat of a coincidence to know that at the same moment when Moses Spriggins was speculating upon the prospects of his legal friend that the latter should be also troubled about the veritable Moses.

Lottie Lawson had gone to “Sunnybank,” brimming over with the affairs of the elated Melindy Jane.

Marguerite listened to the child's amusing description of the many articles that were hourly displayed by the expectant bride, and when consulted as to the choice of a wedding present, thoughtfully proposed sending one herself.

“Oh. Miss Verne, that will be delightful,” cried Lottie, clapping her hands in childish glee. “Why, Melindy will have lots of nice things; I know what brother Phillip is going to give—a pretty China tea−set—and mine, a pair of napkin rings.”

Marguerite smiled at the little maid's enthusiasm, and warned her against being too communicative to Melindy Jane.

“Indeed, she will not know what they are until brother Phillip and I go out to Mill Crossing.”

Lottie took her departure and Marguerite once more sought her father's room to take her place beside his bed.

* * * * *

“Spriggins, did you say, papa?”

“Yes, child—I want the paper.”

“Which paper, papa—can I get it for you?”

In the effort to make known his wishes his memory had failed him, and Marguerite stood utterly helpless to execute that wish.

“Something is on papa's mind—some paper. It is, indeed, of much importance, for poor papa has been deeply

agitated."

The girl had noticed that her father's eyes always rested upon her in a mute, half−despairing appeal, yet she had not courage to question him upon the matter.

"If I could only speak to Mr. Lawson, but there is a restraint between us that I suppose under the circumstances is only natural. I am the affianced wife of Hubert Tracy and Phillip Lawson is not the man to take advantage of his influence."

A heavy sigh escaped Marguerite and instantly she raised both hands as if to compress the aching brow and wearied brain.

In the quiet of her own chamber Marguerite Verne felt that she was safe from human eyes. She longed to give vent to her pent up sorrow, and sitting down upon a pretty ottoman (the work of her own industrious hands) uttered a low and mournful wail—such only as would express a broken heart.

"Oh Phillip Lawson, it is hard to meet you every day of my life and to know that we are strangers indeed—yes, worse than strangers. Oh, my sad heart. None but heaven will ever know what I have suffered and am suffering now. Oh, Phillip! Phillip! why is your image ever before me! Why do you approach me with your grave but kind face and hold out your hand in tenderest sympathy! Oh, my heart, it is maddening! Why was I born to such feeling! Why was I cursed with the susceptibilities of a warm and loving heart! Why were not these sympathetic chords torn rudely asunder ere they could vibrate with such anguish! Why did not my heart turn into stone ere it took root in such deadly bitter soil! Ah well, love is common and grief is common—'Never morning wore to evening but some heart did break.' And I am only a drop in the great ocean—the great sea of struggles—heart−aches and bitter groans!"

A rustle of garments in the outer hall caused Marguerite to raise her head and as she caught a glimpse of her sorrowful face in the mirror opposite she felt a sudden pang and seemed to meet the mild despairing gaze of her idolized parent.

"Dear papa, what would he think of his rebellious child?" Immediately the girl was trying to look brave and struggling hard to set aside all the painful thoughts.

Marguerite fortunately was endowed with much will power. She could master her thoughts to such a degree that a quiet, calm content would succeed, and in this condition she went to her mother's room.

Mrs. Verne was now in a semi−invalid state. She was moody and morose, and oftentimes much depressed. It would be charitable for us to think that this woman reflected upon her past foolishness; and be it as it may we will give her the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Verne saw little of his wife, but there were moments when his thoughts went back to the child−wife of his youth, and a tear glistened in his eye as he recalled the bright scenes of the sadly dimmed life.

But Marguerite Verne compensated for her mother's defects. She was truly all in all to her fond parent. Her smile was his beacon light. Her voice was more musical than harp or psaltery, and her loving ministration were life indeed; and as each morning and evening the girl clasped her hands and knelt beside her father's couch reading aloud the several beautiful prayers for the visitation of the sick, what soul could fail to be deeply affected.

"What a picture for a Guido, a Rembrandt, or a Correggio," thought Phillip Lawson as he stood on the threshold not daring to breathe lest he break the solemn spell; and as he noiselessly turns away the vision haunts him with increasing vividness. "Turn which way I will it is always the same," he murmured, and entering Warwick's elegant china store felt like anything but selecting a bridal present.

But the world has its claims upon us, and Phillip Lawson was shown the many beautiful patterns of delicate china cups, plates, etc., and very soon selected a pretty tea−set that would make glad the heart of the expectant bride.

The young man had crossed over to the northern side of King street, but had not gone many steps when he heard familiar voices, looking around he espied the piquant Lottie and her domestic making their way into the handsome and tasteful establishment of Manchester, Robertson &Allison. The young solicitor was amused as he thought of the conversation which he had accidently overheard on the previous morning.

But for the shopping excursion.

Lottie with an air of importance had given much advice to the jubiliant Melindy but when that great emporium, so dear to many a woman's heart, had been, reached the latter almost lost her senses.

"If Mose could just peek in wouldn't he stare?" said she, casting her eyes on a pile of silks that had been

displayed upon the counter.

Lottie smiled, and having directed Melindy's attention to a choice lot of dress material stepped to the other end of the ware−room to speak to one of her acquaintances.

The shades were too dull to suit Melindy's taste. She wanted it for a “pertikler occasion” and if she had thought in time would have brought a “certain person” in to choose it.

The merry twinkle in the clerk's eye brought Miss Lottie to the rescue, and after much deliberation on the part of Melindy a heavy piece of all−wool goods of bright maroon was at length decided upon for the best dress, while another of fancy plaid was chosen for reception purposes.

It is needless to enter into detail of all the knick−knacks that took Melindy's eye, but we cannot pass the millinery department, into which the latter was ushered by the amused but undemonstrative Lottie.

A bonnet was, of course, the desired article.

“It does look kinder nice,” said Melindy surveying the pretty, tasteful cream−colored lace with a bunch of neat French flowers in relief, “but it looks to me as if it wasn't hardly dressy enough.”

“We can easily arrange it to suit your taste,” said the young lady in attendance as she went towards the show−case and began assorting some bright−colored roses as more acceptable.

“Wal, there's sumthin' more becomin'!” said Melindy into a high key, “and I'm certain that 'person' would like it better.”

Melindy Jane cast a significant glance at Miss Lottie who in turn gave it to the young lady and the result was significant smiles all around.

“Well, its nothing to be ashamed of. I s'pose we might as well tell you that I want it for peerin' out with, and as there's alwus so many remarks passed I'd like it to be sumthin' dressy.”

“Certainly,” said the young lady, and within a very short time the cream−colored bonnet was in reality a bed of roses, highly suggestive to Miss Lottie of the lines—

“Oh my love is like a red, red rose
That newly springs in June.”

“There now,” cried the delighted Melindy, looking in the mirror to note the effect, “that's just the style that'll take Moses' eye. Don't I wish he was here to see it.”

The indispensable white gloves and white net veil and bright ribbons, flowers, etc., were now laid aside, and with a strict injunction “to be sure send 'em right away,” Melindy Jane Thrasher was truly the happiest customer that ever emerged from the time−honored establishment of Manchester, Robertson &Allison.

CHAPTER XXXVII. HUBERT TRACY UNFOLDS HIS PLANS.

It must not be supposed that Phillip Lawson was remiss in his regular duties—that he neglected the professional demands duly devolving upon him.

Our much−respected friend had seen adversity on every hand and in many phases. He had struggled hard to overcome difficulties, and he had smothered the pleading of his hungry unsatisfied soul; and as from day to day he jostles his fellow man in the crowded thoroughfares, or encounters him in the office, shop or study, the same remark was common to every honest−minded citizen:—“Lawson is a clever, industrious and good fellow, and well deserves the position which he will one day occupy.”

And now, when it became an established fact that Phillip Lawson had fallen heir to forty thousand dollars, it was, indeed, worthy of mention that no one was heard to make uncharitable remarks. Congratulations fell thick and fast, and last, but not least, came those of Moses Spriggins.

“Well, sir, I used ter say I'd be no small potatoes one o' these days, but I never dreamed I'd have a millionar at my weddin'. Wal, thar's no accountin' for miracles these times,” and the iron hand left its impress upon the soft palm of the “millionar” in a manner that showed heartiness minus conventionalism.

But there was another who tendered congratulations while a deeper shadow settled down and shut out any approach of joy or gladness.

Marguerite Verne could not fail to see the difference in her mother's reception of Phillip Lawson as he now is, and this thought gave her pain.

The possessor of forty thousand, and a poor penniless lawyer, were indeed two different beings in Mrs. Verne's partial eyes. They were unlike in appearance, character, action—aye, as opposite as two extremes could well be.

Mr. Lawson, in his altered condition, was handsome, was more distinguished looking, could converse more fluently, was more polished and more gallant.

But Marguerite Verne listened to her mother's eulogism with a calm despair, and, save the pallor of her lips, no one could tell the suffering within. What matters it now, thought the girl, as she bent over a sheet of paper and tried to collect her thoughts.

Hubert Tracy eagerly awaited the delicate missive that came as regularly as the mail, and he now was looking forward to the time when he would claim Marguerite Verne forever and forever.

It was so hard to frame each sentence without the conviction that every word conveyed the falsity of the girl's heart. How dare she pen one word such as an affianced lover would expect! Oh, the agony of soul that Marguerite endured as she combated with her honest nature.

Phillip Lawson never lost sight of the doings at “Sunnybank.” He was daily around the afflicted household and tried hard to bring cheer along with him.

That Mr. Verne was sinking fast the young man knew well, and he was sorely troubled that the secret grief would never be communicated— perhaps in a way that might give relief.

Would it be wise to force the subject, to venture an allusion to Moses Spriggins, and thus arouse the seemingly comatose condition of the dying man.

“If I could mention the matter to Marguerite,” thought Phillip, as he sat in his office for a few moment's respite after a day of toilsome labor over some perplexing law points in a case which gained much notoriety, and which had also gained for the leading counsel a reputation for earnestness and strict integrity that must inevitably be crowned with success.

“If I could only ask her advice in the matter,” thought he, “what a relief it would afford.”

But the words froze upon his lips, and Marguerite remained as before in utter ignorance of the failure.

“Why do such questions arise,” murmured the young man sadly, and his thoughts reminded him of the renowned son of Jupiter dying of thirst with the tempting element raised to his chin, but could not partake of a single drop. “Ah! there's many a modern Tantalus,” said Phillip wearily, “many a Tantalus.”

Marguerite had received several letters from Mrs. Arnold, but they were vague, unsatisfactory and suppressed. There was an attempt at concealment that gave the girl much concern, yet she did not communicate the fact to

Mrs. Verne.

“Poor mamma has enough to think of,” thought she, “and as they say, it is no use to be borrowing trouble, so I'll hope for the best.”

Could one have glanced into Mrs. Montague Arnold's private life what a picture would be presented to us—one anything but pleasing to look upon—where alike was depicted disappointment, disgust, anger, sullen resentment and hate.

Add to this dissipation, an utter disregard for the home duties of woman, and one can form some idea of the unenviable position of this fashionable creature.

Of the husband what can we say?

Montague Arnold is indeed far on the downward road to ruin. Dissipation has made fearful ravages upon his hitherto handsome face, and in the bloated features, inflamed eyes, and idiotic expression, there is little left to convey an impression that the gay and fashionable world once coveted such a prize.

The lowest gambling dens were now sought, and hour after hour the man sat side by side with the scum of humanity. His days and nights were scenes of carousal, his wife was left to her own resources, and his home utterly desolate.

Evelyn Arnold had written her sister many glowing eulogies of Hubert Tracy's generosity, yet she did not acknowledge that to him she was entirely dependent.

Let us not utterly despise this young man.

There was yet a spark of generosity in his nature and a desire to lend a helping hand to the needy.

As hitherto expressed, with different associations Hubert Tracy would have been a different man. He began well but had not sufficient will power to resist the tempter and like many a promising youth who went out into the world with a mother's prayers ringing in his ears, stumbled ere he reached the first milestone on life's chequered road.

Hubert Tracy was to a certain degree trying to make amends for the wrong he had done towards himself and towards his fellow man.

When the face and form of Phillip Lawson rose before him with such vividness that he many times closed his eyes to shut out the sight remorse would seize upon him and hold him in galling chains, shewing us that the Divine impress was not entirely obliterated from his nature and that some day one might expect a complete change.

But of this young man's kindness to Mrs. Arnold.

The latter had been accustomed to a lavish expenditure of money and now that her husband's means had been squandered what was she to do? Appearances must be kept up at any sacrifice and without any apparent struggle. Mrs. Montague Arnold received from her sister's betrothed a sufficient amount of money to meet her daily wants.

Every beauty has her reign and so with the beautiful Evelyn.

Another queen succeeded and with many a bitter feeling the former is a thing of the past. Men have ceased to rave over the dark−eyed syren and now behold her as a being of a secondary order.

Mrs. Arnold attributed such slights to her husband's altered position and loud angry words were of daily occurrence until at last matters grew worse and they were completely alienated.

It was now that Hubert Tracy proved himself a benefactor. He remitted money and strove to give the unhappy woman all the sympathy she desired.

At times Mrs. Arnold's temper became ungovernable and as each annoyance crowded upon her with redoubled force it was anything but agreeable to listen to the frequent outbursts of uncontrollable anger or to look upon a face made hideous by those degrading exhibitions of a coarse and corrupt nature.

Let us now take a look at this fashionable woman as she is vainly trying to while away what appears to be a tedious morning.

Mrs. Arnold has removed to another suite of apartments and the change bears heavily upon her.

With an air of disgust she surveys the plainly furnished parlor and taking up a third class novel of the highly sensational type throws herself upon the chintz−covered lounge and gives way to a series of hysterical sobs more expressive of anger than grief.

The once large lustrous orbs have lost much of their brightness and the oval cheeks have lost their beauty of outline, while the rich crimson hue has given place to a sickly yellow. Even the toilette of the proud beauty bears

traces of neglect. The rich and elegant dressing gown of cashmere and velvet had been converted into money and a dowdy−looking stuff wrapper supplied its place.

Mrs. Arnold yawned and sighed wearily, then arose to look for some curl papers but finding the effort too much once more sought the lounge and novel.

The sorrows of the heroine pleased her. “Misery likes company,” as the adage goes and Mrs. Arnold formed no exception.

“Yes,” mused she, “her lord, like mine, proved a failure, but here the likeness ends—she got rid of him but there is no such luck for me. I must put up with his brutal insults, his coarse language, his murderous assaults—yes, I must bear it for better for worse until death doth us part—”

“Which I hope will be very soon, my dear, delightful spouse,” cried a hic−coughy voice from an outer room and instantly the bloated face of Montague Arnold confronted his wife in tantalizing and brutal aspect.

We will pass over the scene which followed, suffice to say that the inebriated husband finally betook himself to his room and—more beast than man—lay until he was sufficiently recovered to set out for the scene of dissipation to be enacted on the coming night.

When quiet was fully restored and Evelyn had once more found respite in her heroine's increasing woes a familiar step sounded in the passage.

“Come at last Hubert, I wish you had been here sooner.”

Mrs. Arnold then gave an exaggerated account of her husband's proceedings, and began sobbing wildly and hysterically.

Hubert Tracy did not like scenes, but he had to await Mrs. Arnold's pleasure.

He had of late been trying to lead a better life and had given the slip to several of his debauched companions, but on the previous evening he had been unable to withstand their urgent entreaties and as he wended his way to Mrs. Arnold's residence his aching brows and dizzy head gave evidence of the sad fact.

“I have had news from home, Evelyn.”

“Yes,” said the latter faintly.

“Your father seems no better. Madge has little hopes of him, and your mother's health has undergone a great shock.”

“No, doubt,” was the sarcastic reply.

“Evelyn,” said the young man in earnest tones, “I shall eagerly await the coming mail, for I have signified to Madge my intention to cross the Atlantic!”

“So soon,” cried Mrs. Arnold with awaking interest.

“Yes, Evelyn, I cannot endure this suspense much longer. Madge is the only woman who can reclaim me, and I must now insist that she will be my wife at an early date—at any rate I wish to be in St. John at the settlement of the affair. It has been a great mistake that I did not accompany your mother and Madge.”

“Oh, Hubert, the thought makes me feel worse, if possible.”

“You will come with me, Evelyn, and if Mont sees fit he can shake off his fellows and come too.”

“I go home Hubert! No indeed, I would rather die than face the people of St. John, Ah no! You must say that I am looking so well, and so brilliant, and am so happy that I prefer English society to dull provincial life!

“True, Hubert, I have done much for you, and you surely will carry out my wishes.”

“I certainly shall, Evelyn, and more than that I shall never forget that to you I owe all the happiness of my life.”

“You may well say so Hubert. But for my scheming Madge would have yielded to mamma's entreaties and became the wife of her pet—Sir Arthur.”

“Well, it's all over, now,” said the young man impatiently. “You never will have cause to regret the steps you have taken, and I trust we will be a happy family one of these days.”

Alas! it is an easy task for us to propose, but the Great Disposer of our destinies finds it necessary to circumvent our plans and show us how utterly helpless we are. But we will not forestall events. We will calmly await the end, in a direct order comforted by the cheering thought that patience is a virtue and worthy its reward.

“Hubert, have you ever thought of Phil Lawson lately. I must tell you some news.”

Mrs. Arnold then, with greater gusto, referred to the fortune, and in sarcastic tones amused her friend with the great change it would make in the heir's position, and the brilliant match he would also secure from the same

source.

“So much the better,” said Hubert, “he'll not be poking his nose where he's not wanted.”

Hubert Tracy tried to appear as indifferent as possible, but in his own mind he was ill at ease. Any allusion to Phillip Lawson opened afresh a very tender spot in his memory.

“Would to God the fellow were dead,” thought he, “though he never did me any harm. Perhaps, after all, he never would have had courage to propose to Madge—but then its best to be safe.”

It would seem as if Mrs. Arnold had divined her friend's thoughts. “Hubert,” said she, rather excitedly, “I firmly believe, and will always believe, that if we had not taken matters in time that Phil Lawson, with his long−winded speeches, would have wrought a spell upon papa and so completely influenced him that he would have had Madge body and soul, for I am certain that she was fool enough to encourage him.”

“I believe so, too,” said Hubert, dryly, and not at all pleased with the woman's reference to a rival.

“It was only his poverty that kept him back. I tell you some upstarts of lawyers have impudence enough to face anything; indeed, when they stick out their shingle they think they are fitting match for a princess.”

Mrs. Arnold was sarcastic in the highest degree, and her expression was scornful as well.

“And I suppose the forty thousand will assist materially in giving a little more cheek,” said Hubert, laughing.

“You may bless your stars that it did not arrive a twelve−month ago,” said Mrs. Arnold, in a teazing manner that was not at all acceptable to her companion.

“Ah, well, Eve, let us think none the less of him. Perhaps he carries a heavier heart than we would wish,” and, glancing hurriedly around, Hubert Tracy bowed to his companion and passed out as if bent upon some particular errand.

Little did the thoughtless young man realize that this was his last conversation with Mrs. Arnold, nor did the latter, as she called to mind the fact that Hubert Tracy had, for the first time, addressed her familiarly as “Eve,”—the name she bore in her father's home— that it would also be the last. Oh, well, this is one of the many lessons sent to teach us what we are, and what we should be:—,

“Let manhood think that death may come
When least it seemeth nigh;
And, though content with this bright home,
Yet be prepared to die.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII. CONFESSION AND RESOLUTION.

November's chilly blast moaned hoarsely around the heavy solid walls of “Sunnybank,” and the weird sound of the rustling leaves impressed one with thoughts alike weird and melancholy.

Marguerite Verne sat in the library poring over some accounts. Several letters lay beside her ready for mailing and as she glanced occasionally at the outer door she is evidently awaiting some person.

The suspense is of short duration. A bright cheerful face is soon at her side.

“You dear old coz, have I kept you long waiting?”

“Only two minutes,” said Marguerite glancing at her watch, then hanging the pretty bauble within reach added, “Cousin Jennie I believe you are equal to a time piece.”

An affectionate embrace was the outcome of the compliment and very soon the apartment looked brighter and more welcome.

The fire in the grate sent up a more cheerful glow as if it were trying to shew its appreciation of the newly arrived guest. In fact all things animate and inanimate tried to do homage to the sweet and cheery Jennie Montgomery.

The willing domestic who had answered Marguerite's summons, had no sooner finished her task than a message was conveyed from Mrs. Verne's chamber requesting Marguerite's immediate presence.

Jennie followed and her presence of mind soon quieted her aunt's violent fit of hysteria, and bathing the aching brows with Florida water coaxed the restless woman into a soft and gentle sleep.

“What would I do without you, darling!” said Marguerite, her eyes filling with tears and then hastily shading her delicate face sought the nurse to make inquiries about her father.

On being advised that it was better not to disturb his restless slumbers she instantly returned to the library.

“It is cosey in here to−day, Madge. Just see how angry the sky appears. How fast the clouds are moving! Look! they seem furious!”

Marguerite having finished her accounts, now looked about for something farther to do.

Her eyes were attracted towards a handsome volume that lay upon the sofa. Its rich cream and gold binding giving a pretty contrast to the elegant upholstering of the said article.

The first words that claimed the girls attention ran:

“Wake maid of Love! the moments fly
Which yet, that maiden−name allow;
Wake, maiden, wake! the hour is nigh
When Love shall claim a plighted vow.”

Hitherto Scott had been one of Marguerite's favorite authors, but now she threw down the book as if stung by an adder. Her blood was chilled in her veins, and she seemed as if petrified.

It were well that Jennie Montgomery was busily engaged looking over the broad rows of bookshelves in quest of some thing suitable to her fancy.

It was also well that she found the desired volume and had comfortably seated herself for a good long read.

Cousin Jennie might well be termed a book−worm, for, notwithstanding the fact that she was a clever housekeeper, an industrious handmaid and a skilful needlewoman, no girl had, considering her advantages, been a more extensive reader. She was conversant with many of the standard authors, could discuss freely upon the most abstruse subjects and also kept herself well posted in all the leading events of the day, a fact which goes to prove that there is no woman no matter in what circumstances, but can, if inclined, give some attention to the improvement of the mind, and make herself a fairly intellectual being.

Marguerite's thoughts were painful, indeed. “The hour is nigh,” she murmured. Hubert Tracy's letter had arrived, and the well−known lines had doubly recalled the fact.

“Would to heaven that it might never arrive,” then suddenly checking the wicked wish the girl exclaimed, “it is so hard to bear. Oh, Heavenly Father, forgive my wicked, sinful heart.”

“Madge, whom do you think I met as I was going along Princess street?”

Jennie had now turned towards her cousin. Her honest face was fair to look upon. Its genuineness was

stamped in bold characters upon the open brow and reflected in the clear expressive eyes.

"Why, none other than Helen Rushton. She has just arrived from Fredericton where she has been for six weeks. She introduced me to her friend Miss Boynton who is such a nice−looking girl, not a beauty but interesting and very graceful."

"She called a few days after I came home," said Marguerite, "but I was unable to leave papa. Helen is a good girl, Jennie."

"I always liked her," said the latter, putting a little marker in her book, "and I would give anything to have her visit us. Mother seems much interested in her."

"I think that I met Miss Boynton at Mrs. Greene's last winter. Is she not tall and slight with auburn hair and straight regular features, with just enough hauteur to give her an air of quiet dignity?"

"The very same, Madge. You are quite an adept at description," said cousin Jennie with mock gravity. "But I have something worth telling," cried she excitedly, "Louise Rutherford is engaged to Mr. Noyes. It is really true, for Helen told me that she congratulated her, and she did not deny it."

"I expected to hear it before this," said Marguerite somewhat sadly. "They are to be married early next spring and most likely will go to Europe."

Whichsoever way Marguerite directed her thoughts there was always some reminder of her own gloomy prospects.

Louise Rutherford's betrothed was an intimate friend of Phillip Lawson's. Their interests were much in common and in their outward appearance there was a striking resemblance.

"Phillip will be the next!" thought the girl "Ah, yes. Heaven never intended that such a man would not realize his highest and fondest hopes. He will receive the congratulations of friends and I will smile and join the pressing throng, while my heart will ache and throb so wildly. But no human heart ever was so freighted with sorrow that it had not sufficient resisting power. Ah, no." And the soft white palms are folded together as if the speaker had invoked a prayer.

Jennie Montgomery had also been indulging in some speculative thoughts, for she stole softly to her cousin's side, and, putting an arm around the girl's neck, exclaimed, "Madge, darling, I have longed for a good opportunity to say what I wish, and forgive me if I make you feel badly."

Marguerite looked at her companion, and her lips grew deadly pale, but her manner was calm, and not a shade was visible upon the madonna−like face.

"Madge," said Jennie, with excited and wistful gaze, "tell me why you promised to marry Hubert Tracy. I am certain you couldn't love him! Oh, Madge! what has prompted you to do anything so dreadful?"

Marguerite Verne sat like one in some horrible dream, not daring to move lest she might become the victim of some dread Gorgon or Fury.

"Speak, Madge, or you will frighten me to death," exclaimed Jennie, imprinting a warm kiss upon the cold rigid lips.

The effect was electrifying.

"Oh! cousin Jennie, you know all! I will not hide it from you. I am going to marry Hubert Tracy to save my father from the depths of poverty. Poor mamma shall never know what I am suffering for her sake; and if I could make a ten−fold sacrifice, I would do it to bring my darling father back to life and health—but he shall never know—oh no!"

"Marguerite Verne!" exclaimed the excited girl, raising her right hand aloft in wild, appealing gestures, "you will *never* marry Hubert Tracy! Heaven could not, or would not, allow it. Oh, no, Madge! Heaven could never sanction, such an act. Madge," exclaimed the girl, with all the intensity of her nature, "you are tempting the Almighty."

"Jennie, Jennie! spare me! oh, spare me! have some mercy!" cried Marguerite, sinking at her cousin's feet, and clinging to her with the force of desperation.

"Ask me not Madge. I can have no mercy in your case. Think me cruel as you will, I will always be of the same mind, and mother is indeed, if anything, a great deal harder upon you."

"She surely cannot be if she knew all Jennie," said Marguerite in wild, agonizing tones.

"She blames you for not having sufficient combativeness to oppose the influence brought to bear upon you."

"Surely Aunt Hester cannot think that I would be doing right to go contrary to the wish of my mother—yes,

and all."

"She does, indeed. She says that you are to obey your parents only when their motives are honest and right, not otherwise, and you know well, Madge, that your father, were he in possession of all his senses, would never sanction such a course; and furthermore, Madge, I firmly believe that the very thought of it is consuming the few drops of blood that vainly try to give warmth to the broken heart."

"Jennie Montgomery, if you have one spark of pity, forbear. It is cruel to upbraid me with being my father's murderess, when I would willingly give my life to save him. Oh! Jennie, you cannot mean what you say. Oh! my poor father."

Marguerite was now an object of pity. Her hands were clasped above her head, and in that half−prostrate position she seemed a living representation of some Grecian maid who, more than two thousand years in the past, with like struggles, had climbed the marble steps leading to the Acropolis and with lips pallid as the ivory temple near, wailed out her woes to the myriads of deities that met her despairing gaze.

But for the nonce Jennie Montgomery had steeled her heart and looked as indifferent as a Zeno.

"It will do her good. There is more work on hand yet"—these and other remarks of a like nature escaped the daring girl as she rose to her feet and glanced at the angry clouds trooping along the grey November sky like hordes of insatiable warriors bent upon further deeds of prowess.

"Cousin Jennie!"

"Yes, Madge," said the latter going toward her cousin with as much composure as if their conversation had been of the most common place.

"Cousin Jennie," said Marguerite raising herself with an air of determination, "I thank you for your harsh but wholesome words. They have given rise to a train of thoughts which I shall soon put to the test and you, my dear, must await the result."

"What now, coz? If it be anything that will relieve you from such disgraceful bonds, I will enter into it body and soul."

* * * * *

"Better to−day, dearest papa? I am so glad," and Marguerite rained kisses upon the emaciated cheeks.

"And cousin Jennie is here to congratulate you upon looking so well," Marguerite now motioned her cousin to the bedside.

"Uncle Stephen," said the girl taking the trembling hands between her own, "you must hurry and get well for I'm not going to leave here until you do."

Marguerite having supplanted the nurse for the entire afternoon and having taken the precaution to learn from the good old doctor that her cheerful presence would do good turned the occasion to the best possible account.

Side by side sat the two maidens in striking but happy contrast. Cousin Jennie's neatly fitting frock of wine−colored serge was relieved by point lace collar and cuffs, the work of her own deft fingers, while a cluster of white geranium served to complete the toilet and give a subdued tone to the highly brilliant complexion.

Marguerite's plain black cashmere with bodice of rich velvet harmonized most exquisitely with her soft *spirituelle* beauty and set off the purity of the purely transparent complexion.

How many have gazed with tearful eye upon that most bewitching of portraits, that of Mary Queen of Scots in costume of black velvet, time−honored ruff, and as reminder of her belief, the massive jet crucifix was suspended from the most perfect neck that was ever fashioned by the hand of the Divine Craftsman.

It is while gazing upon Marguerite Verne that our thoughts carry us back to the ill−fated queen and as we note the striking personal resemblance, thank a kind Providence that the maiden's lot has been cast in happier days and in a land not blighted by the harrowing associations of those stormy times.

But to our subject. The dutiful daughter goes softly toward the bed and raising the shrivelled hand from the snowy coverlid looks into the languid eyes as if she would read the thoughts which she now longed to hear.

"Papa I want to say something. Will you promise me that you will not get excited. You know I am under orders."

"Nothing will excite me now my child. Excitement is only fit for the people of the earth, and I am now already on the verge of another and I trust a better world."

Marguerite would fain have urged her father to forbear, but she knew full well that it was the truth.

"Well, papa, we are all in the hands of God. He will do what he thinks is best for us."

The quivering lips and tremulous tones gave expression to the overflowing heart, but the girl bore up bravely.

"Papa, here is my accuser," said she, grasping Cousin Jennie by the hand and drawing her forcibly to his side. "Now, dearest, tell papa what you told me in the library."

Cousin Jennie trembled somewhat. She was alarmed lest her words might add to the grief of the dying man. But she must not waver now, and in measured tones she repeated almost word for word the same conversation which had so deeply affected the sensitive Marguerite.

Mr. Verne listened, and as the girl proceeded his eye kindled and his lips moved as if in deep gratitude.

Cousin Jennie's eyes now flashed upon Marguerite, and as if by intuition Mr. Verne's also sought his daughter.

"My child, this may be the last question I shall ever ask you! Answer me truly! Do you love Hubert Tracy with a deep and tender love—such a love as a true woman gives to her husband?"

There was silence deep as death, then a sweet voice, murmured: "Papa, I know it is sinful, but I cannot! Oh! I cannot love him!"

"God be praised for these comforting words. Come close my child."

Marguerite had her face down upon the pillow, calmly awaiting the loved voice—the voice that ere long would be silent forever!

Mr. Verne had been tenderly raised to a sitting position, and supported by pillows, he was comfortable and easy. A smile lighted up his countenance and he looked calm and happy.

"Marguerite, my child, in presence of God and his holy angels, I ask you now to make me a solemn promise—I can ask you now, thank God, with a feeling of delight—promise me that you will from this hour renounce that bad and unprincipled man—Hubert Tracy."

Marguerite was bewildered. What knowledge had of late been imparted to her father? But it matters not. She is not to question, and with firm voice, exclaimed: "As Heaven is my witness I hereby break the bonds that bind me to Hubert Tracy," and as if some invisible aid had been wafted from that upper world the costly solitaire, diamond dropped upon the floor and rolled into a darkened recess, where for the time it was safe from human eyes!

CHAPTER XXXIX. A TURNING POINT.

What a change a few moments often make! They seem of small note and yet to many lives they have wrought wondrous things.

Marguerite Verne sought her father's presence with a heart sad as it were possible to be, and left it some time later with a new light dawning upon her. A ray of hope had given warmth to her whole being, and in the inaudible “Thank God” what a world of gratitude was conveyed.

But it must not be inferred that the girl had no misgiving. The picture of the disappointed lover hung before her as a reminder that her release was purchased at the expense of another's happiness. Marguerite reasoned with herself. She was of a deep argumentative turn of mind, though her actions did not always endorse the statement.

“How shall I ever have courage to write Hubert!” thought she! “How shall I pen the words inflicting such a blow! Poor fellow! Whatever his faults are, and papa must know of some, I am certain he loved me, and would try to do better. Indeed, the only consoling thought I had was being the means of making him a better man, but then, it is dreadful to think of him as having committed some crime! Poor fellow! he has been led into it,” and heaving a deep sigh of relief Marguerite once more felt truly grateful that she had been rescued from a fate which now to her seemed terrible.

“Papa does not seem inclined to explain matters and perhaps is as well,” said she, taking a small portrait from a cabinet putting it away in a drawer which she seldom opened. “I will not destroy it. Poor Hubert! some day I may feel even more sympathy than I do now;” and Hubert Tracy in miniature was consigned to its solitary resting place.

Marguerite Verne's words were prophetic indeed.

She had remained some moments in utter abstraction when Cousin Jennie hastily entered telling her that Mr. Lawson had just left and that her father wished to see her.

“What an early call for Mr. Lawson,” thought the girl as she went in answer to the message.

Mr. Verne's face caused Marguerite to clutch the chair beside her for support.

“Is he dying!” thought she, “dying, and our clergyman from home. Oh, if he were here to give us comfort.”

But Marguerite was mistaken. Her father's voice was stronger than usual and his eye kindled with something of the old fervor, then drawing from beneath his pillow a slip of paper raised it to Marguerite.

The latter did not faint or indulge in any hysterical outbreaks as is fashionable on such occasions but quietly read the lines and with calm composure stood for a moment as if waiting for some one to speak.

“May God have mercy upon his soul! Poor fellow, he had passed away ere the letter could have reached its destination.”

Mr. Verne spoke these words in a deep reverential air. They were sacred to the memory of Hubert Tracy.

Poor misguided young man. He had gone out one bright Sunday afternoon flashed with the anticipation of his fondest hopes and as he stepped gaily on board the saucy−looking yacht that awaited him at the pier a boisterous shout went up from merry−making companions.

Who among the lookers−on, glancing at the calm sky, would have then predicted the approaching storm.

Sad to relate none who went out ever returned to tell the sad story.

Some waterman who afterwards passed the spot brought back the tidings that the trim little craft was a complete wreck and that so far the bodies had not been recovered.

Strange as it may seem Montague Arnold suddenly aroused himself from his semi−brutal state and sent a lengthy cablegram to none other than Phillip Lawson.

We will not question the motives which prompted this sense of duty. Let us charitably hope that the impression left by the Divine Architect was not entirely obliterated, that his last generous act was due to that source.

It was the evening of the same day that Marguerite Verne had received the news of Hubert Tracy's sad end.

She was in her own chamber, locking perplexed and troubled. “Am I to blame for his death? Heaven forbid! Did I wish it! Ah no!” then she thought of Cousin Jennie's prophetic speech and a chill seized her as of ague. “It is indeed hard to decide between right and wrong. Will I ever feel real happiness again! Will not the bitter past come

up and taunt me with cruel heartlessness. Would it not have been better if he had lived! then I would have had an opportunity to know myself better than now!”

What causes the girl to start? A well known step is heard on the stairway, and a voice that has power to thrill every nerve, is heard in conversation with Cousin Jennie.

“I cannot see him,” murmured Marguerite, “I must not let him think that I am glad of my release.”

The cosey reception−room was directly underneath, and much of the conversation within could be distinctly heard.

Mrs. Verne having sufficiently recovered to make her appearance now formed one of the company.

Her manner towards the young solicitor was warmth itself. It was painfully embarrassing to the sensitive girl to hear the labored speeches addressed to the guest.

“It is better that I remain in ignorance, for such knowledge will only make me act more ridiculous, in fact, I would not be myself when I was prejudiced to such an extent.”

Marguerite then arose, and stole quietly along the upper hall until she sought the curious−looking apartment already described in a preceding chapter.

Master Charlie and several of his chums were seated around an old table and were having some fun over that highly intellectual game known as “old maid” or “old bachelor.”

With an air of gallantry the young gentlemen arose and each had an impromptu seat for the fair visitor.

“We are not very presentable to ladies, Miss Verne,” remarked a rather handsome boy of thirteen, possessed with that I−am−a−man look so amusing and comical.

“Oh, Madge, what good luck brought you to our den? Come let us make 'old maid' of you, I've been 'old bachelor' six times.”

“And he is afraid that it will turn out so in reality one of these days!” said out the lad who had not hitherto spoken.

“I might as well be diverting these children as brooding over real and imaginary woes. It cannot be wrong. If papa could only look in upon us now as he often did.”

“I can stay a few moments boys—that is if you will be quick.” And suiting the action to the words Marguerite wedged in between two curly−headed urchins brimful of fun and mischief and ready for anything that might honestly be termed a good time.

“I thought so,” exclaimed the jubilant Charlie, clapping his hands in wild delight, “Madge is old maid.”

A round of applause greeted Charlie's speech and amid the general confusion Marguerite made a hasty retreat.

Mrs. Verne's voice could still be heard but with increasing distinctness and her marked flattery was painfully distressing, but the girl was careful to avoid the trying ordeal.

“Eve's letter must be written before I sleep,” and instantly Marguerite was seated in Cousin Jennie's room, where a bright fire glowed in the grate and everything looked bright and cheerful as the maiden herself.

“No gloom can come in here,” said the girl in a manner that showed that she was trying to fortify herself against intruding thoughts.

“Hubert was kind to Eve, she will surely mourn for him. He was more attentive than Montague, and I believe had more sympathy.”

It was well for Marguerite that she was ignorant of her sister's sadly altered condition. As she pens the lines she fervently prays that Montague Arnold may take warning from his friend's sad fate and that Evelyn may feel more interested in her husband and give less concern to the fogies and recklessness of fashionable society.

Mr. Verne's condition now appeared more favorable. Marguerite was buoyed up by the thought that it was almost impossible that her father could be taken away from her. “A kind Providence sees fit to restore him to us,” murmured she as the door closed upon the venerable benign countenance of their much endeared physician. But the latter did not hold out false hope. When questioned as to his opinion he spoke kindly and said that he was doing all that could be done.

Another week had flown, and Saturday night was ushered in with a quiet that was inspiring, reminding one most forcibly of the lines:

“The cheerfu sapper down, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle form a circle wide,
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace

The big ha' Bible, once his father's pride."

Though Saturday night at "Sunnybank" presented a different scene the faithful picture was often presented to Mr. Verne in a way that filled his soul with a deep religious fervour and inspired him with a filial reverence for the time−honored custom of his worthy ancestors.

But of the present. Marguerite had been reading from the *Church Witness*, and having finished her task or rather pleasure, sat down upon a low stool beside the grate, gazing upon the red hot coals with a far off look in her violet eyes!

"Has Phillip been here to−day, my dear?" asked Mr. Verne arousing Marguerite from her reverie.

"Not to−day, papa."

"I would like to see him this evening."

"James can go for him if you wish, papa."

"Very well, dear, just say that I wish to see him, if at all possible."

Marguerite glanced at the tiny alarm clock that stood on the table. It was nearly eight o'clock, and in all probability Mr. Lawson might not be found at home, but she gave the message to the trusty errand boy, and once more was installed as watcher in the sick room, having an uncomfortable dread of meeting the expectant visitor.

"James has indeed been successful, papa," cried the girl as she heard the well−known footsteps in the corridor, then hastily added, "I shall be in the library, papa. You can ring when I am needed."

Marguerite had not gone many steps when she stood face to face with Phillip Lawson.

Despite her efforts to appear calm the flushed cheeks were a sad tell tale.

She reached out her hand in a friendly way but seemed nervous and embarrassing, a circumstance which might easily be ascribed to the painful anxiety that at times possessed her.

"Papa seemed so anxious that I proposed sending for you," said Marguerite in her winning gentle way.

"I am glad that you did, Miss Verne; I was just leaving the house as the message arrived."

Mr. Lawson was soon seated beside his old friend.

The latter, within the last few moments, had become much excited and the young man felt uneasy.

Mr. Verne, having divined the latter's thoughts, exclaimed, "Don't be alarmed Phillip, I have much to say before we are through. This may be the last opportunity—the very last."

"Never mind sir, you're worth a dozen dead men yet," said Mr. Lawson in a cheerful voice.

But the effect was lost upon the dying man.

"Phillip Lawson," said he, his voice calm and distinct, "I have asked God to give me strength to−night and I have not asked in vain. He has been good and merciful to me through it all and on this bed of affliction I have made my peace with Him."

A tear shone in the listener's eye and fell upon the floor.

"God has indeed been good to me. He has revealed Himself in a number of ways. Not once has He withheld His hand. The plots of the wicked have been frustrated. When their hands were lifted against me He laid them low in the dust. Ah Phillip, I have much to be grateful for."

Mr. Verne then pointed to a small box which Phillip brought to his bedside, when a small key was produced.

"Take this," said he, "and on opening the lower drawer on the right side of my desk you will see a miniature Japanese cabinet. Bring it to me."

Mr. Lawson did as requested, and with trembling hands Mr. Verne drew forth a paper which he passed to the young lawyer.

"There is a document, which doubtless you have seen before, at least I always thought so," said Mr. Verne, eyeing his friend with eager look.

"I have indeed, sir, but never would have thought of it being in your possession."

It is needless to add the explanation that followed, the reader being well acquainted with the facts, but we can try to imagine the joy that leaped into Phillip Lawson's heart.

Never within so short a time was realized more true happiness.

"Mr. Lawson," said Mr. Verne, "I want to say a few more words. I feel that my days are nearly numbered, and that soon my voice will be silent. It is, indeed, a painful subject, but duty demands it. Ah! Phillip, what man would have acted towards that unfortunate youth as you have done. Yours is a generosity that is seldom met with."

Mr. Verne seemed for a moment lost in deep thought, then exclaimed: “Ah! Phillip, God's ways are wonderful. Let us thank Him that the barriers are broken down—that ere long you may possess the rarest treasure that this earth can give.”

Mr. Verne's voice sank into a deep whisper as he uttered the solemn invocation:

“And now may the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, rest upon thee forever my son.”

The icy fingers which had lain within those of the other, now relaxed their hold.

Mr. Lawson seeing that the man was growing weaker, made an excuse to leave.

“Phillip,” said Mr. Verne in a hoarse tone, “When I have laid in my grave for three months I want you to show my child that document. Then plead your suit, and if from my home above it be possible that it is granted me to witness the scene, I shall pray for you both. Yes, Phillip, the prayer of an invisible presence shall light upon you and crown you with a happiness, that will have no end.”

CHAPTER XL. TIME'S CHANGES—MONTAGUE ARNOLD.

Gloomy scenes are not agreeable to the general reader we will now pass over the period when death and its inevitable sorrow overshadowed the once festive halls of “Sunnybank.”

A great change had taken place, yet when settlements had been made the estate was in a better condition than was at first supposed. The trustees were men of the strictest integrity, who made ample provision for the afflicted family.

With feelings of relief and gratitude Marguerite learned that “Sunnybank” was to be sold for the benefit of the creditors and that a cosey little home had been provided instead.

With Mrs. Verne it was otherwise.

She went from room to room bemoaning her sad lot and wondering if any other mortal ever had such a cross to bear. Poor woman! It was hard to teach submission to such a spirit.

Phillip Lawson was a true comforter. He was not officious, nor was he remiss, but had a happy faculty of being near when he was most needed.

Marguerite was daily losing part of the disagreeable restraint which had hitherto placed such an inseparable barrier between them, and if at times she appeared forced and formal it was from a sense of shame at her mother's undisguised patronage.

None could now execute Mrs. Verne's slightest wish in a manner like Mr. Lawson, none could give such friendly advice, in fact none could do anything but Mr. Lawson.

The pretty suburban cottage into which Mrs. Verne and Marguerite were now removed was indeed worthy the name of home.

Its surroundings alone were sufficient proof. In summer its neat garden front, vine−clad porch and graceful elms guarding the gateway! But it was when one entered the inviting hall and glanced through the several cosey rooms that the home feeling was realized. A tasteful parlor looking out upon the garden is the spot where we now care to linger, for seated in a familiar looking arm−chair is Marguerite.

She is busy over a piece of Kensington work which has to be ready for the approaching bazaar.

“It is well that I am of some service,” thought the girl as she stitched away upon the pretty designs, admiring the artistic groups of lilies and fern leaves.

Clad in deep mourning Marguerite was striking in appearance and the man must be a stoic indeed who could look upon her without feelings of tender interest.

Such were Phillip Lawson's sentiments as he was ushered into her presence.

“Miss Verne,” said the latter on being seated, “I have called this evening to convey a message from Mr. Spriggins.”

“Was he in the city to−day—and gone back without calling? Well that is too bad, for I had a message to send to Melindy; there now, that reminds me of the Christmas cards.”

“He bade me tell you that it was impossible for him to call to−day, but that he would bring Melindy in on next Tuesday, and I suppose from that you may expect guests for dinner.”

Christmas was drawing nigh, and the “Sprigginses” were not forgotten. Marguerite had knitted a handsome scarf to gladden the large heart of Moses, while a pretty tidy had just been completed for the new easy chair in Melindy's best room.

Mr. Spriggins had become a general favorite with the Vernes, and also with Mr. Lawson. He had dined with the latter a fortnight previous, and left brimful of gratitude and good wishes.

Mr. Lawson with all his integrity had been somewhat evasive, but bear in mind the fact that he is doing so from a sense of duty—a solemn obligation.

He did not inform his fair companion that Moses Spriggins had been detained in his office for more than an hour, and that a serious compact was entered into between the lawyer and his former client.

We will not relate the conversation that passed, but let the reader imagine the look upon Moses' rubicund face when Mr. Lawson presented the missing document, and made the necessary explanation as to the means by which it came into his possession.

"It is a miracle, nuthin' more nor less," exclaimed Moses, his eyes dancing with delight.

"Things are a−turnin' out jest as I expected. Wal, I do believe I'll beat that ere Dr. Wiggins yet! Pity he wa'nt a Kings County feller too!"

"But Queens is a pretentious county. She must not be set aside, Moses," said the solicitor laughing.

"Wal, there's another subject I have to prophesy on, but I s'pose as your a modest sort o' chap will hold my tongue. (It was no later'n last night Melindy was a−tellin' mother I was too long tongued), and I was only sayin' a word or two about some little family matters. Wal, I'll keep dark a little bit longer," while Mr. Spriggins gave a very significant glance towards Mr. Lawson, and enveloping himself in his home−made ulster went forth to "bide his time."

And now, while Marguerite is striving to be happy and make others happy, attending to the wants of the needy and awaiting with anxious solicitude the arrival of the English mail, we turn to a darker and sadder picture.

* * * * *

"For God's sake don't let them carry me off body and soul! Ah, they hiss at me with their venomous tongues! Yes! yes, they are crawling over me! They are sucking the blood in my brain! Evelyn, come to me! I will not send you away again. Oh, take me out of this fire! I'm burning! Oh God, I'm burning to death!"

Such were the incoherent ravings of the shabbily clad creature who had been found lying in a gutter at the end of a street leading to an alley in which were several notorious gambling dens.

Like the parable of the Levite and Samaritan many "had passed by on the other side," but there are good Samaritans at the present day and one came in the form of an elderly gentleman with locks of hoary hair and a benign yet sad expression of countenance. He is accompanied by a sweet−faced woman and a delicate looking child with flaxen curls and eyes of heavenly blue.

"Stay Clarice, we must see who he is, or why he is here," said the old gentleman putting the child in the care of a friend and hastening to the scene with the agility of youth.

"That man was thrown out of that farthest tavern there, sir," said a raw−boned youth, who was standing with his eyes and month open awaiting further developments of the case then before him.

"The same old story, father. They encouraged him until the last farthing is gone, and then he is turned out to die. Oh! how horrible," and the woman laid her hand upon her father's arm as if wishing to get away from the sad and cruel sight.

"He was once a gentleman, sir," said the youth with the air of one who knew much of the affairs of the neighborhood, and was anxious to impress the bystanders.

The old gentleman beckoned to a couple of policemen, and thus armed made his way to the infamous den.

The grey hairs and reverential mien pleaded more than the most honeyed words, and within a short time all necessary information was obtained. Amid shrieks and groans, Montague Arnold was placed in a cab and conveyed to a public hospital, and the good, old Samaritan went on his way happy in the thought of having done his duty.

Nor did he rest here.

On the following day, after having made inquires as to the unfortunate man's condition, he set forth to find the destitute and unhappy wife. Five or six hours search in a wretched tenement habitation, and a sad scene presented itself.

After climbing the third flight of rickety stairs the old gentleman sees a shabbily dressed woman, and as he glances at the surroundings his soul sickens. All is drear and desolate. The apartment is cold, and a few coals seem trying to keep a little glow that the poor creature may not succumb to the pitiless element.

Some coarse shirts are lying upon the rude table—it is the same old song which Hood made immortal:—

"Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread
A shroud as well as a shirt."

"Do not fear madam, I am no bailiff. I have come to bring you to your husband," said the old gentleman in trembling accents. "Oh spare me, dear sir! I never wish to see his face again! His brutal treatment has left me as you now see—this wretched hole and these dry morsels! Oh God! did I ever think this would be my sad fate!"

Who could recognize in this wretched−looking creature any semblance to the peerless proud beauty—Evelyn

Verne.

Ah, surely the proud soul must have passed through the waters of much tribulation—surely she is humbled in the very dust.

"I cannot go, sir. Oh no, I cannot go!" exclaimed the woman in piteous accents, covering her face as if to shut out the sight of human sympathy.

"Listen to me, madam," said the old gentleman in his soft touching way, and then the humiliated woman heard a tale of woe that entered deeply into her soul.

What a change those words had wrought—such a change as mortal can scarcely dream of!

"I will go with you, sir," said Evelyn with tears streaming, down her cheeks.

As she glanced at her threadbare garments a feeling of embarrassment was visible upon her emaciated face, but it was momentary.

The good old man led the way and Evelyn followed, but at respectful distance, and as the frowning edifice rose above them what mortal could have withheld pity for the almost demented creature!

"If Marguerite could see me now! And Phil Lawson whom I once despised. Ah, now he is a prince indeed. I honor him above men!"

What sentiments for Evelyn Verne! Why such sentiments? One of God's messengers has at last struck the missing chord and awakened a flood of divine melody more acceptable to the quiring hosts than the lays of measured song.

"This way, my child," says a benign matron in a kind and sympathetic voice, and Mrs. Arnold stands gazing upon the sadly bloated face of her husband.

"Eve, you have come! I am not deserving of such kindness—but it is nearly over now, I shall trouble you no longer. Oh, if I could undo the dreadful past what a different life I would lead!"

"Hush, Montague! we have both been to blame. Not more than an hour ago I could have cursed you with my whole heart, but now I trust in God that I am a different being."

The old gentleman had remained in the hall but was now summoned to the bedside where he learned the sad story of the wreck of two human lives.

"I was selfish and wayward; heartless and cruel. Many wrongs have been encouraged because it was all right in the eyes of the hollow−hearted fashionable world. Oh! society! you have much to answer for!"

Mrs. Arnold broke down completely, and gave way to heart−rending sobs.

"Let her weep," thought the old man, "It will do her good."

Montague Arnold now raised himself upon the pillow, but the effort was too much, and he sank back exhausted, murmuring, "It will not be long."

"Oh! Montague! my husband," exclaimed the woman, rushing wildly to his bedside, and putting her arm around his neck, "Oh! my husband, you must not die. We will began life anew, and each hour atone for the past."

"Let us thank a merciful Saviour that atonement has been made both for you and me, Evelyn."

"How came my husband to realize such a change," asked the grief−smitten wife, gazing sadly into the old man's face.

"The good Chaplain remained with him nearly all night, and on passing my house this morning came to tell us that the dying man had indeed become truly penitent."

"Thank God!" was the fervent reply.

Evelyn was now left alone with her husband, and she knew that it was impossible for him to live many days. She strove to smooth his dying pillow, and give all the consolation that lay within her power.

It was indeed a sad but tender sight to notice the wistful gaze of the still lustrous eyes, the hectic flush of the wan cheek, and to listen to the spasmodic cough which spoke too plainly that hasty consumption had sought out its victim with unerring aim.

The physician on going his daily round now entered the ward with a look of sympathy in his kindly face, and as he glanced at the careworn creature seated in a corner, felt a sudden pang shoot through his generous heart.

Another day dawned and Montague Arnold was yet on this side of the grave.

Evelyn went to and from the old lodging, with a firmer step yet with an aching void at her heart.

Why did I not see my folly ere it was too late? Ah! mothers, why not educate your daughters to be sensible beings? But why do I speak now? It is too late! and drawing her shawl close to keep out the winter's wind the

woman pressed on amid the surging tide of humanity, pressing against hearts, perhaps, heavy, as her own!

"Is it an apparition," thought Mrs. Arnold, as she stood for a moment to gaze upon a lovely child, standing besides her husband's cot.

It was surely an angel in disguise sent to cheer his last moments.

A bouquet of choice flowers shed a delightful fragrance. They are the gift of the child.

"This is too sad a place for such innocence," murmurs the invalid, taking the bouquet and pressing it to his lips.

"Lalia is accustomed to such scenes, Mr. Arnold, I take her with me on my daily rounds, that she may see the sorrows of humanity, and I trust she will never grow so selfish as not to feel for them too."

"May you receive the greatest reward," cried the wretched Evelyn. "Ah! much promise is in store for your child."

The little one glided toward the speaker, and putting the tiny white arms around her neck, impressed a warm kiss upon the quivering lips.

"Good−bye, Lalia! When you grow to be a woman wear this for my sake," and Montague Arnold took from his finger an old−fashioned ring—the gift of his dying mother.

The child looked at the precious relic, as if it were too sacred to touch. Then spoke her thanks through the soft dreamy eyes— beautiful as an Italian sky.

"Good−bye, Lalia," and the child went forth with a sadness prophetic that from these icy lips those words were the last she would ever hear.

And the child was right. On the following day as the sun was sinking in the west, Montague Arnold was sinking into his last slumber.

Respiration became difficult, and his words were almost inaudible. As his wife knelt beside him, and clasped the cold hands within her own, she tried hard to appear calm.

"You forgive all, Eve?"

A kiss upon the rigid lips was the silent but expressive answer.

A fervent "God Almighty bless you," a faint sigh and Montague Arnold had sought another and we trust a better home.

Mrs. Arnold is truly a widow in a strange land, yet He who is the husband of the widow has not forsaken her. The aged gentleman, his dutiful daughter and the lovely Lalia have given her the warmest sympathy, and taken her to their snug and cosey home.

Only a few weeks had passed away since Evelyn had written Marguerite, but how much had transpired in that time? It was when she had received a second letter that the thought occurred that she had been remiss.

"Marguerite, sweet girl! she will never knew what I have suffered," and with these words upon her lips Mrs. Arnold sat down and penned as much of her sad story as she then thought fit to confide.

"That is all," murmured the writer folding up the blurred page and addressing the letter. Then for the first time since the days of her happy, sunny childhood Evelyn Arnold took up a neatly bound Testament. She had an indistinct remembrance of something concerning the prodigal son and now wished to know for herself.

The sad, pathetic picture soon possessed a charm and the story was read over many times ere the volume was laid aside.

"Thank God," mused the reader and the words were wafted aloft until they reached the

——"Kingly palace gate;
With frontispiece of diamond and of gold
Embellished."

CHAPTER XLI. THE LIVING PRESENT.

The bitter, cold days of winter are nearly at an end. The forces of nature are now exhausted and the elements have settled down into quiet rest.

“How time flies!” exclaimed the solicitor glancing at the calendar opposite his desk. “Three months to−day since I made that promise.”

Phillip Lawson looked happy. His office had a cheerful aspect, and his surroundings seemed to indicate that the young man was contented and happy.

“Four o'clock and the fellow is not here! Well, I can afford to be disappointed to−day. It matters not.” And putting on his great coat Phillip Lawson made his way down town and as he strode along at a rapid gate we were not surprised to hear one of the “oldest inhabitants" remark “Gracious! what a fine strapping fellow that young Lawson has got to be. I bet he'd turn the scales at one hundred and eighty.”

The evening of the same day another scene is before us.

A graceful figure is seated beside the grate of the neat, cosey parlor which we have hitherto admired.

A deep blush rises upon the maiden's cheek as she turns over the leaves of the handsome volume lying in her lap. What causes that blush? What latent property lies hid in a withered moss rose? What beauty to arrest a maiden's eye?

These are questions to be decided by the fair ones who perhaps in like manner have treasured away, far from human eyes, a few, petals of a withered rose or perhaps “only a pansy blossom.”

Ah, the tell tale crimson that will betray Marguerite in spite of all her grand theories of will power!

“It is Phillip!” and the rapid beat of that uncontrollable organ sends the crimson flood surging over the marble brow with redoubled force.

“Pardon my coming to−night, Miss Verne. It is on a sacred mission—a solemn obligation to the dead.”

Phillip Lawson's voice was husky, and his muscular frame vibrated with the depth of emotion.

Marguerite grew pale, but the young man's reassuring words brought relief.

“It is nothing to grieve for. It is somewhat unpleasant for us all, but we must not consider our feelings.”

A familiar face greets the young man with a pleasing smile.

Mrs. Arnold is indeed a changed woman. She is now a true friend an honorable and honest friend.

The once peerless beauty is no longer a silly, heartless nobody, but a being with feelings, and aspirations of a higher kind; and as she stands before us much altered in appearance, with much of the former beauty gone, we can indeed rejoice that in its place is a happy, soft subdued expression that makes even the plainest face comely and fair to look upon.

“I am glad that you have come Mr. Lawson, I have been thinking of you the whole evening. I have so much to ask you about papa. It seems that I never can get him out of my mind. I can see him now looking so interested, just as he did when you happened to come to 'Sunnybank.' Oh! Mr. Lawson, will I ever cease to feel the deep remorse that is almost killing me.”

“That is just the way she goes on from morning till night,” exclaimed Mrs. Verne, who now entered, and extended her hand to her guest in a quiet and kindly way.

The young man was at a loss for words, and thinking it best to say nothing just then, suddenly held up the missing document.

“This is the promise I made Mr. Verne,” said he, addressing himself to Mrs. Verne, then placing the letter in Marguerite's hand.

The latter glanced at the contents, and trembled violently.

Mrs. Arnold was the first to speak.

“Is it the confession of a murder, Mr. Lawson. It must be something terrible.”

“Bead it for yourself,” said Marguerite, awaking from her stupor. “Truly God has watched over us from the first. Oh! mamma, think what I have escaped.”

“Hush! Marguerite. Let us never refer to the past again,” said Mrs. Arnold, with a calm resignation so characteristic of the noble spirit which now actuated her.

“Phillip Lawson, you have proved the truest friend that my father ever had. You have been true to us all, and we little deserved such sacrifice. Many a time I have held you up to ridicule when I knew in my heart that you were honest and good.”

Marguerite had noiselessly stolen from their midst. She was deeply overcome and nature must have its way.

“You will pardon me, Mrs. Arnold, if I give you the same advice which you thought fit for your sister—*let us forget the past and live only for the present*.”

Phillip Lawson was somewhat agitated. A clear, steady light shone in the intellectual gray eyes, and a noble resolve was written in relief upon the generous face.

“Mrs. Verne, I have something further to say.” And the young man repeated the conversation which took place when the document was brought from its resting place when Mr. Verne had invoked his last blessing upon those whose happiness was so dear to him.

“Mr. Lawson, I will also add *my* blessing, and may Heaven shower upon you all the happiness that such as you deserve,” then taking the young man's hand and pressing it to her lips Mrs. Verne withdrew to her own room.

“Bless you, Phillip. You are all to me that a brother can be,” and leaning her head against the stalwart frame Mrs. Arnold gave vent to the pent−up grief and wept like a little child.

Phillip Lawson sat for some moments after they had left the room. His eyes were bent upon the floor and his face was grave indeed.

“Evelyn has told you all, Marguerite?” said the young man rising from his seat and approaching the spot where the girl stood smiling through her tears—like golden sunshine through an April shower.

“And I have come, Phillip.”

Who can picture the joy those words gave?

“Marguerite, my own! mine forever!” exclaimed the enraptured lover pressing the maiden to his breast and impressing upon her lips such kisses as only a pure, noble−minded man can give.

Oh, the bliss of that happy betrothal hour, when two souls are forever made one—when two hearts outwardly estranged at last find the realization of their earthly bliss!

Phillip Lawson goes forth from the cosey home as the affianced husband of Marguerite Verne and with him go our heart's best wishes for a life to be crowned with all the happiness that this world can give.

Poor Mrs. Verne. She may at times have felt somewhat disappointed when she thought how surely she could have had a baronet for a son−in−law, but in charity for the woman's weakness we will forbear.

It is really wonderful how quickly news travels. Not a week had passed ere Mr. Spriggins came in with a double share of congratulation from himself and Melindy.

“I tell ye what it is Mr. Lawson, I'm ahead of Wiggins, for I've never failed in one of my prophesies. They're every one a−comin' true jest as I said,” and Mr. Spriggins slapped his friend on the shoulder with a force worthy his muscular frame.

“You know I hinted about it at my weddin' and you looked sorter shy and put me off, and you had it in yer head all the time. Wal, I'm beginnin' to think men's as deceivin' as wimin.”

Mr. Lawson made a few appropriate remarks and Mr. Spriggins began to think “it was nigh about time for startin'“ when suddenly he jumped to his feet exclaiming, “I do believe I'd a−gone off without tellin' you the most thrillin' story that you'd ever heard. That ere thing just put me in mind of it,” added he, pointing to a circular of the Dominion Safety Fund.

“I remember Miss Verne a−tellin' me that it was the best consarn in the Dominion and I do believe now she's turned out a prophet too. Now to my story (as they say in love affairs),” and giving his waistcoat a vigorous pull Mr. Spriggins resumed—

“You know them ere Wiggleses that Melindy used to be jealous of? Wal, they had a cousin, Jerushy Cursye, and she married a fellar that used to work up at Deacon Jones's. Wal, to make a long and a short of it, they were spliced and came to live on a new farm out in the backlands. Wal, sir, they had a purty tough time gettin' along for the first year or so, but Jerushy was study as a rock and made things go as far as the next one I kin tell you, and so when they were five years in the log house they began to think of gettin' up a frame house and puttin' on considerable airs; and one day I tackled Bill and says I, look here, Bill, if you want to make a good investment (a purty good word for me, Mr. Lawson),” said Moses with a wink, “I'll put you on the track.”

“Good gracious! yes, Moses, says he, it seems I must have had sich a feelin' meself, for I was a−wonderin'

yesterday what I could do to make Jerushy and the family sure of a good livin'."

"Safety is the word, says I, and as soon as you could say Jack Robinson, I explained the bisness, and next day Bill made an excuse to go to town and came home $1000 richer."

"That was the man you had in here about a year ago," said Mr. Lawson, with an air of interest.

"The very one. Poor Bill! he had no notion of cheatin' the consarn, for he was hearty as a bear, but he took a cold in the woods, and gettin' bad treatment it turned to consumption, and he died in less than no time.

"Poor Jerushy took it dreadful hard, and the nabers was a wonderin' all the time how she could get along—for you know Mr. Lawson, that a farm ain't much good without a man or hired help. Wal, sir, what do you think—it was no more nor three or four days after the funeral that a letter came to inform the widder that she was to receive $1000 for her late husband's policy.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Moses, with a twinkle of the big blue eyes, "It was equal to a circus to see how the folks flocked from all parts to hear if the story was true, and I believe there was a good many of the wimin folks jealous of Jerushy's streak of luck."

The lawyer burst into a genuine and hearty laugh, then exclaimed, "Moses I am afraid that you are rather uncharitable towards the fair sex."

"Wal, now sir, because you've happened to fall heir to a terrible nice gal, you needn't think they're all angels, for they ain't by a long chalk."

Mr. Spriggins now made a stride towards the door.

"Bless me if it ain't later'n I thought. The goin' is terrible bad and Melindy will be kinder anxious, so good−bye," and the loquacious Moses made his exit in a style that might not, strictly speaking, be considered "good form."

But the postscript most be attended to in the form of a second appearance.

"I say, Mr. Lawson, when are you a−comin' out? Can't you come some Sunday, and bring Miss Verne and Miss Lottie and be sure and send us word, so as Melindy can have a fire in the best room, and a dinner fit for city folks."

"You may see us all out there some day when you least expect us," said the young man, smiling in his peculiar way.

"All right, sir! Off this time, sure. Don't forget to tell the insurance man about the nine−days' wonder up at the Crossin'," and with this parting injunction, Moses disappeared in good earnest.

An hour later, as the latter is jogging along the king's highway happy as mortal can be, Phillip Lawson is indulging in a quiet reverie beside his bright, cheerful fireside.

Though possessed of much means there is no attempt at display in the pretty tasteful cottage.

The young solicitor had too much good taste, culture, and breeding, to follow in the wake of shoddyism. He was a true gentleman, and as such he cannot take a false movement either to the right or the left.

What glorious day dreams can now be woven from the golden threads of happy thought?

Phillip Lawson is happy, indeed. He thinks of the fair maiden who hourly awaits his coming with the flush of fond expectation mantling the delicate cheek, and as he gazes upon the faithful portrait of his betrothed, murmurs, "Is there aught on earth so pure and true as thee my own—my Marguerite."

"Confiding, frank, without control,
Poured mutually from soul to soul,
As free from any fear or doubt,
As is that light from chill or stain
The sun into the stars sheds out,
To be by them shed back again."

CHAPTER XLII. THE NORTHWEST REBELLION.

"The great heart of the nation heaves
With pride in work her sons have done well,
And with a smile and sigh she weaves
A wreath of bays and one of *immortelle*."
—*Toronto Mail*

It is the spring of 1885—a memorable one to many a bereaved household. The Northwest Rebellion is at its height and our brave−hearted volunteers are starting to the front "to do or die."

On that lovely May morn many a patriotic mother looked on her first−born with a smile of encouragement upon her lips and a dull aching at her heart. And that boy's farewell kiss! It lingers, oh so lovingly, upon the quivering lips and pale cheek! But the brave soul can suffer this much and more if her country needs it. She can send all—husband, son and brother. Ah, yes, the true heroes are oftenest found at the quiet fireside, or in some sequestered spot on a lonely hillside, where, surrounded by the orphaned ones, they struggle on and on—on to the goal where all such deeds are crowned with a crown of victory that is unfading.

We need scarcely speak of that time when our beloved New Brunswick mustered her little band of heroes, when each county gave its share, when each vied in patriotic ardor and enthusiasm. It is well known to all. And who among the countless throng that gathered at the Intercolonial Railway Station of St. John did not feel a thrill of emotion that perhaps he or she would never feel again?

And there were many of our friends—aye, all that could go—were there.

Marguerite Verne, with face of angelic purity, stood bidding adieu to the dear ones. Beside her was Mrs. Arnold draped in her mourning weeds and looking indeed a changed woman—a woman with a heart now ready to sympathize with others and ready to do aught that duty dictated.

"I thought I'd see all the folks here!" exclaimed a voice and Mr. Spriggins is instantly beside them, his honest face beaming with patriotic pride.

"Wal, wal, it is wonderful to see sich a crowd. I wouldn't a−missed it for a good deal," cried he, looking around with an air of bewilderment.

Mr. Spriggins soon became *more* excited. The York contingent, including the Infantry School Corps, now arrived, and judging from the appearance of the surging mass that formed the escort and moved to the martial strains of the I.S.C. Band, there never was a more genuine expression of Canadian loyalty. And the eulogiums passed upon the worthy little band were heard on every side—"What fine, orderly−looking fellows. They'll compare favorably with any of the regulars." True saying, indeed, New Brunswick has a right to be proud of her volunteers. They are ever ready to respond to the call of duty, and to the end maintain the reputation of the British soldier.

But of our friends. Marguerite felt sad indeed. She had witnessed the parting of an aged mother and her youngest boy, and a mist now shaded the thoughtful eyes.

Phillip Lawson next joined the group.

"I need not ask if you are going, Mr. Spriggins," said he smiling, "as I see you are minus the uniform."

"But I'm true blue all the same, sir. I tell you the Spriggins are never skulkin' when they're wanted. Jim Spriggins goes without any coaxin' and if it w'ant that I can't get away from Melindy I'd go too."

"Your brother volunteered, I suppose," ventured Mrs. Arnold, with an air of interest.

"Indeed he did, ma'am, he and another fellar from the Crossin', and I brought 'em down."

Mr. Spriggins made a flourish with his brawny arm and beckoned to the young men who now were introduced, and received warm congratulations.

As cheer upon cheer rose from the crowd Moses became half frantic with enthusiasm.

"Tell ye what it is, Mr. Lawson, them's the fellars to scare the half−breeds. Bet your life on't, they'll soon make quick work of the Injuns round Frog Pond and Cut Knife Creek."

Marguerite could ill repress a smile as she caught sight of Lottie Lawson's face, so expressive of quaint humor

and mischief.

And now the historic air—"The Girl I Left Behind Me," falls on every ear. Those inspiring strains played by the 62nd Fusiliers Band as the train moved off amid deafening cheers and shouts of "God bless you," will ever be remembered as souvenirs of that eventful morn, recalling the enthusiasm which then burst forth from the heart of every true Canadian.

"It seems too bad that they had to go because Riel had to get up such a fuss. Why don't they get him and kill him off before he will have the chance of killing many of our brave fellows."

The girl spoke with considerable force as she finished her speech.

"Bravo! little sister," cried Phillip, patting the flushed cheeks by way of applause.

"And you think the guverment did the square thing by them ere half−breeds, do you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Spriggins. What right had they to sell out their claims and go and settle on any place they wished without making any recompense whatever. How do you think affairs would end if they were allowed to go on without any stop being put to them?"

"Wal now, see here, Miss Lottie, I believe you'd make as good a lawyer as your brother. Spose you've a−learned this from his discourse and sich like. Wal, I b'lieve the guverment is right, and at the nixt 'lection I'll remember every word you've said. I allus thought they was the squarest fellars we've ever had yet—them fellars that got out this ere policy."

"The National Policy; Mr. Spriggins," ventured Marguerite, smilingly. "People may talk to the contrary but it has done much to improve matters. I am not a politician but I must say I like the National Policy and hope it may exist while there is need of it."

"Wal done, Miss Verne, I b'lieve you could lecture better'n some of them fellars that come up lection times. I'm sure they could'nt hold a candle to you."

A general laugh succeeded and Mr. Spriggins was delighted to think he had made such well−timed remarks.

The party had now arrived at the corner of Coburg and Charlotte streets when the latter hastily exclaimed.

"By Jiminey! I must go and see about a tub that a woman was to leave for me in the market. It's a good thing I did'nt forgit; for Melindy would have my head off."

"I don't think Melindy is so dreadful as you seem to say, Mr. Spriggins," ventured Lottie, who had gone a few steps in advance, but now turned face to face with the jubilant Moses.

"Will we wait dinner for you, Mr. Spriggins?" asked Marguerite, looking earnestly at the sturdy son of toil as if she knew the full value of the rough but generous nature.

Marguerite was one of the few who could fully appreciate the lines of Scotland's gifted bard—

"A king can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that.
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he maunna fa' that."

She had moral courage to stand up boldly for those whom the fashionable world would sneer at. She was not ashamed to recognize a plainly−dressed acquaintance in the most public thoroughfare, nor did she ever make an excuse to be pre−occupied when approached by some coarse but well−meaning inferior.

Other subjects now crowd upon us.

Aunt Hester once more gladdens the Verne cottage with her cheering presence. Sunshine follows every step of the happy and hearty matron.

"*Not a bit older*, you say, Evelyn. Now I did'nt come here to be made fun of in that style. It was no later than this morning that your Uncle William told me I was greyer than he! Now there's conflicting opinions enough for one day," and the hearty laugh that followed showed that Mrs. Montgomery was as full of life as ever.

"William was afraid that you might grow conceited in your old age," said Mrs. Verne in a languid manner. To do justice to the latter it must be said that she was more natural than the Mrs. Verne of fashionable "Sunnybank."

"That's just what Jennie told him, Matilda," said Mrs. Montgomery, taking down a pretty panel that Marguerite had just finished.

"It is exquisite," added she viewing the picture from several points, in order to study the most striking effect of light and shade.

"Do tell me, Matilda, have you ever heard of the Lister family? Did they go back to their delightful Parnassus

and revel in the music of their delectable Castalian spring?"

The mock gravity of the speech afforded considerable merriment.

"You have surely heard of the grand match which Urania made," said Mrs. Verne. "Why it was announced in most of the leading Canadian papers."

Poor Mrs. Verne! She almost betrayed her besetting sin, but Mrs. Montgomery, good soul, seemed unconcious of the fact.

"Only think," cried Marguerite, "of Urania talking up those sublime theories to Sir George Vandewater of Cornwall."

"A Cornish knight," cried Mrs. Montgomery, clapping her hands with genuine glee.

"And sixty years into the bargain," chimed in Evelyn.

"You are rather severe, my dear," said Mrs. Verne, addressing her daughter in a somewhat petulant tone, then turning to her sister added, "Evelyn wishes to imply that Sir George is sixty. I can't see that he ought to pass for an old man. I've heard that he does not look an hour over forty; and twenty thousand a year Hester."

"He needs it all! poor man! for he will have a sorry time of it," said Mrs. Montgomery in a tone of mock compassion.

"But that's not the best of it, Aunt Hester, I must tell you the biggest joke you ever heard," cried Fred. Verne, now a handsome and intelligent stripling of eighteen, who had just appeared on the scene in time to have his say also. "You know that they went to Ottawa about a year ago, and shortly afterwards I found a copy of the Ottawa *Times* with an announcement that the Misses DeLister of New Brunswick were the guests of Mrs. Geoffrey Renfrew."

"DeLister," cried Mrs. Montgomery, between fits of laughter. "Well, Fred, that is the best joke, indeed! No wonder they caught the poor Cornish baronet."

Mrs. Verne did not relish her sister's raillery, but she had gained enough sense to say very little about the Listers and their stroke of good luck.

"I don't know how many letters I commenced with 'Dear Cousin Jennie,' and just as I got the length of the Listers new title something always happened to prevent my finishing."

"You need not try to invent any excuses to Cousin Jennie for your remissness my dear little brother," cried Marguerite, giving the youth a sisterly embrace with her fair arm, and running her fingers through the meshes of clustering curls.

"What a pity we never thought of that dodge before," cried Fred, brimming over with mischief. "I tell you what DeVerne would have stood high at Ottawa."

"Can't you let the poor Listers alone, Fred," exclaimed Evelyn, trying hard to look serious, as she glanced at the life of the house wedged in beside Aunt Hester on the dainty little sofa.

Evelyn now arose to give some orders for tea, Marguerite glanced over the evening paper, and seeing that Aunt Hester and her mother were on the eve of a quiet chat went to her own room. It was in the gloaming and the girl enjoyed that hour more than words can tell. Her thoughts were happy ones. All was now bright and fair, and if at times she took a retrospective glance at the unhappy past it gave her more cause to be thankful. It always brought up a quotation from a sermon which she heard in a church in Fredericton—

"Night shows the stars; affliction shows the man."

And true indeed. Affliction showed the true Christian piety of the lovely Marguerite. It brought out all the inherent beauty of her nature, and when on certain days she prayed for those who had been tempted to destroy the happiness of her betrothed it was always thus: "They are only human! God forgive them!"

Apropos of Hubert Tracy's accomplices, we may say they were allowed to go unpunished.

"Marguerite," exclaimed Phillip Lawson, taking the taper fingers within his own. "We are too happy to wish any ill upon a human creature. Let us trust in God, they may yet to see the great wrong they tried to commit upon a fellow being; and may they feel such remorse as will be productive of true penitence."

And the young man did not pray in vain. Messrs. Sharpley &Connors felt much chagrined as they heard through the medium of the press of the prosperity of the young and talented lawyer and often experienced a feeling of uneasiness when they thought how matters might have terminated. And who will not say that at times there arose before them a great tribunal where they must answer for the projected crime.

CHAPTER XLIII. THE WEDDING ANNIVERSARY—CONCLUSION.

"Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—
A sound which makes us linger,—yet—farewell."
—*Byron*.

"Gracious, Melindy; one would think the half−breeds were a−comin'. For mercy sake come out and hear the rumpus." Moses Spriggins had rushed into the kitchen, his eyes ready to start from their sockets.

Melindy was busy frying pancakes and setting the table for the evening meal.

"Now, don't bother me; you see the cakes is a−burnin' already,"— but Melindy did not complete the sentence for the toot of a horn near the barnyard proved that her better half had some grounds for his conjecture.

"It's a gang of roughs a−tryin' to git somethin' to steal. By jiminey! we'll settle em' sure as our name is Spriggins," and Moses made a rush for the guns and ammunition with all possible haste.

"Great scott! they're a−comin' round to the front door."

"I say! Mr. Spriggins, this is a nice reception for invited guests; open the door and let us in."

The words had the effect of magic. The door opened and revealed Moses and Melindy armed for fight with a good supply of ammunition in the foreground.

The scene that followed baffles description. The ludicrous expression upon the face of host and hostess is something to be imagined.

The roars of laughter were deafening and it was some time before Phillip Lawson could make an attempt towards explanation.

* * * * *

"A what−do−ye−call−it weddin', Miss Lottie?" cried Moses, now re−appearing on the scene with his best clothes on, plus a flaring red necktie to match Melindy's "peerin out dress."

"A variety wedding, Mr. Spriggins. Now, you are not to blame any of the others for not sending you word because I made each one promise that it would be kept a surprise."

"Wal, I can tell you, it is a nice surprise, but I felt kinder skeered at the fust, eh Melindy!"

The latter looked quite bridish with her maroon dress and lace ruffles and white flowers—the same which she purchased at Manchester three years previous, still as fresh as if bathed in morning dew.

And the number of guests!

It was no wonder that Mr. Moses Spriggins was in a state of dire confusion as he surveyed the smiling throng of intelligence, grace and beauty, and last, but not least, the pretty and becoming costumes of the fair wearers.

Foremost in the group is Marguerite Verne. "She looks too good for anything," says the enthusiastic host as he contemplates the sweet maiden in a neat black satin frock relieved by a spray of forget−me−nots and pansies.

"And Miss Lottie, what shall I call you—a great big doll with a red shiny dress on."

"Moses Spriggins, I'm ashamed of your ignorance; why it's pink veiling Miss Lottie has on, and I'm sure she looks nicer than any of them china−faced dolls in shop winders."

"Wal, wal, Melindy, you wimin folks oughter know mor'n men folks," replied Moses rushing out of the front door to see if the "hosses were all seen to."

The best room never appeared to more advantage than on this festive occasion. The old−fashioned looking glass seemed to take pride in reflecting the pretty faces and sunny smiles, while the cheerful fire on the hearth played hide−and−seek with the brazen andirons, and sent out a glow of warmth that was emblematic of the big warm welcome of the generous family.

Each guest had to receive a share of Mrs. Spriggins' eulogium, and a lively time ensued.

But the crowning event of the evening was a still greater surprise.

Mrs. Spriggins had been summoned to the kitchen for a few moments, and on her return to the best room saw a sight that almost took away her breath.

The tables, chairs, and every inch of available space were crowded with such, a variety of useful and pretty articles that one might imagine himself in Blanchard's.

Poor Moses was for the moment speechless, first looking at one guest and then at another.

Mr. Lawson now came forward, and in a few well−chosen remarks addressed the host and hostess, and on behalf of the company tendered congratulations on the third anniversary of their marriage.

Wreathed in smiles the host arose to reply.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” said the latter giving his cravat a very artistic touch, “if Mr. Lawson wa'nt a lawyer I'd a−tried to say somethin', but I can't get a word out nohow, only Melindy and me will never forgit your kindness—and the skeare.”

The applause that followed was long and loud, and as the good host made a hasty exit from the room, Marguerite did not fail to see the big tear that rolled down the sunburnt cheeks.

“And you noticed it too, my darling,” whispered Phillip to his bethrothed, as he gained her side.

“Yes Phillip, I was just thinking that those tears were more precious than pearls—the essence of real gratitude.”

“God bless you, my own,” said the lover, seizing the little hand, and folding it so tenderly within his own.

But the time is not for love−making scenes, and the pair are aware of the fact.

Marguerite is ready to assist in doing anything that she can, and the guests now begin to make merry in real earnest.

A neighbor who could “perform upon the violin” was despatched for by the enthusiastic Moses, and the light fantastic was in indulged in with a zest, and all is “merry as a marriage bell.”

Let us glance at some of the familiar faces as they pass to and fro through the figures of a quadrille.

Mrs. Arnold is opposite us, looking quiet and content. She is happy in the thought that she is trying to do her duty, and by striving to live for others to atone for the past.

“You are doing nicely, Mr. Spriggins,” says she to her partner, by way of encouragement. “I believe that you make fewer mistakes than I do.”

“Wal, they say one has to creep a−fore they walk, so I spose I can't be a dabster at the bisness yet—but jist look at them folks.”

“Them folks” were Miss Lottie and a graceful young man who bore a striking resemblance to the young solicitor. The latter was Mr. Tom Lawson who had grown up an intelligent, manly fellow, and on having shown much ability as a civil engineer, had been appointed to a lucrative government position at Campbelltown.

Lottie hailed with delight her brother's flying visit, and when the two sallied forth to purchase a neat and chaste toilet set her delight was unbounded, and when the said articles occupied a conspicuous place among the wedding presents no guest was happier than this impulsive little maiden.

“But can't that insurance man fling himself in great style,” cried the radiant Moses, eyeing a certain official of the Dominion Safety Fund who, at Miss Verne's request, was also a guest.

Mrs. Arnold smiling at her partner's earnestness, cast a glance towards the object of the remark then replied, “It was so kind of Mr. ——to join us as his time is limited.”

“Wal, one good turn deserves another, Mrs. Arnold, for Miss Verne praised up that consarn so that I went right off and got all I could to join it, so you see all through this life it's give and take?”

“Quite true, Mr. Spriggins, but we don't always live up to that principle,” said the other with a shade of sadness in her tone.

Mr. Spriggins had penetration enough to see in what, direction Mrs. Arnold's thoughts were drifting and his discretion came to his aid.

“Wal, this ere affair will be a nine−days wonder among the nabers, the folks will be so jealous that they'll not come to have a squint at the brick−nacks—that's what you call them ere ornaments and sich things ain't it?”

“Bric−a−brac, Mr. Spriggins,” replied Mrs. Arnold, in the mildest manner possible; also trying to appear serious.

“Wal, I'll be jist like Melindy. When she's a−puttin on airs before the nabers sometimes she'll tell 'em she ain't out enough now to know sich and sich things!”

The music ceased before Mrs. Arnold had time to reply, and with an air of awkward gallantry Mr. Spriggins led his partner to a seat.

“Never say again that you can't dance, Mr. Spriggins,” cried the exuberant Lottie, bounding toward the latter with the grace of a fairy, “and be sure to remember that you are my partner for the next round dance.”

“Round dance,” said Moses in perplexity.

“A polka for instances, Mr. Spriggins!”

“Oh, yes, when I used ter go to school the gals used to have me a−dancin'—this is the way it goes Miss Lottie,” and instantly Mr. Spriggins was performing sundry evolutions to his own accompaniment of “I've got a polka trimmed with blue.”

“If that Moses ain't a−makin' a guy of himself a−dancin' I'd like to know,” cried Melindy, as she emerged from the kitchen and caught a view of her better half in his inimitable polka feat.

But Mr. Spriggin was unconcious of the fact and nothing happened to mar the effect of the successful attempt.

The brilliant Louise Rutherford might indeed claim more than a passing thought; her striking beauty was never more conspicuous that when surrounded by her most intimate friends and partaking of the hospitality of Mr. Moses Spriggins.

With due respect to host and hostess, the young ladies had appeared in their most bewitching toilets, and in response to Marguerite's playful reminder, “Louise, it is a wedding celebration,” the latter had donned a handsomely−trimmed garnet silk relieved by a heavy gold necklace, while a broad band of gold crowned the dusky hair and made a fitting coronet for the dark−eyed Houris.

“I cannot realize that you are going away so soon, Helen. It is selfish to wish that you would remain this winter, but self is my besetting sin.”

Helen Rushton put her plump white arm around the speakers waist, and thus they sat for several minutes.

Helen was to start for home on the first of the week following, and her companions could not bear the thought. Louise Rutherford loved the girl as a sister, and though their natures were strongly in contrast there was a firm bond of sympathy between them.

“Just think Louise how many changes have taken place since I came? Who then would have dreamed that Josie Jordan would become a clergyman's wife?”

“Think!” said Louise, with considerable feeling, “I dare not let myself think, each day brings its own thoughts. Life to me is made up of enigmas and puzzling contradictions, and not being endowed with an extra amount of brain power content myself with the comforting words—"tis folly to be wise.'“

“What shall I call you, Louise, a pessimist?”

“For goodness sake! Helen, be moderate. Remember that a successful speaker always adapts himself to the capacity of his hearers.”

“What's all this about? preaching I suppose—something about hearers! Jennie Montgomery!” cried both girls in concert.

Cousin Jennie was truly the ruling spirit of the party. She was ready for anything that was proposed and met each difficulty with a happy solution.

Had Louise Rutherford gone further into the subject of changes she might have claimed the bright eyed Jennie as illustration.

A change had come to happy “Gladswood,” Leslie Graham had won the esteem of aunt Hester, and in return had gained the heart of her daughter.

The fond mother does not regret her loss for she knows that the young man is possessed of all those traits of character which are truly noble and elevating, and which cannot fail to bring happiness to her whose happiness is his only concern.

Ah! yes, in Jennie Montgomery's face one can read her secret. She loves and is loved in return and that is all we wish to know.

A few minutes later, by a happy coincidence, there is a quartette grouped together in careless but artistic style.

“This reminds me of a morning at 'Sunnybank.' Do you remember it Madge?”

A slight quiver of the pretty lips was followed by a faint blush— Helen Rushton raised her hand as if to gain audience.

“That is intended for me girls. I am the only one who is not engaged. I was at 'Sunnybank' on the morning to which Miss Louise refers, and certainly I was the one who made the remark.”

“Helen is mistaken, I think,” said Marguerite in her soft, sweet way.

“She is indeed,” said Louise, with much earnestness. “It was while we were in the library, and all sitting together Josie Jordan suddenly called out: 'Girls where will we all be two years from now? That two years expired

yesterday, and the thought now occurred to me as we became grouped together in the old familiar way."

"Forgive me, Louise, darling, I am too impulsive. Let us now take on two more years and hope that when the time expires we will be as happy then as now."

"Heaven grant it thus," was the fervent prayer of each, though the words were unsaid, and as the merry party returned homeward full of life and gaiety there were none who felt happier than Marguerite Verne and her three companions.

* * * * *

A glorious autumn day in 1886 brings together a joyous and happy group—the old familiar one. The hostess of the luxurious home is the wife of Phillip Lawson. Ah! Marguerite you can never lose your angelic beauty and softness of expression. In the violet eyes there is a light that sheds a radiance over the little household, and imparts a warmth to each suffering heart that has been chilled by contact with the selfish and calculating world.

"Helen you are a darling! you are true blue!" were the words which greeted the smiling visitor as she pounced in upon the fair young matron, with the flush of excitement upon her fair, broad forehead and oval cheeks.

"Girls you look charming! One would think you were expecting your beaux instead of a few old married men! Why I thought when folks got married they did not primp at all."

"I'm glad that you are agreeably mistaken, my dear," said Mrs. Noyes, her charms enhanced by the rich bronze silk de Lyons, that set off her faultless form to advantage.

Mrs. Arnold now entered, followed by Mrs. Verne and a host of hearty congratulations were passed around within a very short time.

Mrs. Phillip Lawson's boudoir was a perfect gem in itself, its pale blue and silver draperies harmonizing with the taste of its mistress, while the delicate and artistic touches of the graceful hand were proof of the labors of love there performed.

"Madge! you old dear, the only thing I envy you is this charming spot," said Helen as she stood admiring the pretty work while the others are reclining upon the inviting ottomans, and cosey chairs of the most unique designs.

"The very words I said when I first entered it," said Cousin Jennie, looking as youthful as when we met her at "Sunnybank."

"The effect of mind upon mind," said Mrs. Noyes, with a sly, roguish smile upon the red pouting lips.

Helen Rushton threw herself into a handsomely carved fauteuil with cushion of pale blue satin, embroidered with a wreath of lily of the valley and soft cream roses.

"How time flies!—two years girls, since we made our promise—and I am the only old maid left in the crowd. What a world of consolation is in that thought!"

"Helen Rushton this is a fit place for your confession, and you shall not stir until you have made it, my precious one."

The speaker was Cousin Jennie, now Mrs. Leslie Graham.

Mrs. Lawson sat for a moment as if buried in earnest thought, and as her companions glanced at the sweet, sympathetic face they were also affected in turn.

The past with all its light and shade was lovingly touched upon, and as the gentle Marguerite's eyes were dimmed with tears her heart was full of gratitude.

Helen Rushton *did* make a full confession of her love affairs, expressly for Cousin Jennie. What that confession was we will not say, but presume upon the imagination of the reader. It is several hours later. Helen has retired to her own room, and her old friend lingers lovingly beside her. They chat of other scenes and other days, and the hour flies too quickly.

A step is heard coming through the hall. Ah! the magic of that step.

"It is Phillip, Helen," and a gleam of love lights up the angelic face.

"Good night, dearest," exclaimed Marguerite, embracing her friend in the old school−girl fashion.

"Good night, Marguerite, if my life be indeed half as happy as yours; it is all I ask."

"Yes, Helen, I am truly happy," and the young wife went forth to meet the loving embrace of a tender, true and devoted husband.

"Ah! my darling, where is to be found such happiness as ours?"

Phillip Lawson needed no reply—no other language than the depths of those violet eyes.