Fleetwood; or, The Stain of Birth. A Novel of American Life

Epes Sargent

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OVERTURE.

Thou light of other days, vision joyous though brief, whose voice was music, and whose presence sunshine! on the dusty high−way of life, fatigue arrested my footsteps. I saw a green tree, a grassy knoll, which invited me to repose. I slept—and my dreams were happy ones—they were of thee!

Brief the season for slumber! The hour of returning toil came round. I awoke. And now a book must be writ. Imagination could find in the realms of fiction nothing half so charming as thou—thou, lost reality!

I wrote. But when I remembered the original, I could have destroyed the picture, which so feebly portrayed her lineaments. It was too late. What was writ, was writ. But thou, most gentle critic, would'st have smiled upon my labors, and not have seen the injustice which was done thyself; for thou would'st ever pluck roses so as to leave their thorns behind! Would that the world were of thy philosophy!

The public know me not. That is one consolation. They have attributed my former literary trespasses,and will probably attribute this, to another—to one who might commit far more flagrant offences, and yet be forgiven. Be patient, dear sir, under the trying imputation. Forgive me, if the frail and slippery raft, composed of two rolling timbers, whereon I stood expecting momentary submersion, has been floated by chance under the lee of your handsome yacht, to which I am well content to owe my parasitical progress.

My publisher remarks that I have said enough. I consider him infallible in these matters. He gave the title to my last book—though I must say it struck me that it was not altogether new—that I had heard something of the kind before. No matter. Twenty thousand copies were sold. And so, when he insinuates that I had better come to a full stop in my overture, I reply, "You know best, my dear sir," and throw aside my pen.

CHAPTER I.

There is a busy motion in the Heaven;
The wind doth chase the flag upon the tower;
Fast sweep the clouds—the sickle of the moon,
Struggling, darts snatches of uncertain light.
No form of star is visible.
— —Schiller.

Midnight brought with it no abatement of the violence of the gale. During the day it had swept in eddying gusts through the broad avenues and narrow cross−streets of the city, carrying desolation and dismay—prostrating chimneys—scattering the slates from the roofs—and making sad havoc with the wooden signs, which adorned the districts devoted to traffic. One man, as he was passing up Broadway, had been knocked on the head by the shaft of a canvass awning, and instantly killed. Others had been severely bruised by the flying fragments, strewn at random by the blast.

The dwellers on the North River had been appalled by the lurid aspect and the rapid swelling of that majestic stream. Its tortured waters would writhe and convolve into huge ridges of foam, as if a new ocean were struggling for birth beneath the laboring surface. The adjoining piers and abutments were soon overwhelmed by the rushing tide. Boats and sloops and schooners of a considerable size were wrenched from their mooringsand driven by the unsparing gale high into the street, side by side with the habitations of landsmen. Most of the cellars near the river were completely inundated, and the destitute and despairing inmates driven forth houseless.

It was indeed a night of storm and desolation— a night when those, who were comfortably sheltered from the loosened elements, could not omit thanking God that they were not at that moment sharers in the lot of the hapless child of penury on the bare ground, or of the struggling seaman, whose bark lay off the too adjacent coast.

The streets of the city had been deserted at an early hour that evening by all, whom necessity did not compel to run the risk of being made subjects for the coroner and the penny reporters. The air grew chiller as the night advanced, and the snow fell in smothering profusion. The city lamps were unlit, but, with your eyes turned from the teeth of the blast, the snow−light, as it is beautifully termed by the Germans, would disclose objects with tolerable distinctness.

While the gale was at its height, the door of a house in what was then one of the most fashionable streets of the city might have been seen to open, and a young man to issue forth unattended. But some one, who was holding the door ajar, called him back before he had reached the side−walk, and a hurried interchange of words took place.

"You had better stay, Challoner. It is a dreadful night. Come back."

"No, I thank you, Winton. I shall get along very well. Good night!"

"Good night then, since you insist upon going."

Winton closed the door, and returned to a parlor elegantly furnished and comfortably warmed, where notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, a board liberally spread with all the delicacies of the season,including canvass−backs and the choicest wines, stood in the middle of the room. Folding−doors communicated with another apartment brilliantly lighted, where a table covered with cards and red and white counters indicated that the party had been engaged at faro. Four gentlemen besides Winton, the host, sat down to the hot supper, which now claimed their attention.

"Why the deuce didn't Challoner stay?" asked a pursy, red−faced little man, who had evidently been in luck that night.

"I couldn't persuade him, although I offered him a bed," replied Winton.

"How much did he lose to−night?" inquired a young man named Brockden, who seemed to have little appetite for the delicacies before him.

"Some two thousand at least," replied Winton. "I never knew such a run of ill luck, as he has been the victim of, the last month or two."

"And yet no one would suspect from his manner that he was a loser rather than a winner," said the red−faced

individual.

"True; I never knew a man so keep his temper and equanimity under losses. If I am not much mistaken, he has staked his last dollar to−night and lost it."

"Indeed!" said the red−faced man. "Try these ducks, Brockden. You will find them superb. His last dollar, did you say?"

As our business does not lie with the exemplary company, to whom we have thus suddenly introduced our readers, we will quit them and follow him, who was the subject of their discourse. No sooner had the door closed upon him than he threw his cloak over his arm, took off his hat, tore open his vest, and stood with his face to the blast as if its snow−laden currents were hardly strong and chilly enough to cool the fever of his brain. Hisperson thus bared to the storm, he walked on slowly like one immersed in thought.

"It is all—all gone!" murmured he. "I did not leave myself enough even to buy a loaf of bread. What a wretch—what an insane wretch I have been! And how can I now meet Emily, beggar that I am? God of mercy! I do not know the man in this populous city, to whom I can go to−morrow to borrow a five dollar bill. And then my credit—Credit! I have none. Ay, lash me, ye keen winds! Oh! that ye might bear me like a leaf away from these human habitations and sink me in the wide ocean!"

Challoner leaned against a lamp−post and groaned in spirit. He suddenly started, and looked around as if to assure himself in regard to the locality where he found himself.

"It is the very house!" said he. "I cannot be mistaken. Can it be that she lives there still? And if she does—what then? What then, Challoner? Art thou indeed so degraded that thou wouldst ask alms of her—of her, the daughter of shame, who first lured thee aside from the paths of pleasantness and peace? Nay; say rather it was thy own folly and wickedness, that led thee astray. And yet in spite of her degradation, I believe she truly loved me once—as much surely as her fallen nature was capable of loving anything. I have lavished hundreds upon her. She must be rich; for unlike her frail sisterhood, she was not a spendthrift. Truly I know of no one rather than her to whom I would apply for aid. At any rate, Augusta, I will test your generosity!"

And thus determining, this weak−minded man proceeded to put his project into execution, and knocked at the door. But Challoner was not so thoroughly bad a person as his conduct would seem to declare. He had been left, when quite a child, an orphan; and his guardian, who was an old bachelor named Hardinge, had brought him up in the most lax and indulgent manner. The boy always found his pockets well filled with money, and was early accustomed to expensive tastes and habits, notwithstanding the property left by his parents did not exceed ten thousand dollars. Hardinge himself had introduced him when hardly eighteen years of age to a female some five years his elder, whom we have heard him apostrophise by the name of Augusta; and perhaps he was often indebted to the influence she exercised over him, that he was saved from still more destructive pursuits.

Challoner had just entered upon his twenty−first year, when his guardian died, and left him the uncontrolled possessor of his patrimony, which had been reduced about one half during his minority. A still more important event soon afterward occurred. Challoner fell in love. He dropped the unworthy connexion, to which we have alluded, and began to regard life more seriously. The father of Emily Gordon was arrogant both on account of his wealth and his family; and he frowned upon Challoner's pretensions. But a smile from the maiden herself was sufficient to inspire Challoner with hope and resolution. He applied himself to the study of the law, and built grand castles in the broad domain of the future. Three years flew by. Mr. Gordon not only still forbade his daughter to receive Challoner as a suitor, but expressed his determination that she should marry the booby son of his old friend Norwood. The propriety of an elopement now began to be discussed by the lovers at their clandestine interviews; and Challoner, in an evil hour, entered into some stock speculations with a view to making a fortune by rapid steps. Before the result could beknown, some new act of tyranny on the part of old Gordon rendered it easy for Emily to be persuaded to run away with her lover, and get married. They could not have done a more indiscreet thing. The whole of Challoner's little fortune, with the exception of a few hundred dollars, had melted away. His wife's family refused to be reconciled; and the father and brothers denounced him as an adventurer and a pauper. His pride and indignation were fully roused.

"Oh, that I might retaliate by riding by them with my wife in my own coach!" was his foolish and vindictive wish. He took apartments for himself and wife at an expensive hotel; but his sojourn there was not long, for his means were quite exhausted a few months after his marriage. He removed to obscure lodgings; but the insane hope still possessed him to elevate himself in his external circumstances by some extraordinary run of good luck,

far above the contempt of his wife's relatives.

Alas! how true it is that none but the contemptible are apprehensive of contempt. Had he been possessed by a true, honest pride, he would have looked down, even in his extreme poverty, upon those who professed to despise him. He would have shown his superiority by his calm indifference to their slights. But a false and paltry ambition made him constantly uneasy and discontented so long as he could not live in a splendid house, and drive as neat a span of greys as old Gordon himself. In his impatience to rise above want, he resorted to the gaming table. At first his success was extraordinary. In two months he found himself once more the possessor of ten thousand dollars. But ten times ten thousand would not have satisfied his ambition. He did not think it worth while even to change his lodgings in consequence of his good luck. He applied himself more devotedlythan ever to gaming; but fortune was no longer propitious. The cards were against him; and they continued so until the evening we have described, when he found himself stripped of his last dollar, and stooped to solicit aid from one, who lived on the wages of infamy and guilt.

Such was the noise of the gale, that it was nearly an hour before he could make himself heard by the inmates of the house. With much difficulty he persuaded a black maid−servant, whose voice he distinguished from an upper window, to open the door for his admission, and then bade her carry his name to her mistress. He walked into a parlor fronting on the street, where the remains of a coal fire still shed a flickering light on the walls; and, in a few moments, a female bearing a candle, and clad in a wrapper of plaided silk, entered the room. She appeared to be about thirty years old, and in spite of the inevitable impress, which sin ever leaves upon the female countenance, there were abundant traces of beauty in her face and figure. Placing the candle upon the centre−table, she advanced towards her midnight visitor with both hands extended to greet him, and exclaimed: "Edward! can it be you?"

"Yes, Augusta," he replied in a sorrowful tone. "We meet once more. I did not think ever again to enter this house."

"And why not? It is six years since we have met. But I forget, you are married. At least so I read in the newspapers. But bless me, Edward! how pale you look! Your hair is covered with snow. Are you ill? Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes; sit down, and listen to my story. But first tell me, Augusta, how has the world treated you?"

"Prosperously enough. This house and furnitureare mine; and I have an account at the bank. My daughter will be an heiress, Edward, and I mean she shall grace her wealth."

"Indeed! I had forgotten all about little Adelaide. She must be quite a young lady by this time. Surely—that is to say—I hope you are bringing her up virtuously."

"Do not doubt it. She has not been in this house since she was four years old. I have placed her at an excellent boarding−school, and I mean that all her mother lacks both in accomplishments and morals, shall be hers. But I would hear something in regard to your own affairs. What has happened, Edward; and why are you here?"

"I blush while I say it, Augusta—my purpose is to ask for a small loan."

The female started as if surprised; but whatever her secret motives may have been, she replied: "If it were only for the sake of auld lang syne, Edward, you shall have what you want. But pray tell me what has happened? You have more than once profited by my advice; and perhaps I may help you by words as well as by deeds."

"My story is soon told," replied Challoner. "Did you ever see my wife?"

"About a year since she was pointed out to me in Broadway," replied Augusta. "She seemed a mild, beautiful creature, and disposed as I was to hate her for having robbed me of you, I could not help feeling pity as I looked in her pale face, and marked its patient, melancholy expression."

"Ah, Augusta, she is too good for a reprobate like me. When I think of her uncomplaining temper, her attentive kindness, and her confiding devotion to myself, I often bitterly feel a consciousness of my unworthiness. I married at a time when I was little able to support a wife, and in the faceof the opposition of her whole family. The stinging contempt which they expressed for me roused my whole soul. 'I will show them that I can support Emily in the position to which she has been born,' thought I. For her sake, Augusta, although the fact is still unknown to her, poor thing, I became a gambler. There, you have the whole secret of my past miseries, and my present wants. This very evening I have lost at faro upwards of two thousand dollars—all the money I possessed in the world!"

"Two thousand dollars! Why, Edward, you could have lived comfortably on that for at least a year."

"Yes, wretch that I am!" exclaimed he. "And when I had money in abundance, instead of securing for her comfortable apartments, and paying for them, I had the baseness to remove to mean and contracted lodgings, that I might have ample funds with which to speculate at the gaming−table. And Emily will soon be—a mother!"

"Where do you reside?" inquired the female.

"Truly, I forget the name of the place," said he, "but I have it written down. Here it is."

He handed her a slip of paper, which she retained.

"And how much money," she added, "will serve your purposes for to−night?"

"A hundred dollars will be sufficient," said he. "I will give you my promissory note for the repayment."

"It will answer," she replied; and unlocking a small desk, she drew a check, while Challoner drew up the note as he had suggested.

"Here, Edward," said she, handing him the check, "you have the amount you desire. Take my advice, and provide first of all for your wife's comfort."

"I will do so," exclaimed he. "Dear Augusta, if I live, you shall not repent this act of generosity."

The tears stood in his eyes. Your profligates are often marvellously tender−hearted.

"And now," said the female, "hasten home to your wife. Poor creature! What must have been her anxiety on your account this dreadful night! Hark! The City Hall clock strikes one."

Challoner pressed her hand, bade her good night, and quitted the house.

And how are we to explain conduct so inconsistent on the part of an abandoned woman? If love were the ruling motive, why should she have shown so much consideration for her lover's wife? Was it pride—the pride of assisting an elegant young man about town? Perhaps so. But then why should not that pride have induced her to attach him once more to herself? Why send him home to his wife, and bid him look to her welfare? Perhaps, after all, we do the woman injustice in imputing to her merely interested motives. Who shall say that it was not a pure impulse of goodness which prompted her? A momentary triumph of her good angel? A transient flicker of that "original brightness," which had not yet wholly gone out in her derogate soul?

Despising himself—his heart torn by contending emotions—Challoner hurried along the street in the direction of his lodgings. The gale roared and rattled over his head, and the fine, icy snow whirled, like a shower of needles, into his face.

"Poor Emily!" muttered he. "What a dreary time she must have had of it, alone in those old, ricketty apartments! But I will live to repay her for all the privations she has endured on my account. Yes; I will yet be rich—honored— envied—"

Challoner never completed the sentence with his lips. At that moment, as he was turning the corner of a well−known street, a chimney was hurled into fragments by the blast. The scattered debris struck him violently on the head, and felled him to the earth. "God forgive me!" he groaned forth. "My poor wife! my unborn child! Help! I cannot die! I am not fit to die! God knows I meant to change my—What, ho! Will no one hear?" He strove to rise; but, as he moved, the blood poured profusely from his wounds upon the drifted snow. With a mighty effort, he staggered to his feet, uttered a last cry for help, fell and expired. The storm howled on, and spread its flaky winding−sheet over his body; and there he was found, under the incarnadined snow, a ghastly spectacle, by the early morning light.

CHAPTER II.

Have ye a sense, ye gales, a conscious joy
In beauty, that with such an artful touch
Ye lift her curls and float about her robes?
— Milman

Seventeen years after the tragical event, which we have narrated, two young men, equipped for a shooting excursion, were sauntering along one of the most beautiful portions of that shore, which forms the Connecticut side of Long Island Sound. They carried fowling−pieces, and were apparently in pursuit of that delicate little bird, the snipe, which frequents the salt water sands. But either the game was scarce, or the sportsmen were indisposed to make very vigilant exertions to find it.They would occasionally stop, and picking up a handful of the smooth flat stones, which lay in ridges along the beach, send them skipping over the smooth surface of the Sound; or they would stand and watch the progress of some distant steam−boat, as with a black streamer of smoke issuing from her funnel−pipe, she ploughed the tranquil waters.

At length the wanderers reached a ledge of rocks, which seemed to offer so tempting a resting−place, that they sat down, and called to their dogs to crouch at their feet, as if disdaining to seek a farther acquaintance with the sky birds, who had thus far baffled all their murderous skill.

"Isn't this a bore, Fleetwood?" asked the larger of the two companions, whose full face and figure seemed to indicate a predominance of the sensual over the intellectual faculties. "Isn't this a bore, Fleetwood? I can't imagine how you can tarry in this stupid place except upon compulsion. If you were dependent as I am upon a rich, capricious old aunt for your expectations of future affluence, and if, as one of the conditions of being her heir, you were obliged to do penance a month or two every summer in her stupid little cottage on Blackberry Hill,—why, there would be some excuse for you. But here you are,—just twenty−one, and a free man—with five thousand a year under your control, and liberty to cut in upon the principal, if you choose—with no one to say, do this, or do that, come here, or go there—and no one even to bother you with advice, unless it is old Snugby your former guardian. By Jove! I wish I were in your situation."

"In my situation, Glenham!" replied the younger man, while a melancholy smile passed over his countenance. "Without mother, father, sister, brother! In my situation!"

"Ahem! I should not consider it such a mighty misfortune to be so deprived," returned Glenham, displacing his shirt−collar, that his fingers might coquet with a pair of incipient whiskers. "To be perfectly independent—above the reach of rebuke and interference—master of one's actions and of a handsome fortune—Jove! What ingratitude not to be happy!"

"Did I say I was not happy?"

"You seemed to regard your lot, as in no manner preferable to mine."

"True! You have parents, who are fondly attached to you; sisters, beautiful and affectionate —a brother, who has just entered upon an honorable professional career, and to whom you can look for guidance and encouragement. But I—I am literally the last of my race. I know not one human being, who is bound to me by the ties of consanguinity."

"Happy man!" ejaculated Glenham. "As for me, I have a whole regiment of country cousins, whom I would like to exchange with you for your pointer, Veto."

"Indeed, Glenham, it is no light thing to be so alone in the world. Had I only a sister! Heavens! How I would love her—how I would cherish— worship her—a sister!"

"Nonsense! With your face, figure and fortune, you can find sisters enough in the world—ay, more than sisters. But how happens it, my dear Fleetwood, that you are so unencumbered? Is it possible that there isn't even one of that delightful and numerous class of individuals, known as poor relations, who claims alliance with you—some great grandfather's second cousin's nephew's needy niece, for instance?"

"Not one! Not one!"

"Indeed! If it is not intrusive, I would like toknow by what strange fortune you have been left so delightfully isolated."

"My story is soon told, and yet it is not wholly devoid of romance. My grandfather having taken the king's side during the war of our revolution, was, as soon as our independence was established, stripped of an estate large enough to be cut up into half a dozen townships. Too much attached to the country, however, to quit it altogether, he removed to the West with his family. While sailing down the Ohio in a flat−bottomed boat, his party was attacked by Indians, and all but my father, who was then a boy, were massacred. This explains the reason of my having no relatives on the paternal side."

"But how happens it, that you were equally fortunate on your mother's side?"

"My mother," (and here Fleetwood's lips quivered slightly as he spoke) "was the only daughter of a French gentleman of high rank, who, with his wife and their maternal relations were murdered at Lyons by Collot D'Herbois, in 1793. Coralie, (such was my mother's name,) was saved by her nurse, who afterwaads escaped with her to New Orleans, where on the death of her protector, the little girl was adopted by a company of charitable nuns, by whom she was admirably educated. They were unable to persuade her, however, to join the ascetic sisterhood. She had not reached her seventeenth year when my father saw her—an elopement and marriage were the consequence—and of that union I am the unworthy issue."

"Quite a little romance! If I mistake not, you lost both your parents by shipwreck?"

"Alas, yes! We were bound to Charleston to pass the Spring in a milder climate. We were wrecked in the Palmetto, off Hatteras. After the first shock, I knew nothing until I found myself onthe beach with some one supporting my head and chafing my temples. On learning that both my parents were lost, I became delirious and continued so for several days. It is now six years since that disaster, and I have tutored myself to speak of it with calmness."

"Adventures seem to run in the family."

"I could tell you much more to prove it. But I will finish my story now that I have got so far, although the catastrophe is already told. My father, Frederick Fleetwood, whose name, but not whose virtues, I inherit, accumulated his large property by fortunate speculations in cotton just after the cessation of the last war. He then came north, and recovered the most eligible fragment of his ancestral estate on the Hudson, building the house which you have seen. He was a man of a nice sense of honor, generous, high−spirited, and full of all noble impulses. Both he and my mother attached a little too much importance, I think, to the circumstance of gentle blood. Both could trace back their lineage to some of the most illustrious personages of England and France; and both would often make me promise to keep pure and uncontaminated by unworthy alliances the noble stock from which I sprang. Their wishes I shall ever regard as sacred, not because I care for 'the blood of all the Howards,' but because the recollection of those parental injunctions will ever be stronger in my heart than the throes of passion."

"Thank you for your story," said Glenham. "But see! What a shot is there — by the water's edge! Here goes for one more chance! Bang!"

Fleetwood did not look to see the result of his companion's aim; for before the smoke of the explosion had cleared away, a slight feminine scream arrested his attention. He turned and saw a young female on the brow of a small sandy acclivity, in the act of falling from a spirited horse. He darted to her relief, and caught her in his arms, while her horse in his fright was twisting round like water as it leaves a tunnel. Breathless and faint with alarm the lady suffered Fleetwood to support her for nearly a minute, during which he surveyed her face with undisguised admiration. A little black velvet cap had fallen from her head, giving the gazer an opportunity to examine with all an artist's enthusiasm its matchless proportions —the sweep of that low but intellectually developed forehead—the light chesnut hair, that parted from the centre, undulated to the temples and broke into closely clinging curls—the chiselled loveliness of the features—the regular and immaculate teeth, which the delicate upper lip, lifted so as to form Cupid's bow, fully revealed—and the long eyelashes that curtained the depressed, dark blue balls.

"Who can she be?" muttered Fleetwood. "She is strangely beautiful! And what a figure!"

Glenham now approached, after having satisfied himself that he had committed no havoc by his last shot among the birds. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he drew near, "there is Fleetwood, once more in luck; with his arms about the waist of a pretty woman! How the deuce happens it, that such adventures never occur to me? I see it all. The horse took fright at the discharge of my gun—the lady fell—and Fleetwood was just in time to catch her ere she touched the ground. Confound the fellow! How he studies her face! How he manages to let the wind blow her

curls against his cheek! And now he puts his hand upon her heart to see if it beats! And now he places his lips near her own to see if she breathes! And now he looks at her like a mother on a new−born child. I do believe the fellow is half in love already. Andnow—the devil! what is he after now? Ahem! Ahem! Ahem there!"

"What, Glenham, is that you?" exclaimed Fleetwood, arrested by his companion's satirical cough, in the act of warming the lady's lily−like cheek with a kiss. "Mount the horse instantly, Glenham, and ride for assistance to the nearest house. Do not delay. The life of a fellow−being may depend upon your speed."

"In what part of my eye do you see anything green?" retorted Glenham, using a school−boy's colloquial vulgarism. "I will hold the lady, and you shall ride the horse. Come! now prove the sincerity of your concern."

"I will prove that by remaining where I am," replied Fleetwood, who recoiled from entrusting his precious burthen to his companion's care. "But look—she revives—her breast heaves."

The lady attempted to lift her hand twice, but it fell to her side. Then she raised it suddenly to her forehead, pressed it for an instant to her eyes, dropped it, and starting from Fleetwood's support, looked inquiringly about her.

"Your horse is close by—he was frightened by the firing of a gun—wheeled, and would have thrown you—but you have escaped uninjured," said Fleetwood rapidly, and in his tenderest and most respectful tones.

"I remember—and I am indebted to you, sir— am I not?—that my head was not dashed against some of these rocks?"

"I wish I could say, lady, that I believed your life was in danger, for the thought of having saved it would have been to me a life−long joy—but the danger, I am bound to say, was slight. Your horse was spinning about in this little heap of sand, and, had you fallen, you would have found a soft resting−place."

"Nonsense, Fleetwood," muttered his companion in a side−whisper, "I would have protested that her brains were on the point of being dashed out, when, at the imminent peril of my neck, I rushed to her relief. I see you don't know how to win a woman."

At this moment an equestrian party of five, consisting of three young ladies, a female of a certain age, and a black servant with a gilt band about his hat, made their appearance, having been concealed hitherto by the ridge of the sand bank.

"As I live, here is Miss Adelaide Winfield parleying with two young men!" exclaimed the female of a certain age, who, I may as well tell the reader now, as hereafter, was Miss Holyoke, the keeper of a boarding−school for "the finishing of young ladies" in the little village of Soundside, where the scene now lingers.

"And pray, Miss Winfield, may I ask the meaning of all this?" interrogated Miss Holyoke, reining in her horse, and casting a very acidulated glance upon the young sportsmen.

Glenham started forward, and, making a respectful obeisance, said: "Pardon me, Miss Holyoke; if blame rests upon any one it is upon me. The discharge of my gun frightened the lady's horse, and she would have been inevitably killed upon the spot, if my friend here, Mr. Fleetwood—allow me to introduce him, my dear Miss Holyoke; Mr. Fleetwood, of Fleetwood, New York—as I was saying, the young lady would have been dashed into splinters if my friend here had not, at the risk of his own life, seized her horse by the head, and caught her as she was about being hurled against that rock, which you see there, with the skeleton by its side."

Glenham's style of beauty was not displeasing to Miss Holyoke; and his address was calculated toallay her rising indignation. She dismounted, and, approaching Adelaide, inquired if she had received any harm from the accident. Her apprehensions were speedily quieted. Beyond a momentary agitation the young and fair equestrian had experienced no bad effects.

"Mount your horse, then, Miss Adelaide, and let us proceed homeward," said the chaperon of the party.

"Allow me the honor of assisting you," said Fleetwood, who, in silent admiration, had for some moments been contemplating Adelaide.

"Clinton, you will save Mr. Fleetwood the trouble," said Miss Holyoke waving her hand imperatively, and addressing the black attendant, who was on his feet holding the recently terrified horse.

Clinton obeyed, and placing his ebony hand for a stepping−stone, lifted the young lady lightly and dexterously into the saddle.

"May we have the honor to call and inquire into the lady's health and your own?" asked Glenham, with his most persuasive smile.

"The young ladies of the Holyoke Seminary receive no male visitors farther removed than first cousins," said

the instructress.

Awful Miss Holyoke! At that moment Fleetwood would have given more for a passport to your good graces than for the freedom of all the courts of Europe.

Seeing her fair troop all ready for a start, Miss Holyoke called Clinton to her side, placed a hand upon his shoulder, and mounted into her saddle. "Forward now, young ladies!" she exclaimed. Adelaide cast one parting look full of gratitude upon Fleetwood ere she drew the green veil over her features, made a slight and gracious inclination of the head, then touching her horse's mane lightly with her riding−whip, followed the cortege, lessanxious apparently than she had been, to be in advance.

"Confound the old prude!" exclaimed Glenham, before the instructress had well got out of hearing. "If she cannot be circumvented, however, I am no judge of woman. What are you gazing at, Fleetwood? You cannot see them, for they're out of sight, as Lord Burleigh would say. Is little Velvet Cap riding away with your tongue as well as your heart? Speak, man! Confess! Or, if you can't speak, give us a shake of your head."

"Who can she be?" ejaculated Fleetwood in a half reverie. "They called her Adelaide—Adelaide who?"

Fleetwood did not attempt to shoot any more that day. He found a suddenly awakened sympathy in his breast for wounded birds.

CHAPTER III.

Oh she is fair!
As fair as heaven to look upon! as fair
As ever vision of the Virgin blest,
That weary pilgrim, resting by the fount
Beneath the palm, and dreaming to the tune
Of flowing waters, duped his soul withal.
— Taylor

Adelaide's position at Miss Holyoke's school was far from an enviable one. Her parentage was unknown. Boys and girls are more quick even than grown persons to detect aught that is equivocal in the birth or genealogy of their companions, and wo to the unhappy victim of their suspicions, if he or she be of a sensitive disposition!

No one, with whom Adelaide was brought in contact, appeared to know anything concerning her that was disreputable; but all distrusted her respectability. Miss Holyoke herself, though she had her sex's share of curiosity upon most subjects, was discreetly cautious how she pursued her inquiries too far in regard to her pupil. She was fearful lest the investigation might result to her prejudice; and then Miss Holyoke might be scrupulous about retaining her in her strictly genteel establishment. Now there was a proper degree of uncertainty in regard to the young lady's position. All that the instructress knew, and all that it concerned her to know, was that her quarter's dues were punctually paid in advance, and that Adelaide had a larger amount of spending money than any of her companions. A respectable banker in Wall−street was the person to address in case an extra supply of money was at any time wanted, or in the event of the illness of the young lady. Apprised of thus much, Miss Holyoke, it cannot be denied, had her own surmises and conclusions; but she maintained an imperturbable silence on the subject.

And what did Adelaide herself know in regard to her origin and family? Little more than her instructress and schoolmates. She was now in her sixteenth year, and had been six years a resident at Soundside in Miss Holyoke's family. The remembrances she preserved of the period of her childhood were fleeting and shadowy. She had a faint recollection of a cottage beside a broad stream; and of a porch, where she used to sit with two or three little children of her own age and eat blueberries and milk; and of a lady richly dressed, who used to stop before the gate in her carriage and take her in her lap and ask her questions as to the treatment she received. The impressions of these distant events were for the most part pleasing; and yet the image of the lady seemed to bealways connected with painful though indefinable associations. Sometimes Adelaide would persuade herself that it must all be a dream; and then some little incident or trait would stand out more salient than the rest from memory's canvass, and convince her of the reality of the whole.

She remembered well the events of the few years immediately preceding her transference to her present abode. She had resided in the family of a Mr. Greutze, a teacher of music in Philadelphia; and there she had not only been treated with kindness and attention, but had acquired a ready colloquial knowledge of the German language and attained considerable proficiency in music. To be sure she learned little else under his care; but it was with the most poignant regret that she quitted a roof, where she had heard no other accents than those of harmony and affection. Soon after her departure from Philadelphia, the Greutze family, consisting of a husband, wife and two daughters, broke up their establishment and returned to their native Germany. She had heard nothing of them for upwards of five years, and was ignorant of their address.

Up to her thirteenth year Adelaide lived in happy ignorance of any conjectures that might be interchanged by others in regard to her parentage. In answer to repeated interrogations which she addressed to those, under whose protection she might be, it was told her that she was an orphan; and that the relatives of her parents were in Europe. She would often ponder intently on these circumstances; but, child as she was, she never distrusted the ingenuousness of her informers. She would ask herself in these solitary moments of reflection, "how happens it that I have neither brother, sister, kinsman or kinswoman, who takes sufficient interest in me to visit me at least once a year?" Andthen the remembrance of the richly dressed lady, who used to come in her carriage every Saturday to see her, would rise to her mind, and give her new food for reverie and conjecture.

At length the terrible suspicion, which others entertained, was forced with crushing effect upon her own apprehension. The occasion was this: Adelaide had been wandering through some of the shady by−lanes of the village, and returning home, had been summoned into the parlor by Miss Holyoke. She found a lady present, a stranger to her, who rose from the piano as she entered.

"Adelaide, my dear," said Miss Holyoke, "here is some new music I have just received from New York—some waltzes from the famous new opera of Amilie—will you play them for us?"

"I will try," returned Adelaide. "I cannot always read music correctly at sight; but this seems to be very simple as well as very beautiful."

She took her seat at the piano—glanced a moment at the sheet before her while pulling off her gloves—and then running her fingers lightly over the keys—went through the whole series of waltzes in a very correct and spirited style of execution.

When she had concluded, Miss Holyoke turned to the strange lady, and said: "You see, Miss Ashby, that my pupil plays without hesitation this music, which you called so difficult, and which you declined attempting. I fear you are not sufficiently qualified for the office of musical teacher in the Holyoke Seminary for young ladies."

Miss Ashby bit her lips, and turned a glance full of malice and hostility upon poor Adelaide, who now began to be painfully conscious of the comparison in her favor.

A few hours afterwards Adelaide was sitting alone in her little chamber. She had a strange distaste, this solitary child, for all dark and gloomycolors. Everything in the room she occupied gave evidence of this. The walls, window−curtains, chairs, table, bureau, sofa, bed and coverlid were all of a pure white. The floor had its white cloth. Even her books were covered with paper of a stainless white. A crystal champagne glass, holding some white roses, stood upon the white marble mantel−piece; and Adelaide, dressed in a robe entirely white, with slippers of a delicate lilac hue, sat in a half recumbent posture, tapping an ivory paper folder against her lips, and conning a lesson in ancient history.

She suddenly started, as if a dark cloud had all at once come between her and the sun. She turned, and saw Miss Ashby, whose whole attire was intensely funereal, enter the apartment.

"I couldn't leave Soundside without coming to bid you good−bye, my dear," said the lady, with a smile so constrained and sinister, that Adelaide instinctively shuddered. She rose, however, and with an air that spoke high breeding, replied, "Pray be seated."

"I can stop but one moment," said Miss Ashby. "How charmingly you did play, my dear, to be sure! Is not your mother a piano−forte teacher?"

"I am an orphan, Miss Ashby," replied Adelaide.

"Poor thing! An orphan! Ahem! That is, your father doesn't claim you, my dear. Now I should think he would be quite proud of you. But then society is so dreadfully prejudiced in such cases!"

"What do you mean, Miss Ashby? Speak more plainly," gasped forth Adelaide, swallowing her heart, which seemed ready to leap from her breast, so sudden was the shock communicated by the revolting intimation.

"Surely, my dear, you are aware that—"

"Aware of what?" exclaimed Adelaide, startingto her feet, her eyes kindling, and her whole frame dilated with excitement.

"Dear me! You are enough to frighten one, child!" returned Miss Ashby. "Of course, I supposed that you knew what all the world said of you."

"And what do the world say?" asked Adelaide, in a subdued tone.

"They say that your father and mother were never married, and that you are—"

"Oh, no, no! do not say it!" exclaimed the heart−broken child, bursting into tears, and covering her face with her hands.

"Dear me! I supposed, of course, that you knew all about it," said Miss Ashby; and to do her justice this was partially true; but a feeling of irrepressible envy checked the outburst of her better feelings. "I must go now," she continued; "or I shall miss the coach that is to convey me to the steamboat. Pray, don't take on so, child. You thought you were an orphan—would you not be rejoiced to find that you have a parent?"

Adelaide looked up from her weeping—her head erect—and her tear−laden eyes sparkling with a sudden animation. A smile of indescribable sweetness—such a smile as might play across the lips of a commissioned seraph while announcing pardon to a sinner—illumined her features, and returned an answer more eloquent than

any that could have been framed by words, to the interrogation. Even the spiteful Miss Ashby relented for a moment. But the mischief was done. The humbling suspicion was awakened, and it must either gather force, or be removed forever in the mind of Adelaide.

Miss Ashby took her leave; and Adelaide was once more alone. This child possessed an intelligence beyond her years. Confided from an infantile age to the care of strangers, nature and her owninstincts seemed to make amends for the absence of a parent's tender and ever vigilant superintendence. Conscience was to her in the light of a mother; or shall we believe that there were good and guardian spirits about her, who infused into her soul a sense of right and beauty? One singular habit would seem to countenance this idea. She would daily arraign herself for real or fancied errors, and impose such penalties as she deemed suitable. These penalties were always rigidly fulfilled. Thus she was her own accuser, judge and punisher. And the very freedom from others' scrutiny and restraint which she enjoyed, made her the more watchful and severe towards herself.

Constant activity, mental, manual or physical, was one of the first of duties in her eyes. Every portion of the day had its appropriate employment. Debarred by the express will of those, who supplied the means for her education, from no pursuit which agreed with her tastes, she was allowed to range at will through the fields of German and English literature. Her long residence in the family of the German musician, Greutze, had enabled her to render herself as familiar with his language as with her own; and the works of Jean Paul, Schiller, Goethe and Klopstock were as well thumbed by her as those of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Scott and Byron.

It will not be considered surprising, therefore, that Miss Ashby's heartless intimation was immediately understood by Adelaide—that she saw at once the true character, in a worldly point of view, of her imputed position. Hours flew by, during which she remained lost in meditation. At length Miss Holyoke came to seek her.

"What is the matter, Adelaide, that you have not come down to dinner?" she asked, as she entered the room.

"Ah! tell me—tell me, whose and what am I?"exclaimed the agitated girl, seizing the hand of her instructress.

Miss Holyoke, as has already been seen, knew nothing positive in regard to her pupil's genealogy. But it now occurred to Adelaide that the absence of all knowledge upon this point was the best proof in confirmation of the truth of the suspicion aroused by Miss Ashby's interrogations. From that moment there was a marked modification of some of this young girl's traits of character. Agitation of mind was succeeded by a violent fever, from which she recovered slowly. But her constitution, though delicate, had much recuperative energy; and it was at length re−established in all its original purity. Convalescence, however, was accompanied with change. Naturally social in her disposition, fluent and communicative in conversation, and quick to bestow and elicit confidence, she now became shy, reserved and abstracted. She imagined, and not unjustly, that her schoolmates were well aware of the suspicion that blurred her reputation. She was too proud and too generous to involve others in the consequences of associating with one, whose respectability was doubted. And thus she kept aloof from all companionship.

But love was a necessity of her nature; and unable to lavish her exhaustless treasures and manifestations of love upon human kind—for the whole population of the village was thrifty and healthy—she found objects for its sheltering care in the brute and vegetable creation. An old horse turned out in a barren field to starve and die, was sure to receive food and protection from her hands. She would watch over a languishing shrub or tree with an almost parental solicitude. She would shrink from succoring no living creature, however fearful and revolting. It mattered not whether it was a wounded snake or a perishing bird. Bothequally claimed her kind offices; for she assigned the existence of both, in the words of Origen, to "the exuberant fulness of life in the Deity, which, through the blessed necessity of his communicative nature, empties itself into all possibilities of being, as into so many receptacles." And this thought made her regard the life of the meanest insect or reptile with reverence.

An instance illustrative of the force of this sentiment is worthy of mention. A noble bull−dog, who went by the name of Cossack, was condemned to be shot on suspicion of hydrophobia. Adelaide protested against the sacrifice; for having some acquaintance with the diseases of animals, she believed that the imputed malady did not exist in this case. Her appeals, however, were in vain. Cossack must die. A gun loaded with buck−shot was aimed and fired at his heart. The charge took effect in his thigh. With one bound the agonized creature broke his chain. Amid screams of terror the spectators fled—all except Adelaide.

"He will bite you—he is mad," exclaimed the man who had fired the gun, and who, in his alarm, had swung himself high on the bough of a tree.

Adelaide remained firm; and the dog swaying from side to side, stood with drooped head, his tongue lolling out and covered with foam, and the blood oozing from his wound.

"Poor fellow! Cossack! Cossack!" said Adelaide, endeavoring to attract his attention.

"Escape while you can, you fool−hardy girl!" cried the man with the gun. "At least, get out of the way, and let me fire again."

Cossack, as if he recognized the meaning of the man's words, lifted his head, looked imploringly at Adelaide, and dragging himself a few paces with difficulty, fell at her feet.

"He is mine now," said Adelaide, stooping topat him on the back and seizing his chain. "The dog has been poisoned—he is not mad," she continued, looking at his tongue.

Gently but firmly she persisted in her object, until at length it was agreed that she should take charge of the wounded animal. But how would she dispose of him? For Cossack could not walk, and all the bystanders were too much afraid that he would bite to lend their assistance to remove him. But true kindness is ever fertile in expedients. In the little enclosure where Adelaide maintained her superannuated horse was an old sleigh half filled with straw, and containing parts of an old harness thrown by as useless. By the promise of a few pennies Adelaide persuaded a butcher's boy to tackle the horse to the ricketty vehicle and bring him as far as the barred gate. Then quitting her wounded protegé for a few moments, she opened the gate and led the horse to where poor Cossack lay panting, but regarding her movements with evident interest. With considerable effort she lifted him tenderly into the sleigh, and placed him upon the straw, although in the act her hands and dress became smeared with blood. Then fastening the end of the dog's chain securely to the side of the sleigh, she assured the spectators that there was no longer any danger, and leading the horse with the vehicle and its contents at his heels back into the enclosure, she applied herself to the examination of Cossack's wound and the administration of the proper remedies.

Her heroism and care were, after several months, amply rewarded. Poor Cossack was crippled in one thigh for life, but he recovered his health, thus refuting the slander that pronounced him mad. Never did brute repay human protection with such tokens of gratitude as he ever afterwards exhibited towards Adelaide. For hours he would lie extendedwith his head resting on his fore paws, and his big sagacious eyes lifted so as to observe every change upon her face. His lameness prevented his following her when she went forth on horseback, but he would often limp after her in her pedestrian rambles through the alleys of the forest or by the water's side.

In the frame of mind, which we have described as consequent upon Adelaide's doubts as to her parentage she reached her sixteenth year, and the period of her encounter with the two young sportsmen on the beach.

CHAPTER IV.

I arise from dreams of thee,
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are burning bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet,
Hath led me—who knows how!—
To thy chamber−window, Sweet.
— —Shelley.

It cannot be supposed that a young man of Fleetwood's prospects in life and personal advantages, should have lived so unexposed to peril as to be likely to be seriously captivated by a casual sight of a pretty face. But his taste for the beautiful in nature as well as art, was too refined not to be awakened by the strange loveliness both of features and expression, which distinguished Adelaide. It had been his intention to quit Soundside for New York, whither he had been summoned by his lawyer, the day after his shooting excursion on thebeach. An interview with Glenham, the morning of that day, caused him to change his intention.

"How fares our cousin Hamlet?" cried Glenham, as he caught sight of Fleetwood in the act of throwing open the folding windows of his apartment.

"I humbly thank you, well," was the reply. "What a superb morning! Are you for the city?"

"By no means. Here's metal more attractive."

"A new discovery, eh? What is it, Glenham?"

"Have you forgotten the fair equestrian—little Velvet Cap? Fickle, unimpressible, invulnerable champion that you are! Don Giovanni himself would have been more constant."

"I have not forgotten her," said Fleetwood joining his companion on the piazza. "I met her last night in my dreams. Would that I might always sleep if I could have such dreams! But I have a letter from Dryman telling me I must be in the city to−day. I will be back here soon—and who knows but I may stumble once more upon the fair unknown?"

"I intend calling and paying my respects this morning."

"You! But, Glenham, what claim have you to call? She doesn't know you!"

"The deuce she doesn't! Didn't I frighten her horse with my gun? I must call and make an apology."

"But Miss Sunflower—I beg her pardon, Holyoke—expressly told us that none but the relatives of the pupils were allowed to visit them."

"Is it possible, my dear fellow, that you are so exceedingly verdant as to mind such a prohibition, where a pretty girl is concerned?"

"If you go, I will stay and go too," said Fleetwood.

"Bravo, Fred!" returned Glenham. "I begin tothink that you are really in for it. But I shall cut you out. There is no chance for you whatever, my dear boy. I have got to pass a whole month longer at Blackberry Hill—a whole month—with nothing to do, if I choose, but make love. I look upon the appearance of the incognita, under these circumstances, as little less than providential."

"She is not a woman to be insulted," said Fleetwood with sudden emotion, for there was something in the tone of assurance of his companion, which jarred most ungraciously upon his feelings.

"I wonder who she is, and who her papa is, and whether he is respectable, that is, lives upon the interest of his money," said Glenham, not noticing his companion's remark. "But come;" he continued—"the Holyoke Seminary is at least three miles distant—let us mount our horses and set forth. This being a Saturday, we shall be likely to find that there is an intermission of the school."

Fleetwood complied with the suggestion. But he felt in no mood for talking, on the road. If any remarks were made they came from Glenham, and would hardly add by their repetition any contributions of value to our ethical literature.

Arriving at the gate of the Seminary, the young men tied their horses and passed under an arch of old, umbrageous elms towards the house. Glenham, who naturally took precedence in impudence, led the way. As they approached the piazza the tones of a piano accompanied by a female voice arrested their attention and their steps. A song from "Amilie," beginning "To the vine−feast" was recognized at once by Fleetwood. He was charmed with the animation and enthusiasm thrown into it by the singer. He half wished that she might be Adelaide. A step farther, and he found that his wish was granted.

On hearing footsteps she rose to quit the apartment. Seeing her about to escape, Glenham, without more ado, threw open the front door, entered the room, and confronted her with a profound bow. Adelaide did not recognize the gentleman, and quietly remarking that she would order the servant to send Miss Holyoke to him, she continued her steps towards the door.

"The gentleman who saved your life, Mr. Fleetwood!" said Glenham, pointing towards his companion, who at this moment entered, and who, half abashed at the audacious example he had unreflectingly followed, bowed respectfully and said: "Being about to leave this place for the city. I could not relinquish the pleasure of satisfying myself in person that you had received no injury from yesterday's accident."

"And I, Miss Winfield," (Glenham had been examining the corners of a handkerchief she had left on the piano,) "I could not rest till I had apologised for being the unfortunate cause of your horse's flight. From this time forth I forswear shooting."

"Really, gentlemen"—said Adelaide; but the door opened, as she began, and in swept Miss Holyoke. From the expression of her face, on seeing the visitors, Glenham perceived at once that an extraordinary propitiation was necessary. Never did he display to more advantage his gift of impromptu lying.

"Ahem! I have called, Miss Holyoke," he said, with a look of grave importance—"I have called at the request of two or three fashionable families of my acquaintance in New York to learn your terms of tuition, and inquire into the nature of the studies pursued at your far−famed seminary."

The expression of acerbity and indignant inquiry on the lady's face at once gave place to one of gracious affability.

"Will you be seated, gentlemen," she said with a condescending smile.

"Mr. Fleetwood, madam, you already know, I believe," said Glenham. "I had the honor to introduce him to you on the beach. Mr. Fleetwood, may I ask you to do a similar kind office for me?"

"Certainly, certainly," murmured Fleetwood, dismayed at his companion's assurance. "This is Mr. Glenham, madam; he belongs to one of our oldest New York families, and his aunt's country seat is on that hill—Blackberry Hill—which you see at some four miles' distance."

"I have often heard of Miss Glenham," said Miss Holyoke, for whom as an old maid she felt no little sympathy.

"Had she not been too infirm, she would have visited you herself on this errand," interrupted Glenham. "She begged me to present her respects, and to say that she would be most happy to receive you at Blackberry Hill."

"She does me too much honor," simpered Miss Holyoke; and then, seeing that Fleetwood was undertaking to engage Adelaide in conversation, she exclaimed: "Adelaide, you may go to your studies;" but a second consideration, not altogether disinterested in its nature, occurred to Miss Holyoke. She could not forbear reflecting that so creditable a specimen as Adelaide, of what she was pleased to consider the fruits of her instruction, would serve to impress Glenham favorably as to the character and advantages of her school. "You may remain, Adelaide, upon the whole," added the instructress. And then a little embarrassed as to whether she should violate a rule or commit an indecorum she concluded by introducing "Miss Winfield" to both the young gentlemen.

With unfeigned reluctance, Adelaide remained. Shy as she was of forming acquaintances amongfemales, it was natural that for the same cause she should be far more reserved towards individuals of the other sex. There was something, however, in the circumstances under which Fleetwood approached her, and in his grace and respectfulness of manner, which rendered her more than usually incautious as soon as she became interested in conversation. Wishing to measure the extent of her literary attainments, Fleetwood took occasion to allude to a new and elegant translation of Goethe's Faust, which had just appeared. He asked Adelaide if she had seen it. She replied that she had not, and added that the man who could produce an adequate translation of Faust must have the genius to write a poem equal to the original. "Then you read the original?" asked Fleetwood, putting his question

in German, of which he had a smattering. To his surprise Adelaide replied in the same tongue, with so pure an accent, and so much fluency, that he inadvertently exclaimed: "Then you are yourself a German?" "Not so." replied Adelaide; "but I lived some years in a German family."

The conversation turned upon music; and Adelaide discoursed upon the subject in a vein of originality and enthusiasm, which convinced her hearer that she had given it her profound and well directed study. Of all the great masters Mozart was her favorite. She regarded him as bearing the same relation to Beethoven that Shakspeare did to Milton. Bellini she considered the Tom Moore of composers; Rossini the Byron.

Little had Fleetwood imagined that accompanied with so much personal loveliness he should find so much good sense, talent and vivacity. He was charmed in spite of himself; and when Glenham rose, and signified to him that it was time to depart, for that they had been there half an hour, he was onthe point of exclaiming, "then it is the shortest half hour that I ever knew!"

As soon as they were in their saddles, Glenham began: "Acknowledge, Fleetwood, that I am the most generous man alive."

"Say the most audacious, and you will not be far from the truth," was the reply.

"Is this all the gratitude I get for keeping that old woman in a sweet humor, while you undertook to commend yourself to the good graces of the young one? But, no matter! My turn will come soon. I lay my foundations broad and deep. I shall attack the enemy from an ambuscade. I have already made wonderful progress. Will you believe it, Fleetwood? I am invited to make one of the board of examiners at the next exhibition of the school."

"Did you find out anything about her?" asked Fleetwood.

"About the incognita? No. Nothing very satisfactory. Miss Holyoke twice evaded my question as to who the girl was and where she came from. I shouldn't wonder if she were an heiress from this circumstance."

"She is beautiful—very beautiful—and high−spirited too—I could see that. Do you know, Glenham, that I am half in love?"

"You don't say so! What will you give me for not coming in your way?"

"Pshaw! I will let her know before to−morrow that I am her admirer. Let me see! Could we not get up a serenade?"

"Nothing easier. You have only to drive to Norwalk, and engage the band that came down yesterday in the steamboat."

"I will do it at once," exclaimed Fleetwood.

"That is right," said his companion. "And I will take the credit of the thing," he added, sotto voce.

About one o'clock the next morning, a strain of wind music under Adelaide's window disturbed the deep and solemn stillness of the hour. For some moments her waking faculties seemed to struggle with a sense of Elysian sweetness, in which her spirit sought to be detained. An undetermined twilight of the mind, between sleeping and waking, succeeded; for a moment her soul was on tiptoe, as it were, all faculties merged in that of hearing. At length her eyes opened. She was awake. The serenaders were playing "Oft in the stilly night." She arose, drew a shawl about her shoulders, and looked from the window, which she had left partly open on retiring. Half a dozen musicians were grouped under a tree. Apart from them, on a patch of moonlight that fell upon the flag−stones leading to the front door, stood a figure, which she recognised at once as that of Fleetwood. He had a guitar in his hand, and seemed to catch sight of her as she looked forth, for he threw off his cap, and bowed, and as the music terminated at that instant he lifted his guitar and sang:—

In the silence of the night
In the hush of wave and tree,
Beneath the moon's pale light
I come, fair one, to thee.
Thy image will not fade
From the heart it hath imprest;
'Twill linger, Adelaide,
E'en though it be unblest.
For I see that thou art fair,
And I feel that thou art good;
And thy soul hath treasures rare,

Too rare for solitude.
Ah! while I breathe thy name,
Let not my song offend;
If you light the censer's flame,
The incense must ascend.

He ceased, and looked to receive some token that his appeal was not unheeded. But a white curtain was dropped where he before caught a glimpse of Adelaide's figure. There was certainly no encouragement to a lover in this sign. The band played a few more popular airs, and then the whole party retired, Fleetwood more than ever enamored because of the discouragement he had encountered.

And what became of Adelaide? Acutely alive to the influences of music, and a critical judge, she had listened to the serenade with emotions of delight, such as she had never before experienced. But it was not her taste for art alone that was gratified on this occasion. All the finer sensibilities of her nature were touched. For some minutes after the serenaders had departed she sat lost in a reverie. Her eyes dilated—her breast heaved—and a proud smile sat throned upon her lips—as if visions of transcendant beauty had been suddenly revealed. Then, as if they had been as quickly withdrawn, her countenance fell. She rose, and looking upwards with an expression of unutterable despair, buried her face in her hands, and gave vent to her tears. The spell of young romance was at an end. The reality that succeeded was too dark and cold.

Modern science has proved that there are persons with a nervous organization so wonderfully delicate, that they form correct impressions instantaneously in regard to the character of those with whom they are brought in contact. A sort of instinct like that which makes a dog slink away from the person who is about to strike him, although no outward premonitory sign of the act has been given, seems to tell them whom to avoid and whom to trust. Well may Adelaide have been startled, therefore, when she awoke to a consciousness ofthe direction in which the needle of her heart's compass was now pointing.

"Let me shun these dreams before it is too late," she hoarsely whispered, while her frame involuntarily shuddered. "They can never be realised by one who is a —. Merciful God, why was I born? The endearing amenities of home are not for me; the ties of consanguinity do not exist—and love, should I ever feel it, can lead only to anguish and life−long wretchedness!"

And then, as if struck with contrition for these repining thoughts, she poured out her soul in a prayer to heaven for forgiveness. It was not till the crimson of sunrise had mingled with the waning light of the moon, that she sank into a calm and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER V.

Signor Lucentio,
Here is my hand, and here I firmly vow—
Never to woo her more; but do forswear her,
As one unworthy all the former favors
That I have fondly flatter'd her withal.
— —Shakspeare.

At the breakfast table the next morning the event of the serenade was a matter of general remark among the pupils. Miss Holyoke had fortunately slept through it all; and although a little scandalised by the interest which the young ladies of her establishment seemed to take in the affair, she did not attach to it that importance, which it would seem to merit. No one for an instant imagined that the compliment was intended for Adelaide. She alone had heard her name breathed in the serenade. Indeed, several of the elder girls looked very mysterious, as if to say as plainly as they could by looks, "we could tell, if we would, for whom it was all designed."

It would be unnecessary to relate with minuteness, all the incidents which forced upon Fleetwood's mind the conviction that not only was the state of Adelaide's feelings unfavorable to himself, but that she regarded Glenham with a flattering degree of partiality. Let it not be inferred from this that Fleetwood had committed himself by a formal offer of his hand. The remembrance of those parental injunctions, to which we have alluded, would alone have been sufficiently potent to deter him from such inconsiderate haste; and no man of sagacity need run the hazard of a verbal refusal where he is dealing with a woman of candor and refinement. There are a thousand delicate waysby which she will signify to him that his attentions are not agreeable.

The day after the serenade being the Sabbath, Fleetwood attended the village church in the hope of finding an opportunity of forwarding his acquaintance with Adelaide. After service was over he joined her; and the road homeward being muddy from a recent shower, he offered his arm by way of guide. This she declined. Shortly afterwards they were joined by Glenham, who also proffered his arm, when much to his companion's surprise, it was accepted. A little more knowledge of the mysteries of the female heart would have caused Fleetwood to put a different construction upon this act, but as it was, he regarded it at the moment as a decided token of preference. Other indications equally significant followed. Add to these, Glenham invariably boasted of his rapid success; and, at length, Fleetwood, unable to elicit a faint sign of encouragement, resolved, after many a heart−pang, to abandon the trial. Love requires some hope, however small, for its aliment; and he had as yet received none. After remaining some ten days longer at Soundside, during which Glenham had so far mollified Miss Holyoke that she interposed no obstacle to their visits, Fleetwood called to take a final farewell of Adelaide.

On his way he encountered Glenham.

"You seem in bad humor, Glenham? What is the matter?"

"We have been barking up the wrong tree, Fred, puppies that we have been."

"Speak for yourself, my dear fellow. Explain."

"Having reason to believe that our incognita was an heiress, I made her an offer of my hand this morning, and—can you conceive it?—the girl had the assurance to refuse me most unhesitatingly."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Fleetwood, his eyes sparkling with delight.

"You needn't look so well pleased, my boy. You will not have her even if you could when you hear all."

In accounting for Glenham's conduct, it should be borne in mind that Adelaide's singular personal attractions were of a character to make the most frigid heart beat with emotion in her presence. Glenham was as seriously in love as his sensual nature would permit, notwithstanding the pretence that his belief that the girl was an heiress was the main motive of his offer. Fleetwood, supposing that he was sincere in this profession, naturally felt no pity for his discomfiture; and exulted in the thought that Adelaide might yet be won.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked in reply to Glenham's last remark.

"There is a stain upon her escutcheon—the bar sinister—" muttered Glenham significantly.

"What! Do you mean to say she is —"

"Ay, it is a deplorable fact. Her father and mother were never married; and considering the existing prejudices

of society, I think we had better cut her acquaintance."

"Poor girl! poor girl!"

"Poor girl! Nonsense! She ought to be amenable to the law for procuring lovers under a false pretence—under the pretence that she was a lady."

"And so she is, and ever must be!" exclaimed Fleetwood with animation; "a lady by nature's own stamp, which no outward circumstance can ever efface! Did we not thrust ourselves upon her acquaintance in spite of all rebuffs? Has she ever by a look or word encouraged our addresses?"

"Stop, stop," interposed Glenham; "you forget, my dear fellow, the day she refused your arm and took mine."

"That act may be construed in two different ways," replied Fleetwood.

"What! Do you pretend to say that she has not all along encouraged me in preference to yourself?"

"I know not what to think," mused Fleetwood, in whose mind some dim notions of the true state of the case began to dawn. "Poor Adelaide! beautiful, accomplished, high−bred—is she then an outcast from that society which she is so fitted to adorn? Poor girl! I can now imagine why she has repelled my advances; why she has avoided extending the slightest encouragement to my attentions. But now the gulf between us is impassable!"

"Of course," continued Glenham, "no gentleman would now think of making love to her with any matrimonial intentions. But I shall keep up the acquaintance pour passer le temps. It would be impossible, of course, for me now to occupy the relation of a husband; but I may persuade her to place herself under my protection nevertheless, one of these days."

Fleetwood started as if a venomous reptile had touched his flesh with its cold slime. He conceived a sort of loathing for his companion, indicated rather by looks than words.

"Surely, Glenham," said he, "you wouldn't be such a craven villain as to approach the unfortunate girl with any other thoughts than those of kindness and respect?"

"Be more choice in the epithets you apply to conduct, which you assume as possible on my part," retorted Glenham.

"I am glad to hear you speak of it as an assumption," replied Fleetwood. "Come, come; we will not quarrel. You can now see that the girl had good reason to refuse you; and your self−complacency need not suffer in the retrospect. As for myself I was on my way to take leave of her—a finalone it is likely to be now. Let us not seek, Glenham, to add to the misfortunes, which her very birth imposed upon her. By heavens! since I cannot be her lover, I will be her brother, if she will let me, and I can occupy the position without harm to her reputation."

"A brother!" sneered Glenham. "Truly it is quite refreshing to meet with such verdure in a young man with ten thousand a−year."

"Well, as I said before, we will not quarrel," continued Fleetwood, with an evident desire to get rid of his companion. "Have you any commands for the city? I leave this afternoon in the Bridgeport boat."

"Farewell, don't be too fraternal, Fleetwood," said Glenham, turning away with a smile, which his companion did not altogether like.

Fleetwood walked on. The revelations he had just received in regard to Adelaide awakened in his mind a succession of conflicting thoughts. First came an emotion of joy at the recollection of Glenham's dismissal. Then followed the misgiving, that she may have loved while she refused him, and that the cause of the refusal was merely her unfortunate position in a social point of view. And lastly occurred the despairing consideration of the insuperable bar, which this latter circumstance placed to his own union with her. Could he be so neglectful of parental prejudices and injunctions, as to entertain for a moment the idea of wedding one, who was a Pariah by birth? Should he, the last of his race, although tracing back his lineage to the best blood of England and France, should he select for the mother of his children one, upon whose genealogy charity would always have to drop her veil? The impracticability of the thing effaced the last vestige of hope from his heart.

In the midst of these ruminations he approached a narrow grove of pines, which bordered on one side the play−ground attached to Miss Holyoke's "Seminary for Young Ladies." The weather was warm, and he paused under the shade of a tree to rest himself. Suddenly a troop of girls, amid shouts and laughter, came forth with bows and arrows and dressed in archery costumes. One of them carried a target attached to a pointed staff, the end of which she thrust firmly in the ground. And now began the trials of skill. As every successive arrow fell wide of the mark, a peal of girlish laughter greeted the failure. The general mirth was at its height, when Fleetwood saw a new candidate approaching the scene of action. She was dressed partially in white, a dark green boddice setting

off to advantage the upper portion of her figure. A quiver filled with arrows was slung gracefully over her shoulders, and she carried a bended bow with an arrow set in the string in her hands. A straw hat afforded protection to her face from the sun. She was followed by a lame dog, which limped after her with difficulty. Fleetwood at once recognized Adelaide in the new comer.

But however welcome her appearance might be to him, it seemed to produce a very different effect upon the young girls, who occupied the playground. They at once checked their noisy ebullitions of mirth, withdrew from their sports, and gathered about one of their number, who, as Adelaide approached, led her companions in an opposite direction towards the house. It was not until Adelaide had reached the archery ground, that she seemed to be aware of its abandonment by her schoolmates and of the cause of their departure. And then she mechanically dropped the bow from her hands, and slowly snapping the arrow, which she held, into pieces, flung them upon the ground at her feet. An expression of deep sorrow, unmingledwith one taint of anger, came over her face. An old apple−tree, scathed and leafless, offered its bent trunk for a support. She drooped her forehead upon its rough bark, and lifting her hand as if to keep back the tears that threatened to gush forth, gave way to bitter reflections.

Unseen, but seeing, Fleetwood watched her every movement, indescribably graceful and picturesque as it was. His indignation had been aroused by the unfeeling conduct of those who had shunned her presence. His intensest sympathies were at once awakened in her behalf. She was alone in the wide world—perhaps, like himself, without a relative. She was avoided by those who were immeasurably her inferiors in every external and internal grace. Why should he pause? Why should he not fly to her side, and pour out the natural promptings of his heart in her ear? Ah, Fleetwood! It is not argument—it is not generosity —it is not philanthropy, that impels you. You are in love, man—and there is no imprudence, of which you would not be guilty, rather than be shut out from the haven of your hopes.

CHAPTER VI.

I fear it is a rash
And passionate resolve that thou hast made;
But how should I admonish me, myself
So great a winner by thy desperate play?
— Taylor

Leaping over the stone wall, which separated him from the field wherein she stood, he approached, and accosted her by name. Adelaide started, and turned upon him a face, from which the traces of tears had not yet disappeared. Cossack, the wounded dog, whose history we have already given, returned from barking after the departing female troop, of whose unkindness towards his mistress he seemed to be aware, and, with a suppressed growl placed himself by her side and looked threateningly at the stranger.

"When I left my inn," said Fleetwood, "it was with the intention of bidding you farewell, Miss Adelaide, and quitting this place for the city this afternoon."

"And have you changed your intention?" inquired Adelaide, endeavoring to force a smile, and to make firm the tremulous tones of her voice.

"Yes; a spectacle I have just witnessed has induced me to change my plans."

"Indeed! To what do you allude?"

"To the conduct of those of your own sex, who abandoned this spot as you approached."

"And how can it be that you are affected by conduct of theirs?"

"I have been too hasty—I have offended you?"

"Proceed."

"Ah, Adelaide! Why should I disguise feelings,which I know to be honorable and pure? I saw that you were shunned—shunned by those who were unworthy to be your handmaidens—and I knew the cause."

"Well, then, my unhappy story is known to you. So be it. I would be known to none, to whom it is not known."

"And what has been the effect of that knowledge of your situation upon me, Adelaide? It has impelled me to offer you, as I do now, that protection, which you so much require—the protection of a husband?"

With a glance of utter amazement, Adelaide regarded the speaker for some moments in silence. It seemed so like a dream—or the miraculous fulfilment of one—that, which she had heard fall from his lips!

"Yes, Adelaide," continued Fleetwood; "I have weighed this matter deliberately"—

He paused, while a series of cross questions were put to him interiorly, by some impertinent sprite, who happened to be passing, 'though invisible to the material sight' at the time. "That sounds to me very much like a lie," said the sprite. "Is it?" asked Fleetwood, who was scrupulous in his regard for the truth. "To be sure it is," said the sprite emphatically; "you know very well, that not five minutes have elapsed since the intention, which you now call deliberate, entered your head. Be more careful, sir, in your assertions, or I and other clever fellows, who now do you good turns when you least think of it, will cut your acquaintance." "I believe you are right, sir," returned Fleetwood with humility. "Must I retract?" "To be sure you must." "It will be awkward." "I don't care for that." "Then here goes!"

"Pardon me," resumed Fleetwood, and Adelaide's bosom heaved while he spoke—"deliberately wasnot the word I should have used. I cannot have weighed this matter deliberately, for it is but within a few minutes that I have formed the resolution, which my words have conveyed—but I have weighed it in the scales of unerring instinct, of conscience, of earnest and well−grounded affection. I love you, Adelaide—I never knew how well till I saw you subjected to an indignity from those, whom no outward circumstance can ever make your equals."

Adelaide had apparently made an effort to speak during the brief pauses in these remarks, but though her lips moved, agitation prevented their utterance from being heard. At length, with a negative motion of the head, she said: "This is language, to which I should not listen and which you should not utter."

"And why not?"

"Ah, Sir, truth speaks in your tones and beams in your looks. I feel that you are sincere, and I thank you

for—may I call it?—the romantic generosity of your offer. But you are young. We are both young. Yet I realize, perhaps, more justly than you, the evils and mischiefs of my position. Heaven forbid that I should make you a partaker in them—that I should drag you down to the ignominious level, socially speaking, where I must ever rest as contentedly as I may! Your prospects in life would be blighted by an association with me —the child of shame—whose parentage is unknown, and may be both guilty and base."

"Ah, Adelaide, you are as God made you, and I am contented with his marvellous handiwork. I care not for the sins of your progenitors. Were they greater than the heart of man can conceive, still they would be expiated in the virtues of their offspring."

"You speak with enthusiasm, and that makes medistrust your judgment. Think of the grief and misery you would bring upon your parents and friends by such an alliance. Indeed, Sir—do not distress me by further importunities."

"Hear me, Adelaide. I know not the being, in whose veins runs blood kindred to my own. I have neither father, mother, brother nor sister. I have not a single relative, to my knowledge, on the face of the earth."

Adelaide started and trembled, and her breath came quick and heavy. A mountain of objections was removed by this avowal.

"But you have friends, who love, who esteem you," she replied, after a pause. "You have your way to make in the world—honors to win—a position to attain. Alas! You would find me a continual impediment to your advancement. I have been sinful in arguing with you thus—in admitting the possibility of an event, to which in the generous enthusiasm of the moment you look forward, but which in your calmer moments, you will regard as I do, impracticable and wrong. Now, leave me. It is unmaidenly in me to admit you to farther discourse on a subject like this."

"Nay, we part not thus. Think you, Adelaide, that in any of my moments, however calm, I could be such a sordid calculator as to weigh the pitiful prospect of getting on in the world (that is the phrase, I believe) against the fulfilment of an honorable and well−founded attachment? But your concern for my interests is superfluous. I am independent of the world and its opinions. I prize the smile of my own conscience more than all its honors, all its gifts. It can neither bestow nor take away aught for which I care—unless you are so needlessly a coward, either on my account or your own, as to fear its frown. Stay yet a moment; and do not call my zeal imprudence. Ah, the heartis as likely to be right as the head, in deciding upon critical steps in a man's life. I am placed by a large and secure income, far above the caprices of fortune and the world's favor; and were I not—had I nothing but my hands and my head, with which to procure a support—I know not that my course would be different. I am willing to confide our case to the pastor of this little parish, Mr. Lilburne, to whom I have letters from my lawyer, and who, I am convinced, from the sentiments I have heard fall from his lips, will approve of our union."

Adelaide started at this last word. She was sorely tried. The color came to her face, and fled as quickly. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground. Her heart beat with violence. She could not speak. Fleetwood took her hand. It lingered in his for a moment, and was then gradually withdrawn.

"And why should we not go hand in hand for the remainder of our pilgrimage?" he asked. "Why should we not supply to each other the place of kindred and friends—destitute as we both are of those ties of consanguinity, for which the isolated heart so yearns? Ah, Adelaide! How often have I wished, that I had but a sister—a sister a few years younger than myself—about your age. What delight, I have thought, to receive her little confidences—to execute her little commissions—to provide instructors for her, and have her perfected in every ennobling accomplishment—to instil none but high and generous thoughts and opinions—to watch over her health, physical and moral—and to see in the hearts of both, the growth of an affection immortal as the soul! Will you not be to me something even more than I ever expected in a sister?"

And still no reply came from Adelaide's lips.

"Indeed I cannot take a refusal," continued Fleetwood. "For my sake, for your own, I must insist upon pressing my suit. Why should we not atonce unite our fates? Pardon me if I have not grounds for saying that your present situation is irksome and distressing. Isolated as I am in this world, my own is hardly less enviable. The love that might have been dissipated among kindred, is concentrated all upon you. You shall supply the place of parents, sisters, brothers. Nay, droop not thus, my Adelaide. Look up; and say that you will be my wife. What should oppose or delay our marriage? Are you fond of travelling? We will pass the autumn in a trip to Niagara and the lakes, and next November shall find us in the South of Europe. My delights, my studies, my tastes, my

charities shall be yours, and yours shall be mine. What treasures will we store up for memory to ponder over in our maturer years! Our first impressions of all that is grand in nature and art, shall be simultaneous. Hand in hand we will meet dangers and adventures; and if we ever have opportunities of playing the good Samaritan on the highway of life, it shall be with one impulse of beneficence and ministering love. Speak, Adelaide; shall it not be thus?"

He took her hand. It was not now withdrawn. He gazed in her face. It was pale; but what a glance of earnest, heart−surrendering affection, of triumphant and resistless love, told him that his victory was secure! She remained speechless with emotion; but at length her full heart found relief in tears. Gradually she became strong again, and taking her lover's arm, they strolled towards the sombre aisles of an adjoining forest of pines, and there confided to each other their hopes and fears.

"And have you no recollection of any one, who claims the authority of a parent over you?" asked Fleetwood.

"It must now be upwards of twelve years," repliedAdelaide, "since any one, who I had reason to suppose was interested in my lot, came personally to see and question me. I remember, when quite a child, dwelling in a quiet little cottage by the river−side; and I can recall the face of a woman, who used to come occasionally in her carriage and ask me if I was well treated, and if I was contented with my home.

"And have you reason to suppose that this woman was your mother?"

"I have often asked myself the question; but have never been able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion."

"Do you not remember some tokens of tenderness and affection, which none but a mother would have been likely to display?"

"She always treated me kindly, and yet I do not remember looking for her arrival with much eagerness of expectation; nor, when she discontinued her visits altogether, did I repine. And yet who but a mother could have shown so much interest? Perhaps she scrupulously avoided, for both our sakes, awakening any deep affection on either side."

"My own Adelaide, under the peculiar circumstances of your situation, you are surely justified in acting as if you were perfectly independent of parental consultations. Your own principles, impulses and affections must be your guide. Trust yourself to them, and I am sure you cannot go wrong. Now listen to my plans. This is Saturday. Precisely one week from to−day I will return, and we will be married. Nay, do not tremble. It is well that it should be thus. There shall be no concealment, no delay. You shall on that day, but not till then, announce to Miss Holyoke our intentions. I will be accompanied by two female friends and their husbands, who will lend respectabilityand authority to our union. They are women of generous impulses and strong good sense, who, I am sure, will approve my choice. It may be that the persons having authority over you will be angry at the step, and cut off the support which they have hitherto supplied. But you cannot regard that as any objection. If they have your interests truly at heart, they will be gratified when they learn the true state of the case. Now, say, Adelaide, that you consent; say that it shall be as I propose; and that next Saturday shall find you my wife?"

Adelaide looked frankly up in his face, and gave him her hand. She was resolved not to be outdone in generosity.

"Be it as you will," she said. "I am yours henceforth—forever."

"Bless you, Adelaide, for those words. And now, farewell! I see, through the leaves, your companions returning to the play−ground. I will take leave of you here. Farewell!"

He held both her hands in his while he spoke, and they stood face to face. They entrusted to their eyes the language of endearment their lips could not utter. Then lifting her hands, Fleetwood allowed them to drop upon his shoulders, while he clasped her in a first, hurried embrace, and sealed upon her lips a pure and sacred token of his affection. Adelaide's face and neck became crimson, but she did not speak; and Fleetwood, after one more deep and earnest farewell, leaped over an adjoining wall, and was soon in the dusty road.

Adelaide watched his departing figure till it was lost to sight. Her tears fell profusely, but they were tears of exultation and joy. Slowly and thoughtfully she strolled by a circuitous route homeward. Leaving Cossack to bask in the sunshineon the front door−step, she sought the little apartment, with which so many associations, sorrowful and bright, were connected. She recalled the night of the serenade, the melody to which she had delightedly listened, and the desperate energy with which she had shunned those dreams, the realization of which now seemed near at hand. How different was her present mental mood, while

"Hope, enchanted, smiled and waved her golden hair."

Reclining on the sofa, with the fingers of one hand twined carelessly through the rich locks about her temple, which rested on the palm, she listlessly watched the shadows of the leaves of a neighboring tree dancing across her curtain, and gave herself up the while to joyous contemplations. What a change had one little hour wrought in her destiny! She was no longer isolated in the world, shunned, sneered at, and subjected to indignities even from the lips of menials. She was beloved— and by one to whom she could render up in return the whole exhaustless wealth of affection, of which her nature was capable. What were the scoffs of the world henceforth to her? "Oh, let them come," thought she, "that I may show him how little I regard them while blessed with his smiles! With what ever vigilant fondness will I watch over his happiness! How will I lend fleetness to the wings of every moment, that he may sigh only when deprived of my ministrations! How will I study to repay his generosity, his liberal and unquestioning love! Indeed the happiness in store for me as his wife seems too great, too bewildering for realization. And yet there is no cloud upon the horizon; for who that cared for my welfare could oppose this alliance? Yes; I am now to be repaid for my years of solitude, unloving and unloved; for theabsence of kindred and friends. And who would not endure all that I have endured, and more, for such a requital? Oh, goal of my hopes! Oh, object of my unchanging and undying love! To thy welfare I henceforth devote myself! Thou hast been generous beyond what I believed man could be, and thou shalt find me faithful, constant, affectionate and zealous to please beyond what woman has ever been!"

Adelaide looked up, as if to invoke surrounding spirits to bear witness to the internal vow; but at that moment a sound in the court−yard made her start. It was merely the noise of carriage wheels grating over a newly gravelled walk that led to the house; but she thought she had never heard aught so harsh and dissonant. As they rolled on, they seemed to crush the newly−sprung flowers of hope in her heart. Who could the new comer be?

She looked from the window. She saw a woman, who was a stranger to her, descend from the vehicle. Her face seemed to Adelaide like a face she had seen in some unhappy and dimly remembered dream. She shuddered while she gazed— and then awaited the result with a sort of vague conviction that a crisis in her destiny was approaching.

CHAPTER VII.

And thy heart Enlarged by its new sympathy with one, Grew bountiful to all.

— —Talfourd.

Fleetwood did not defer his departure. A few hours after taking leave of Adelaide, he was pacing the deck of one of the steamboats that ply between the city of New York and the many beautiful villages that look out upon the waters of the Sound. His thoughts were of the sudden and unexpected step he had taken towards matrimony, and they of course partook of that rose−colored hue, with which love ever imbues surrounding objects. He half regretted that he had not brought Adelaide with him as his wife. Strangely tender visions of her loveliness, her forlorn situation, her grace and genius flitted through his mind, until he reproached himself with having forsaken her even for the few days during which it was his intention to be absent. He never once put himself the question, am I acting a prudent part? So much did it seem to him a matter of course, that loving her as he did, he should seek to make her his own!

But though the absence of the beloved one might occasion regret, never before had he thought life so full of sweetness and of blissful import. The meanest and most common−place object seemed all at once invested with an interest, which it never before possessed. They passed an island—a narrow bar of sand with a few stray blades of grass scattered along its centre, as if to set off the baldness of the remaining portions, while a stunted poplar marked the spot where stood a small hut nearlydismantled by the tempests and the droughts of successive seasons. A more desolate looking strip of barren land could hardly be imagined; but here a fisherman and his wife contrived to live and thrive. Fleetwood had often wondered, in passing this sand−bar, how any of God's intelligent creatures could exist contentedly upon it. What monotony, what vacuity, what poverty of occupation, physical and mental, must they experience! A prison would be preferable, for there one might have the excitement of planning an escape; but to remain summer and winter, year in and year out, on that bleak, blasted, solitary specimen of a miniature desert, was more than he could suppose humanity capable of! It seemed cruelty to compel the very household cat, that might be seen occasionally creeping along the sands, to take up its abode there, so dull and dismal did everything about it appear! Such were the feelings with which Fleetwood was accustomed to regard this spot. But now how were they changed! He gazed on it, and by some miraculous alchemy it seemed to have been transmuted into a fairy isle, with luxuriant bowers and ever−varying landscapes; and he thought, that even there, with Adelaide, he would be well content. The wind that sighed through the dismantled hut would but cause him to press her closer to his bosom; and the waves that tossed their spray over the whole breadth of the isle would but make him the more anxious to shield her with his protecting love. The solitude would not be irksome, for they would be all in all to each other; and under such circumstances society would be intrusive. In short, our hero almost persuaded himself that the dreary little sand−bar would be a very proper and delightful place, whereon to pass the honey−moon. Yes; it is the soul that sees; and makes "a heaven of hell—a hell of heaven."

Fleetwood had passed hardly a week in the city since the attainment of his majority. After finishing his collegiate studies he had visited the different states of the Union, stopping at every place that attracted him by its beauty, and studying the local peculiarities of the people. But now, on reaching New York he drove to one of the principal hotels, and after engaging the best parlor and bed−room for his accommodation, dressed and walked forth to call on his lawyer, Mr. Dryman. On approaching the door of that gentleman's house, shortly after night−fall, he found from the letting−down of carriage−steps and the lights from the windows, that preparations for a party of some kind were going on. He knocked, and leaving his card with the servant told him to tell Mr. Dryman that he would call on him at his office on the morrow; but he had not proceeded many paces on his way home to his hotel, when the same servant, panting with the exertion of running, arrested his steps, and begged him to return.

Fleetwood did not feel the lack of company. His thoughts of Adelaide were society enough for him; but he felt too well disposed towards the world and all the people in it, at that moment, to refuse any one a reasonable request. He accordingly retraced his steps. Mr. Dryman met him at the door.

"My dear Frederick," said Mr. Dryman, seizing his right hand in both of his, "this is truly an unexpected pleasure. How are you, my young friend? I have been lamenting to Mrs. Dryman all day that you were not in the

city. Come in. You will be quite an accession to her little dancing party. Some pretty girls here! Take care, Fred. But you are somewhat fastidious, if I remember aright."

And with these remarks, Mr. Dryman led him by the arm into the gentlemen's withdrawing−room, and from thence into the parlor, where the company were assembled. He had never been introducedto the lady of the house; for, notwithstanding the familiar manner in which Dryman chose to accost him, the truth was that the intercourse between the lawyer and his youthful client had always been as brief as a necessary attention to occasional business would permit.

"This is Mr. Fleetwood, my dear. I needn't say a word more in his behalf," said Mr. Dryman, a little flushed with the importance of his announcement, pushing his way through a circle of young gentlemen in white kid gloves, and ladies in light satins.

Fleetwood could not but be conscious of that irrepressible flutter which takes place in an assembly upon the announcement of a person, of whom all have heard, and whom all are curious to see. The fact was, that Fleetwood had very innocently furnished an unfailing topic of conversation to Mrs. Dryman for a whole season. On the credit of her husband's acquaintance with him she had been invited to many a house, where there were marriageable young ladies in the family, and where her stories of his immense wealth, his elegant personal appearance, and his attractive manners, coupled with his remarkable indifference to the approbation of that mysterious portion of the community known as fashionable society, never failed to excite eager and interested hearers. Her look of surprise and exultation may be imagined when she found herself face to face with the hero, in whose praise she she had gossiped so often to so much advantage. Curtseying profoundly she looked around, as she rose from her obeisance, with a significant air of triumph upon the surrounding group of young ladies, the shrillness of whose commingled voices had subsided a little as Fleetwood entered.

"We have been wondering for some time, Mr. Fleetwood, why you could not find charms enoughin the city for at least a flying visit," said Mrs. Dryman.

"I am not insensible to its charms, madam," was the reply. "If I were, I should be in imminent peril of being cured of my obtuseness this evening."

Mrs. Dryman looked delighted. It was just the reply that pleased her best.

"You must dance, Mr. Fleetwood," she continued. "Let me present you to a partner. A cotillion is about to be formed."

"Do with me as you will, Madam. Though an accidental recruit you shall not find me backward."

"Do you see any one to whom you would like to be introduced, Mr. Fleetwood?"

"I can reply to that question, Madam, without taking a survey of the field. Introduce me to one of two ladies in the room—the prettiest or the homeliest. It is a matter of indifference to me which."

"How very odd! But come, I will choose for you; and the lady shall be Miss Emily Gordon, whom you see standing yonder by the orange−tree, beleaguered by ten beaux at once."

"Do you mean that lady with the cloud−like drapery floating about her figure—with the fair, clear complexion, and hair, the hue of which may be said to be the disputed territory that lies on the borders of red and auburn? Come now, I admit that she is more than pretty—she is beautiful."

Without more words, Mrs. Dryman took her visitor's arm, and conducting him across the intervening space, introduced him to Miss Gordon, and then withdrew for a while to see if the preparations for supper were all going on smoothly.

"It must be an idle ceremony for me to ask you to dance the next cotillion with me, Miss Gordon," said Fleetwood. "As a matter of course, you are engaged."

"Not so; for I have declined dancing again," she replied. "But do not let me detain you from the amusement. The set is forming."

"I thank you, I am well content to remain where I am."

An animated conversation ensued. Fleetwood could not but confess to himself that he had rarely met with so agreeable and charming a person. She was piquante without being ill−natured in her remarks; and the knowledge which she displayed of the world, of society, and the current theories of the day for its reform, surprised and amused him. The causes of the distress, the destitution and vice prevalent among the great mass of mankind, became the theme of a mutually earnest discussion. Emily was inclined to attribute their existence and increase to defects in the outward organization of society; and she believed that Fourier had hit upon the most feasible plan

for a reform.

"Fourier's error, as it seems to me," replied Fleetwood, "is in beginning at the wrong end—in attempting to reform the external before the internal state, whereas it is the latter that must ever supersede and mould the former. What folly to talk of making men and women herd together in one vast caravansery, while envy, hatred and all uncharitableness are in their hearts! But his system of association, he tells us, will harmonise the passions, and produce that favorable state, which in my opinion must precede and not follow that dwelling together in unity, which he recommends. The idea is fallacious, Miss Gordon. The world is an arena for the soul's discipline—so reason and revelation teach us. It matters not what the external form of life may be, so that the internal be pure, and active and good. There is no truth more self−evident to my mind, than that sin brought into the world all our wo—physical as well as moral—socialas well as individual. Who can deny that the sins of the fathers are visited on their children? When I have a twinge of the gout, it is not my own indulgences in Madeira−tippling that I am paying for, but those of my great grandfather. And so we see mental and moral, as well as physical taints bequeathed through successive generations. If my ancestors were purer and better than my neighbor's, where is the injustice if I am born a better and purer and healthier man than he? The menial who cleans my boots was born to drudgery and wretchedness, while I was born to affluence and ease. But is Heaven therefore unjust? Undoubtedly it is the duty of every good man to reduce as much as possible the amount of distress and poverty in the world. But the inequalities in human condition, are not to be levelled by social systems of man's invention. The fault (not to speak it profanely) is interior and innate. You must go back to the policy of the ancient Spartans, and put to death every infant that is born into the world with mental or bodily defects, if you would carry out Fourier's plan effectually."

"And are they then a necessary part of civilization—the wretchedness, the squalor, the precarious subsistence, the absence of regular employment of the lowest and most numerous laboring class? Must men be driven to crime, and women to dishonor to sustain life—and is there not something wrong in the social organization, which compels them to such alternatives?"

"You must remember," replied Fleetwood, "that we are indebted to the effervescence of the work−houses of Europe, for the pauperism and crime, with which our large cities have been prematurely infected. This fact is notorious. Who can tell what would have been the state of our laboring population, if, after the declaration of our independence, the country had been left to its natural growth, without any accessions from abroad? We might not have boasted perhaps of our leagues of railroad, our stupendous canals, and other public works, but it is not unlikely that we could have pointed with pride to an unsullied escutcheon—to contented labor receiving its adequate reward throughout our borders—to a moral, intelligent, patriotic and thrifty people. Our institutions, in their effect upon the laboring classes, have not been fairly tested, owing to these tremendous irruptions from monarchichal Europe. It is impossible to say what our republicanism might not have done for the prevention of the social evils you deplore, for we have had engrafted upon us, even in our infancy, the vices and miseries of the old world."

"But surely the system of Fourier, in finding congenial employment for all, is calculated to do away with much existing misery and destitution?"

"I do not deny that his system is a very good one for those who can live under it. I should esteem it a most cheering sign of the progress of the race to see whole communities forming themselves into phalanxes and living together like amiable children of one family; but to suppose people capable of doing this, is to suppose that they have attained a state of angelic goodness. The evils they have inherited and the evils they have taken unto themselves of their own accord must be pretty thoroughly rooted out before they can enter harmoniously upon such a plan of life. While human nature is as it is, the scheme is chimerical. But there comes Mrs. Dryman to interrupt us! The theme is a vast one we have broached—too grave for an evening party—and too unwieldy for an amateur like myself to handle."

As Fleetwood concluded his remark, Mrs. Dryman approached, having hold of the arm of a youngman of rather distingué appearance, whom he had not before noticed. She separated from her attendant as she drew near, and announced that supper was ready. Fleetwood turned to give his arm to Miss Gordon, but found that he had been anticipated by the stranger.

"You shall be my conductor, and we will lead the way," said Mrs. Dryman, suiting the action to the world. "Do you know," continued she, as she approached the supper−room with Fleetwood, "that you have given mortal

offence to Count La Salle by your very acceptable attentions, as they appeared, to Miss Gordon?"

"And who is Count La Salle?"

"A young Frenchman, who comes here with letters from our minister in Paris, and other respectable sources. He is desperately enamored of Miss Gordon, and until this evening I supposed that his attentions were not altogether indifferent to her. He has been watching you for the last ten minutes with not the most amiable glances, and the poor man must have bitten his nails to the quick during that time."

"I am sorry I should have given him cause for discomposure," said Fleetwood.

They entered the supper−room, and after the customary havoc among stewed oysters, ices and champagne, Fleetwood resumed the conversation by the inquiry, "And who is Miss Gordon?"

Mrs. Dryman looked at him, as if she thought he was quizzing her by the interrogatory, so impossible did it seem that any young man about town should be ignorant of one so much courted and caressed.

"Indeed you must make allowances for my rustic education," said Fleetwood, deprecatingly. "Consider that I have rarely passed more than a week at a time in the city."

"Why, she is the reigning belle," exclaimed Mrs. Dryman. "No party is considered complete where Emily Gordon is not present. And then she is so accomplished, that she is as great a favorite with philosophers as with fops."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, I assure you it is true. In the principal European capitals she was quite as much of a belle, during the last two winters, as she is here. She speaks French and Italian as if those languages were her mother tongue; and then she sings like a prima donna."

Mrs. Dryman's account was not exaggerated. And Emily Gordon had preserved her youth and freshness of manner with marvellous success. No one, unless informed, would have imagined that she was hackneyed in the ways of society. She did not seem to have lost any of her bloom at midnight routs, nor to have made callous any of the susceptibilities of her heart in the school of fashion. Fleetwood found himself once more in communication with this dangerous beauty before the breaking−up of the party. There was something about her features—something vague and undefined—that reminded him of Adelaide. Now he thought it was in her eyes—the next moment in her smile— and then in the tones of her voice. And did she cause him to forget, even for an instant, her, the beautiful and lovely one, whom he had that day wooed and won? Not at all. But, by a system of tactics, so subtle that he was unconscious of them, she managed to keep him for the rest of the evening by her side. When, as the company were departing, he threw her shawl over her shoulders, he caught the eyes of Count La Salle fixed upon him with a glance of defiance.

"That fellow is disposed to be impertinent,"thought Fleetwood; "it will not do to let him imagine that I have shown the white feather."

A few minutes afterward he was retracing his steps homeward to his hotel. It was a clear starlight. The air was soft and mild. It seemed to him a week since his head last pressed the pillow— such a series of emotions and thoughts had been crowded into a few hours. "Dear Adelaide!" soliloquized Fleetwood, as he took a last look at the stars before entering his hotel, "as I have eyes to see and ears to comprehend, you are incomparably her superior. Light of my life, good night!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It was the hoot of the owl from the turret of her hopes.

— S. Lover.

The carriage, which in the noise made by its approach along the gravel−walk, had aroused Adelaide from her day−dreams, had but a single occupant, and she was a female. Adelaide sat in breathless expectation—why she could not tell. The arrival of a carriage was a daily, oftentimes an hourly, occurrence. Why, then, should an apprehension be awakened now? She began to get the better of her momentary agitation, when a knock at the door brought it all back.

"Come in," she said, with an involuntary sigh.

A servant entered, and saying, "your mother wants you, Miss, down in the front parlor," immediately withdrew.

How could words of such import be uttered so carelessly! Adelaide stood transfixed for a moment, unable to take in their full significance. And then, half gasping for breath, she murmured to herself: "My mother—she said my mother wanted me! Then I have a mother! Ah! why has she not discovered herself before? For good reasons, doubtless—reasons having regard to my own welfare. A mother! Whom can she be like? What are her features—her tones—the color of her hair and eyes?"

Adelaide leaned upon the scroll of the sofa, and pictured to herself the personal appearance of her whom she so longed and yet feared to meet. She imagined a face yet bearing the impress of youthful beauty, where the lines had been worn by grief and penitence rather than by time—eyes tender and earnest in their glances, beamed with mournful but affectionate lustre—the hair was like her own, of a light auburn—the figure, though it had lost the fullness it once possessed, was erect and graceful, and the whole aspect was dignified and humble.

"Ah! she shall find in me a daughter, indeed!" thought Adelaide, touched by the expression of those features, which her own fancy had conjured up.

With a beating heart she entered the parlor. A female was standing before the mirror arranging two bunches of frizzly curls, which were puffed out on either side of her forehead. She turned as the door was opened. "Alas!" thought Adelaide, "and that is my mother!" How different was she from the ideal which had presented itself to Adelaide's mind! She saw a thick−set, coarse−looking woman, upon whose features few traces of youth and innocence could be discovered. Though not absolutely ill−looking, there was nothing of that charm in her countenance which refinement of character and breeding gives to the expression. Her complexion was slightly florid; and the double chin usually set down as a characteristic of landladies was hers in perfection. Her dress was costly and ambitious; and she wore a profusion of jewelry. Adelaide's first feeling was one of repugnance.

"Bless me, child! Is this Adelaide? Come and kiss me, my dear," exclaimed this woman, fixing the clasp of one of the rings in her ear while she spoke. "Dear me, how you have grown!"

Adelaide tremblingly made her way towards her, and bending as much to hide her tears and her disappointment as to comply with her mother's invitation, took her hand and kissed it.

"And are you my mother?" she asked, looking in her face.

"Why, to be sure, child! Do you suppose I would have supported you else ever since you were born? Who but a mother would have been at the pains and expense of educating you as I have done?"

"Most true!" sighed Adelaide. "But why, mother, have you suffered me to remain in ignorance of you so long?"

"I had my reasons, child—you may be sure of that," was the reply. "But come, I have settled accounts with your school−mistress, and I want you now to accompany me to the city."

"To the city, mother—and when?"

"Now—this very hour—it will not take you long to pack up your things—will it, child?"

"But, mother—"

"Well, child?"

"Is it necessary that our departure should be immediate? May I not join you in the city—next week, for instance?"

Adelaide thought of her promise to Fleetwood—of his injunctions upon her to communicate a knowledge of their intentions to no one till the day fixed for their marriage had arrived. And then the guilt of deceiving her mother—of withholding information so important from one entitled to receive it— forced itself powerfully upon her mind.

"Why, child, I thought you would he delighted at the idea of going to the city," said Mrs. Winfield—"and now you ask leave to remain here another week."

"Yes, till next Saturday, mother—and remain you, also."

"And why till next Saturday, child? There is some mystery in this. Explain."

It was a marked trait in Adelaide's character to be frank and unreserved. Perhaps it arose from a natural courage, for it is the cowardly only who fall into the habit of deception. Stratagem and guile are the resorts of the feeble, never of the strong. And therefore it is that the crimes of poisoning and falsehood are more prevalent among women than among their lords. The man, who is bold and strong enough to knock you down with his fists, will not assassinate you in the dark.

Adelaide saw no refuge from deception but in communicating to her mother the real cause of her not wishing to depart till the coming week. This she did with a touching candor not easy to be resisted.

Mrs. Winfield was evidently unprepared for any such disclosure. She was interested and surprised by the recital. After a momentary pause, she replied: "I have no knowledge whatever, my dear, of this young man, to whom you tell me you are engaged. He may be all that he has represented: but it is well to be cautious in these affairs. Why, it was only the other day that a beautiful young girl in the city ran away with a fellow, whom shesupposed to be a great catch, when it turned out that he had a wife and six children all living."

"I will answer with my life for Fleetwood's truth, mother!"

"And what girl wouldn't do as much for her lover?" retorted Mrs. Winfield. "No, my dear. We will not be precipitate. If the young man is worth having—if he is truly attached—he will not let such a prize as you are slip through his fingers, because of the marriage being put off a week, or a month, or even a year."

"But, mother, you will suffer me to be true to my appointment—to remain here till he comes, that I may tell him why we should defer our union— that I may give you an opportunity to acknowledge his worth?"

"Nonsense, my dear; I have made up my mind to take you to the city at once. If the young fellow is worth having, I tell you, he will follow soon enough on your track. Why can't he marry you in the city as well as here?"

"It is not that, my mother—it is, that I would see him according to my solemn promise—that I would assure him personally of my fidelity—and leave him to conciliate you as he may, and as he undoubtedly will. Now do not urge me further, my mother, to disobey his parting injunction."

"And pray, Miss, to whom is your obedience due? To him or to me? Come, now, be a good girl, and go and get ready to return to New York."

"Indeed, madam, I cannot go," replied Adelaide, with firmness. "Yesterday, I might have felt bound to obey you. To−day my obedience is due elsewhere."

"Upon my word, Miss, you are disposed to carry it with a high hand," returned Mrs. Winfield."But remember, you are not yet eighteen, and I can enforce my authority."

"Ah! do not attempt it, my mother," said Adelaide, much agitated, clasping her hands imploringly. "Let not our first interview, after long years of separation, be one that must be painful to both. Tarry here with me till Fleetwood returns. Should I then oppose your wishes, it will be time enough to talk of enforcing your authority. There are so many accidents that may occur, so many occasions for misapprehension in the event of my departure, that indeed you must suffer me to remain."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing," exclaimed Mrs. Winfield, her face reddening. "Have I spent so much money on you ever since you were born, now to be thwarted in a trifling matter like this?"

At this instant the door opened, and Mr. Glenham entered the room. He started, as if surprised, on seeing the occupants, and cast a penetrating glance on the elder of the two, who returned a look of intelligence, and rose as if to speak.

"Excuse me, Miss Winfield—I supposed I had left my gloves upon the piano, but they do not seem to be there," said he, evidently at a loss for some excuse for his intrusion.

"And do you not recognize me, Mr. Glenham?" said Mrs. Winfield, advancing.

"Augusta!" He checked himself, and altered his mode of address upon receiving a significant glance from the

person he so accosted. "Mrs. Winfield, I would say," he added. "And is it possible—can it be that there is any relationship between—"

"Yes; this is my daughter, Mr. Glenham—my daughter, Adelaide."

Glenham was unaffectedly surprised at this communication; and Adelaide was hardly less so atperceiving that Mr. Glenham and her mother were acquainted.

Mrs. Winfield seemed to be lost in thought for a moment. Then, as if an idea had suddenly struck her, she said: "My dear Adelaide, you may leave the room for a few minutes. I will send for you when I am ready to receive you again."

Adelaide did not require a second intimation. She quitted the apartment, and re−entering her own little room, bent her head upon the pillow and fervently prayed that she might not hate her mother. The thought of Fleetwood's disappointment and chagrin on finding that she had left the village, crossed her mind, and she resolved to remain in spite of all opposition. Then came the fear of compulsion, and she was half inclined to fly and hide herself from her mother's reach till Fleetwood should return. The impracticability of this step was, however, but too apparent; and with her arms folded upon her breast she paced the floor in impatient expectation of some message from the woman, who had been so abruptly revealed to her in the light of a parent. Could Adelaide have listened to the conversation, which took place between the parties she had left in the parlor, she would have had additional cause for marvel and anxiety.

"And little Adelaide is your daughter, eh? Who would have imagined it?" exclaimed Glenham, as the maiden left the room in obedience to her mother's request.

"Yes, Glenham; and I wish to ask your advice upon a matter which I fear is going to give me some trouble. You are a lawyer, I believe?"

"To be sure I am, although I never had the honor of receiving a fee. I am quite curious to know the sensation. Can I render you any professional assistance?"

"Be serious, and attend. Do you know the young man to whom Adelaide has engaged herself?"

"Whom do you mean?" exclaimed Glenham, opening his eyes with astonishment.

"Ah! then it has been kept a secret!" said Mrs. Winfield. "I think she said his name was Fleetwood."

"Fleetwood! Oh! I see it all!" muttered Glenham, rising from his seat, and with clenched hands and pallid lips pacing the room. "I see it all! Fool, dupe that I have been. How could I be so blind?"

"And what ails you, my dear fellow?" said the female, shrugging her shoulders.

"They must have been affianced this very day— this very hour," exclaimed Glenham, without noticing the interrogation. "He must have passed you on the road. I caught a glimpse of you in your carriage, and you are indebted to that circumstance for my presence here. I wondered what could bring you to this sequestered spot. I see it all now. But are you positively sure that the engagement has taken place?"

"I have Adelaide's assurance to that effect. Is not that enough?"

"Yes, more than enough. I would not have believed that Fleetwood would have taken such a step after what he knew of the girl!"

"And what was that?"

"But half of the real truth. He knew that her parentage was questionable, but he did not know—"

"I understand—no offence—for I see you mean none. What sort of a person is this Fleetwood?"

"Proud as Lucifer—and there lies the mystery of his conduct. How could he have engaged himself to Adelaide?"

"His pride was mastered by a stronger passion.You say he is proud. I do not like that. He would object, I suppose, to his wife's ever having any intercourse with me—with her mother?"

"You may be sure of that, Augusta. He would never permit you to meet. But then he is rich, and he would not begrudge you money if that could make up for the loss of your child's society."

"Money! I have enough of that. I am afraid I shall not like this man. Adelaide is resolved to marry him. What shall I do?"

"Take her to the city."

"She refuses to go. Her marriage is fixed for next Saturday."

"Indeed! Well, that is characteristic of Fleetwood. He is prompt to act when he has once made up his mind."

"The girl is evidently fixed in her determination to remain here till her lover comes, notwithstanding all my

remonstrances against it. What shall we do to get her to the city?"

"All that will be necessary, I think, will be to persuade her that you have the legal power to enforce your authority over her. I see a way of doing this. You must make it appear that I am in favor of your yielding to her wishes. I will remonstrate earnestly against your taking her to the city. She will be the more disposed to listen to my advice on hearing me countenance her views. But when you drive me to a plain answer to the question, whether you can legally enforce your commands, my reply will be so shaped that she shall think it advisable to yield and accompany you where you wish."

"But should she not even then yield to my command? What shall be my resource?"

"Physical compulsion."

"And will the law allow it?"

"After you have proved first that she is yourdaughter, and then that she is not of an age when she is privileged to be her own mistress."

"That would cause delay."

"Undoubtedly. But I think it will be enough for me to assure her that you have the legal power of compulsion, and for you to threaten its employment unless she will go with you at once. Rather than submit to an indignity, when she finds that resistance is useless, she will consent to accompany you peaceably."

"We will see if you are right."

"But tell me, Augusta, what are your future plans in regard to this girl?"

"If she marries, she shall marry a man who is not ashamed to take her old mother by the hand. If she remains single, I mean to make an actress of her. She has a fine person and a good voice. I think she would succeed on the stage."

"Admirably!" exclaimed Glenham, his features brightening with obvious satisfaction. "The girl has talents and would unquestionably make a hit. On the stage she might attain a more advantageous position than any matrimonial alliance could give her. Besides, if she married Fleetwood, after the effervescence of passion began to subside, he would reflect with dismay and regret upon the step he had taken in uniting himself with your family. He would begin by ill treating you, and end by ill treating his wife."

"Then he shall not have my daughter. I am resolved on that. And now let us see if we can induce Adelaide to return with me quietly to the city."

She rang the bell, and directed the servant to inform Miss Adelaide, that her mother wished to see her in the parlor immediately.

CHAPTER IX.

Good night! ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be good night.
— —Shelley.

The second morning after the party at Mr. Dryman's, Fleetwood sat in the parlor of his hotel, over a cup of coffee and an omelette, scanning the newspapers, which had been brought in withhis breakfast. As he glanced carelessly along the columns for some paragraph of interest, his attention was slightly awakened by one promising to give some account of recent movements in the fashionable world. After listlessly perusing a few lines, he found that it contained a sketch of the party of the night before. He read on, and remarked his name conspicuous among those of others, who were present. The following was the passage in which it occurred:— "The entrance of Mr. Fleetwood of Fleetwood, "was the signal for a general levelling of quizzing "glasses on the part of the ladies. This young "man, by the death of both his parents without "other issue, was left at an early age the inheritor "of a large and princely estate, including the noble "place on the banks of the Hudson, well known by "the family name. He is good−looking, but said to "be eccentric and peculiar in his habits and notions "of life. He was no proof, however, against the "charms of Miss Emily G—, who, in spite of "the frowns and evident anger of Count La Salle, "received her new admirer with unequivocal marks "of favor. Was it merely to encourage another "moth to singe its wings in the candle−flame? One "would think that the young lady had numbered"victims enough. Both in Europe and in this "country, she has received offers without number "from the most eligible men in society. Fleet "wood is certainly a formidable competitor—but "he had better look out."

"Pshaw!" muttered Fleetwood throwing aside the newspaper with disdain, and sipping his coffee, as if to take out the taste of the paragraph. "What license these 'pickers−up of unconsidered trifles' for the public maw, assume with a man's name and character! Should this impertinent tittle−tattle fall under Adelaide's eye, I am sure she will prize it at its worth."

Re−assured by this conviction, Fleetwood attacked the omelette, until there was little left of its fair proportions. He suddenly paused, and set down his knife and fork.

"And next Saturday," soliloquized he, "I shall be a married man! Have I been hasty in taking this step? Have I been inconsiderate? Ah, no —Adelaide is purity itself—and did I need an excuse for our immediate union, surely the circumstance of her present position would be enough. But is it pity, that has any weight in urging me to this consummation? Tell me, my heart—is it pity? No, no! Is not Adelaide my equal—perhaps my superior in every respect, save those of birth and fortune? It is love, and love only, that impels me. Yes, Adelaide, thou art the first and shalt be the last, for whose sake that passion has been awakened in my soul. Nor time nor accident shall dim its ever full and radiant flame."

It is something of a bathos to descend from a rhapsody like this, to bread and butter; but, as a candid chronicler, I must confess that Fleetwood having uttered it, did take up a piece of toast and finish his breakfast like a man with a good appetite.He had hardly done this, when a servant threw open the door, and announced "Mr. Gordon."

"Show him up," said Fleetwood.

The individual who entered was a fine specimen of a well preserved "gentleman about town." His features, though a little sunken about the cheeks, were still handsome. His hair was slightly grizzled about the ears; and a keen pair of gray eyes lent animation to his face. His figure was erect and tall. He was dressed in unexceptionable taste, and there was an air of elegance about him, which gave the assurance that there was no circle of gentlemen, in which he would not have been perfectly at his ease. He entered the room with a free and cordial bearing, and bowing slightly, said:

"Hearing that a son of my old friend, Frederick Fleetwood, was in town, and at this house, I could not miss the opportunity of calling to take him by the hand."

"You are welcome, Sir," returned Fleetwood, advancing to receive his greeting. "I always rejoice to meet any

man who knew my father."

"I was indebted to my daughter," rejoined Mr. Gordon, "for my first knowledge of your presence in the city. You may remember meeting her at the party on Saturday evening."

"The event was one not likely to be soon forgotten," returned Fleetwood. "Will you not be seated?"

"I can stop only a moment now—having a dozen engagements in Wall street. But you will dine with us to−day—will you not? Our hour is five. You will find the number of my house on this card."

Fleetwood could not give a good reason for declining the invitation—and so he accepted it promptly; and Mr. Gordon, after a parting shake of the hand with the 'son of his old friend,' took his leave.

After a day spent over papers and parchmentsat his lawyer's, Fleetwood knocked at the door of Mr. Gordon's sumptuous up−town abode, with its patrician, free−stone front and lofty windows. A servant in livery ushered him into the parlor; and, on looking round, Fleetwood found himself alone. He stood in the room fronting upon the street, and as he glanced in the opposite direction, he was surprised at the apparent extent and magnificence of the communicating apartments. Between the two spacious parlors, which occupied each end of the house, was an oval saloon, the walls of which were covered with fluted silk of a light crimson hue, spangled with stars of considerable size. Passing into this apartment he was again amazed by the seeming distance of the enclosed space before him. Through the second elegantly decorated parlor were seen open windows reaching to the floor, and leading into what appeared a wilderness of exotic trees, shrubs and flowers of the rarest beauty and most exquisite fragrance, among which Canova's Hebe stood over a fountain pouring water into a marble basin, embossed with figures in bas−relief. Struck with admiration, Fleetwood passed on—it seemed so like enchantment to be transported at once from the dust of a crowded street into a bower of such extent and freshness of verdure! As he drew near, he saw that the effect of size and distance was produced by an ingenious arrangement of mirrors; and he could not but accord his admiration anew to the art and skill, which had contrived so agreeable and forcible an illusion. After lingering among the flowers, of which he was passionately fond, for a few moments, he retraced his steps. And now an effect which had excited his suprise on his first entrance, again arrested his attention. The weather without was overcast; but throughout these voluptuous apartments a soft amber glow, slightly suffused with crimson, was shed.It was as if the fierce light of the noonday sun had been softened and subdued by thick saffron curtains; and it produced that genial sensation of content, which the 'blest power of sunshine' always produces upon persons impressible to atmospherical influences. After some examination, Fleetwood discovered that the efflux must come through certain portions of the ornamented ceiling, which were formed of amber−stained glass, and which probably received the light from a sky−window in the roof of the house. He could not but admire both the novelty and success of the contrivance. The exquisite taste of the furniture also claimed his attention—there was such adaptation in every article! So precisely fitted was it by its color and size for the place it occupied! An exquisite sense of the beautiful in art, thought Fleetwood, must surely be possessed by the person who presided over these arrangements! He moved towards the parlor which he had first entered. A harp and piano−stool stood in one corner, and on the floor near them was a glove. He picked it up. It was small, and white as a snow−drift on the top of an iceberg. A faint but delicious fragrance seemed to exhale from the delicate kid. Fleetwood felt as if he were wandering in the gardens of Epicurus. A noiseless turn of the door−handle—and enter Miss Gordon!

She wore a light muslin robe, which floated over another of a faint straw color, so cut and arranged as to show off her figure to the best possible advantage. Her hair, plainly parted and wound in a knot on the top of her head, offered no impediment to the display of its classic contour. Her complexion, always delicate and transparent, seemed luminous like a 'lily in bloom,' in the peculiar light shed through the apartment. Consummate grace was in all her movements.

"Good evening, Mr. Fleetwood," she said, as sheentered the room. "What a pleasant surprise it was to find that your father and mine were friends!"

"The surprise was as agreeable to me as it could be to any one else," replied Fleetwood, bowing.

"But do you not remember ever hearing your father mention the acquaintance?" continued Miss Gordon, as she attempted to join the little clasp, which fastened her glove at the wrist.

"Allow me," said Fleetwood, performing the office for her, during which he could not fail to see that the hand he held was as small and symmetrical as a sculptor could have wished. And then summoning his powers of recollection, Fleetwood endeavored to recall a circumstance, which would enable him to answer her inquiry in the

affirmative. After ruminating for a moment, he replied:—

"I have an indistinct remembrance of hearing him mention the name more than once—but it was in connection with another—what it was, I forget —ah! Challoner."

Emily's countenance fell, but she instantly rallied, and said: "There was good excuse for your forgetting us, since you knew us only by report. I hope that your memory will be more tenacious now."

"I trust I may not have occasion to say, in the words of the song. 'Teach, O, teach me to forget!'" replied Fleetwood.

The entrance of Mr. Gordon with a lady on his arm, here interrupted the conversation. The lady was introduced as Mrs. Gordon, his sister−in−law. She was of the order termed "stylish" in appearance; but the freshness of youth was gone from her features, and she served as an excellent foil to Emily's radiant charms.

Mr. Gordon was a widower; and Emily was the eldest of a family of six children. With admirable discretion, however, the remaining five were banished to the country during the greater part of theyear, until entitled by age to take their places in society.

After a few conversational common−places, during which Mr. Gordon found an opportunity of informing his young guest that to Emily belonged the sole credit of all the interior arrangements of the house, dinner was announced. Mr. Gordon handed down his sister−in−law. Fleetwood gave his arm to Emily and followed them into the dining−room. They sat down to a circular table, and after soup, salmon and green peas, followed all the choicest dishes, which French ingenuity could prepare. Champagne and burgundy sparkled in their glasses; and the excitement of an animated conversation sparkled in their eyes. Mr. Gordon well knew how to keep the shuttlecocks of small talk in motion. He had seen much of the world, and of the best society in it; and his fund of anecdote was as rich as it was exhaustless. He threw down a sterling piece of information, or a solid and interesting fact new to his hearers, with the same nonchalance and air of liberality with which he uttered a light jest or indulged in a polite repartee. Fleetwood could not but confess to himself that he had never passed a couple of hours more agreeably at the dinner table. As the ladies rose to take their departure, Mr. Gordon proposed that Emily should give them a parting song. There was a piano−forte in the room; and she readily complied with the request.

"Farewell! but whenever you welcome the hour" was the song selected—and she imparted to it all that warmth and earnestness of expression, of which it is so peculiarly susceptible. Fleetwood joined with great sincerity in the applause, which Mr. Gordon set the example of by drumming with the handle of his knife upon the table and crying "bravo!" The ladies made their escape to the sound.

"And now, my dear boy, let us try a fresh bottleof this Lafitte. It is as mild and smooth as milk, and far more harmless," said Mr. Gordon, as the servant brought in fresh glasses and a dusty bottle just uncorked.

Fleetwood began to think he had drunk enough, but, before he could reply, his glass was full. The wine was certainly delicious, and destitute of that alcoholic pungency which he disliked. It seemed as if one might drink it like water, and with as much impunity as to its effects. Mr. Gordon's eyes beamed with satisfaction, as he saw the glass of his guest empty a second and a third time.

Cigars were placed on the table. Each took one and lighted it. The Lafitte again flowed.

"What do you mean to do with yourself for the rest of the season, Fleetwood?" asked Mr. Gordon, carelessly brushing off, with his little finger, the fresh ashes of the fragrant Havana.

"That will depend, in a measure, sir, upon the wishes of my wife," replied Fleetwood.

"Eh? Your wife? Is it possible? What! Do you mean to marry?"

"To be sure I do, and at once. Next Saturday finds me a married man."

"The devil it does!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon, bringing down his glass so heavily that the Burgundy spilt upon the table. "And who is the lady?" he added, drawing his breath with difficulty for a moment.

"Her name is Adelaide—Adelaide Winfield!"

Gordon involuntarily struck his clenched fist upon the table, and with so much vehemence that his guest looked up amazed; but Gordon's face, if it had borne any other expression, was in the twinkling of an eye brightened with a smile, so that he met Fleetwood's gaze without blenching. The clenched fist lay upon the table, but there was no sign that it had been thrust down with anyother emotion than that of sympathy and congratulation.

"I was thinking," said Gordon, and he paused a moment to take a few puffs of his cigar—"I was thinking what

a career you might run in society during the next two years if you chose to remain unmarried. Don't marry next week, my dear boy, nor next year. Go to Paris—to Vienna—Munich, London, Florence, Rome—study life a little, and woman in particular—the lady of your love can wait till you return—you will have opportunities that few young men have enjoyed for mingling in the best society of Europe. I can give you letters that will place you at once on velvet in the most desirable circles. What, Fleetwood, it is abominable, that with your wealth and advantages, and at your age, you should dream of sinking into a humdrum husband! Wait a while, man; and marriage will do very well by and by, when you want a new sensation, or when you are prepared to enter on the serious business of life."

"There are circumstances, Mr. Gordon—peculiar ones, I may add—which render my determination unalterable. I marry on Saturday; and, notwithstanding your arguments, I shall consider myself the most fortunate of men when Adelaide Winfield is my wife."

"Winfield—Winfield—pray to what family of Winfields does she belong?" asked Gordon, fixing upon his guest a careless but penetrating glance.

"Hang her family! What do I care for that? I marry her, and not her family," replied Fleetwood.

"Probably one of the Winfields of Baltimore," said Mr. Gordon, musingly. "An excellent family—unexceptionable in every respect!"

So habitual was Fleetwood's reverence for truth, that he could not even bear to see a false impressionformed by another, which he had it in his power to remove. This trait in his character was brought out in still bolder relief by the slight effect of the wine upon his naturally frank and communicative temper. He accordingly replied:

"To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Gordon, the girl is illegitimate. At any rate, she has been brought up in ignorance of her parents, and has not a single friend, except myself, of any influence or position in society."

"And you would marry such a girl?"

"Why, my dear sir, do you not see that under those circumstances there is all the more reason why I should make her my wife?"

"I must confess, that never occurred to me," replied Mr. Gordon, drily, and looking intently at his guest, as if to get more light in regard to his true character before proceeding further.

"She is a noble creature, sir," said Fleetwood, warming in her praise. "Rank and fortune might have given her more attractions than ought justly to fall to the lot of one woman—but they could not have increased her charms in my eyes."

"Is she beautiful?"

"How can you ask that question of a lover? She is beautiful as—O, I cannot describe her—but do you know I have several times traced a kind of resemblance—a sort of floating, fleeting, indefinable resemblance, between her and your daughter?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon, biting his lips to prevent their quivering from being remarked. And then rising from his seat, he continued: "Let us join the ladies in the saloon—your unemptied glass is a hint that you will drink no more."

"Such Burgundy would make Father Matthew himself violate his cold water pledges," repliedFleetwood. "But I have reached my ultimatum, and second your motion to adjourn."

They found Emily and her aunt in the conservatory. At a gesture from her father, unseen by Fleetwood, the former left their young guest with the elder lady for a few moments, during which Emily was carrying on an earnest conversation, in a low tone of voice, with her father. When she rejoined Fleetwood, she made an evident effort to entertain him, but there was a constraint in her manner, a pensiveness in her voice, which he had never before observed. The conservatory was lighted up by colored lamps; and although the space it occupied was but small, there were labyrinthine walks through it so ingeniously contrived, that it was difficult for a person introduced for the first time to arrive at any just conclusion as to its extent. Mrs. Gordon and her brother−in−law had disappeared. Fleetwood remained to examine the plants with Emily. Linked arm in arm they strolled through the marble walks. Rich odors floated about them from the commingled flowers, some in bloom and some just bursting from the bud. The plashing of the fountain that imparted freshness to the air, was the sole noise that disturbed the prevailing silence. Fleetwood tried several times in vain to engage his fair companion in conversation. The most suggestive topics failed to draw forth more than a monosyllabic reply. She was evidently sad and preoccupied. At length, after full two minutes of silence, during which they continued to pace the flowery

labyrinth, Emily stopped suddenly, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes, burst into violent weeping.

"I fear that something disturbs you, Miss Gordon," said Fleetwood, tenderly.

She put down her handkerchief, and looked himin the face. Her cheeks were wet with tears, and her eyes shone with unwonted lustre.

"Fly at once from this house, if you would preserve your happiness—your honor," she said, in a deep but low and earnest whisper. "Go at once to her whom your heart has chosen—marry without delay—believe nothing against her that you hear, nothing that you see—fly, and secure the happiness of both before it is too late."

Fleetwood was astounded at language like this from one whom he had hitherto regarded as a pattern of discretion and good sense. He could put but one construction upon her conduct; and although that construction was one favorable to himself, he was perhaps justified in adopting it, without subjecting himself to the imputation of vanity or self−conceit. Emily had evidently just heard of his intended marriage. She had formed hopes herself, notwithstanding their slight acquaintance, which were thus dashed to the ground. The disappointment working upon a romantic temperament had produced the ebullition of feeling she had just displayed. Such were the interpretations of her language, which now flashed across Fleetwood's mind.

"Compose yourself, my dear Miss Gordon," he said, hardly knowing whether to reply in a tone of badinage or seriousness. "I grant there is danger in your society, but"—

"Ah! do not, as you value your happiness, think lightly of my warnings," interrupted Emily; "must I be more plain? Yes, I may not again be in the mood to tell you all—there may be inducements to silence, which I cannot, dare not resist. You think I am in love with you—you never were more mistaken in your life."

Fleetwood coughed slightly, blushed, and felt like a fool. He could not deny the accusation.

Emily continued: "But do as I have bid you —fly and consummate your marriage with her you have chosen. You still look incredulous and amazed. Know then that—"

At this moment, the sound of Mr. Gordon's voice was heard so near that both the interlocutors were startled.

"Emily, my dear," said he, appearing from behind a japonica tree of magnificent proportions, "your aunt and I, are desirous of hearing you try the new song to the accompaniment of your harp. I am sure Mr. Fleetwood will not object."

Fleetwood drew back to make way for Mr. Gordon's approach. The latter took his daughter's hand. At the same time a suppressed cry of pain escaped from her lips. It was so slight, however, that Fleetwood hardly regarded it at the moment.

Emily turned one last, beseeching glance upon him, and then, with a constrained smile, permitted her father to lead her to the harp. Bending over the instrument, she paused for some moments with her hands upon the strings, while a deep silence pervaded the room. Fleetwood was too much lost in wonder to speak, and Mr. Gordon seemed to be struck dumb by some deep emotion, which, with all his command of his muscles, he hardly succeeded in disguising. At length, he exclaimed: "Come, my dear, why don't you play?"

Starting from an evident fit of abstraction, and running her hands over the strings, Emily commenced a strain, full of such appealing melancholy, that her father exclaimed petulantly: "We didn't ask for a funeral hymn, my dear—give us something animated and gay."

She obeyed; and how sportively the notes seemed to leap out from beneath her fingers! A new creation of emotions was called into existence, as if by a spell in the mind of the listener. As sheceased, Fleetwood rose, and approaching her side, earnestly expressed his gratitude for what he had heard. He saw that she had been severely tasked by the effort; and, with a repetition of thanks for the rich strains, bade her good evening.

"Will you go so soon, Frederick?" said Mr Gordon.

"Indeed you must excuse me," replied Fleet wood. "Good night, Mr. Gordon! Ladies, good night!"

Mr. Gordon accompanied him to the street door. The rain was falling in torrents. "You must stay with us to−night," said Mr. Gordon. "A servant can go to your hotel for such clothes as you may wish in the morning."

"I will accept your invitation," replied Fleetwood. "I do not fancy a shower−bath except when my skin is divested of broadcloth."

"It threatens to be quite a furious storm," said Mr. Gordon, closing the door. "You are wise in remaining."

CHAPTER X.

I have't;—it is engendered:—Hell and night Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

— Shakspeare

Adelaide entered the room, where Glenham and Mrs. Winfield were awaiting her return—she entered with a firm step and a countenance, to which the grave and fixed determination she had taken added new dignity.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Winfield, "this gentleman has been trying to persuade me to yield to your wishes. At the same time as a lawyer he cannot but allow, that I have the right to compel you to accompany me."

"Let me entreat you, Mrs. Winfield," interrupted Glenham, "not to dream for a moment of such an alternative as compulsion. Your daughter has strong and excellent motives—motives, which you cannot but respect—for persisting in her resolution. Why not remain with her here till the return of Mr. Fleetwood?—and then I am sure that every thing will be amicably arranged."

"I told you, Sir," replied Mrs. Winfield, "that I wished to consult you as a lawyer—and you already go over to the other side. Pray tell me definitely whether I can legally enforce my claims upon this young lady's obedience?"

"We can do many things legally, which we could not do justly and humanely," replied Glenham.

"You evade my question, Sir. Can I, if disposed to call in the aid of the law force Adelaide toquit this place immediately for my home in New York? I beg that you will answer me briefly, yes or no."

"It is quite unnecessary," said Adelaide, as she stood with folded arms in the centre of the room, regarding Mrs. Winfield and Glenham—"it is quite unnecessary for the gentleman to answer. My mind is made up. I shall not in any event quit this place. Not even the threat of violence can shake my resolution. But why need we embitter the moments of our first interview, my mother, by this altercation? Listen to reason, I pray you. I will write Fleetwood this very afternoon, begging him to return here at once, or to consent to await my arrival in New York. This is Saturday. He will receive my letter to−morrow morning, and by Monday I shall have his reply. You can surely tarry here till then."

"I shall do no such thing, you obstinate, ungrateful"—

Glenham cut short Mrs. Winfield's angry exclamations by drawing her aside towards one of the glazed recesses of the apartment, and accosting her in a whisper. His communication had the effect of appeasing her indignation at once; for the choleric flush that had overspread her face disappeared, and she said aloud: "Well, Sir, you have prevailed—Adelaide shall do as she proposes, and I will wait here till Monday, although much against my will."

Adelaide was touched by her tone of compliance, however tardy, and taking her hand she pressed it to her lips, and said: "I fear you think me head−strong, self−willed and undutiful—but O, try me on any point but this, and see if I do not answer your expectations."

"There, there, you are a dear child," said Mrs. Winfield, hurriedly; "now go and write your letter, and see that it is sent forthwith."

"It is too late to send it by the Bridgeport route," said Glenham, looking at his watch. "You must let me leave it at Norwalk. It will be in the way of my afternoon's ride."

"You are very kind," replied Adelaide. "I will place the letter in your hands in five minutes;" and she glided out of the apartment.

The infernal scheme, which had entered Glenham's brain, will readily be conjectured; but Adelaide knew too little of this world's wickedness to distrust for a moment the sincerity of his proposition. Opening the little portfeuille, where for years her stock of note paper had lain untouched, she sat down to write. She described, in a few concise sentences, the position in which she was placed, and called upon Fleetwood for counsel and direction, promising to abide by his wishes at all hazards. She alluded in no unfilial terms to her mother; but expressed a conviction that all would be well. She closed by saying that she should expect a reply by the following Monday. The letter was in Glenham's hands within the time she had promised.

No man, who is not accustomed from high and stable principles to repel the first promptings of evil in his heart, can tell into what depth of guilt he may be hurried by circumstances. Glenham was selfish and sensual in his impulses; and the low, appealing voice of conscience was rarely heard amid the din of passions, which he was

not apt to question and chastise. Notwithstanding he had declared that he would not marry Adelaide, knowing as he then did her questionable position in society, still he felt as if Fleetwood had done him a personal wrong in engaging himself to her so suddenly and unexpectedly. He even persuadedhimself that Adelaide had been guilty of duplicity, inasmuch as she had hitherto studiously avoided extending any encouragement to Fleetwood, to whom she now considered that a higher allegiance was due than that which she owed even to a mother.

Glenham hurried home, and entering his apartment locked the door, and drew forth the letter, which Adelaide had so guilelessly entrusted to his care. With an eager hand he broke the seal, and perused the contents.

"His ever affectionately and devotedly!" muttered Glenham, quoting the last line of the note. "That shall never be if I can help it: His—his— must everything be his? He has wealth, accomplishments, personal attractions, perfect freedom and independence, and now he would fill the measure of his felicity by this union! It is his money that has won the girl's heart. I am sure she would otherwise prefer me—has she not all along shown her preference? Fleetwood—d—n him—with what contemptuous anger he regarded me when I spoke of extending to the girl a protection that was not the protection of a husband! D—n him—he thinks there shall be no more cakes and ale in the world because he is virtuous. Hold awhile—and I may show him yet that the girl, to whom he has condescended to offer marriage, is not too good for an humbler and less reputable companion to me. And she—she shall be punished for presuming to refuse my hand. True, I regarded the offer at the time as one which might be kept or broken, according as it might turn out, as she might be rich or poor—of a high or low family—but she had no reason to doubt my sincerity—and the jade refused me with all the condescension of a princess, phrasing her sentence of rejection in the daintiest language. She refused me. But I amwasting time in denunciation, when I should be plotting action."

The habitually placid expression of his face distorted by malignant passions, Glenham paced the floor with his mind bent upon contriving the means for thwarting the plans of the lovers.

"The mother is on my side," soliloquised he; "but then Adelaide is evidently resolved to place her duty to her selected husband far above that to her newly−found parent. Compulsion cannot be employed. It will but destroy the little influence which her mother may have over her. Stratagem is our proper weapon. Cunning can lead her unresistingly into the net, to which force could never drag her. Let me see. The mother—ah, the mother! What will Fleetwood say when he finds what a nice family he is going to marry into? And yet such is his independence—moral and pecuniary—that I am convinced the objection will not weigh with him, so he is but sure that Adelaide is pure and uncontaminated. It is that confidence which must be undermined, broken down beyond the possibility of question. And how shall that be done? But this is a matter for after consideration. How shall we get Adelaide into the city? There lies our present difficulty. Once in her mother's house, she can be easily managed. But she must go there of her own accord, cheerfully and unsuspectingly. How can she be induced to do that? Pshaw! Could anything be more simple?"

Glenham looked among his papers for a letter in Fleetwood's hand−writing. He at length found one, which related to the purchase of some fishing−tackle; he carefully examined the chirography, and then drawing forth a blank sheet of paper, set himself to the task of carrying out the project, which had dimly dawned upon his mind the momentAdelaide offered to write Fleetwood, and to be guided by his reply.

The following Monday, at the hour expected, Adelaide received from the hands of the carrier, who usually attended the village post−office daily for Miss Holyoke and her scholars, a letter, which she eagerly and joyfully opened. It was as follows:

"My dear Adelaide:—

"You were decidedly right in resisting your mother's importunities to leave Soundside until you had heard from me. I shall not forget such a proof of your attachment and fidelity. My business here is of that importance that I cannot possibly quit the city till Friday afternoon. Otherwise I would most gladly fly to you at once. Under these circumstances, and since your mother is so exceedingly anxious to have you accompany her, I do not see but that we had better yield to her wishes. Our marriage can as well take place here as at Soundside; and I see no good reason why it should be deferred beyond the period we originally fixed. Present my respects to your mother, and tell her that for her daughter's sake she shall be dear. Should you see Glenham, remember me to him kindly. I owe him much. Poor fellow! he has cause to envy me your affection; but I know that he is incapable of any such passion. Apply to him unreservedly, should you have occasion for friendly and discreet advice. Let me know you mother's address, that I may call as soon as you reach the city. I am compelled to write in haste, as I only received

your letter a few minutes since, and mine will miss the mail if I delay even to tell you with how much sincerity and love,

"I am ever yours, dear Adelaide, "Frederick Fleetwood."

This letter was ingeniously contrived to give satisfaction. No such idea as distrust of its genuineness could possibly suggest itself to Adelaide's mind. It was plain, affectionate, and to the point; and the closing excuse for brevity was all−sufficient. Adelaide handed it to her mother, and said, in a cheerful tone "There, mother, read it—I am ready to accompany you to the city at any moment you please."

"Then hasten, and prepare for your departure at once," said Mrs. Winfield, taking the letter, and casting upon it a far less attentive glance than Adelaide had expected.

With a suppressed sigh, Adelaide quitted the room. Entering her own little apartment with a servant, she speedily packed up her wardrobe and library. The trunks were strapped, and carried into the entry. Adelaide stood alone in the midst of the little territory, which she had presided over for so many years, and which she was now about to resign probably for ever. Uncertainty as to her fate, and the solicitude of preparation, had hitherto procrastinated the thought of leave−taking. And now the reality had come with an abruptness that was almost heart−crushing. She looked from the window, and the old elm before it, which had been to her so like a friend since childhood, seemed to stretch out its arms imploringly to detain her. The rustle of its leaves sounded like the language of entreaty. The knots and bossy rings upon its trunk appeared to her like so many eyes, instinct with an almost human expression of tenderness. And then the little room—the scene of her studies, her tears, her resolves, her prayers, her blameless joys, her premature griefs! Mournful but dear recollections! Even the dimity curtain that flapped against the window−pane seemed to protest petulantly against her departure. The familiar outlineof the surrounding landscape never appeared so picturesque and lovely as at this moment. The smooth waters of the Sound gleamed like a road of silver in the distance, while the hills lifted their piles of verdure high in the sunshine, as if proud of their affluent drapery.

Cossack, the venerable dog, whose life she had once saved, was sleeping on the front door−step in happy unconsciousness of the bereavement which awaited him. Taking one of the few remaining gold pieces from her purse, Adelaide called an old servant of the family, named Norah, and placed it in her hands, requesting that she would take good care of the animal.

"That I will, for your own sweet sake, and not for the money," replied Norah, whimpering at the thought of losing her young mistress.

"Well, Norah, take the gold−piece then for a keepsake—may it bring you good luck."

"Bad luck to me when I part with it, Miss," said Norah, receiving the gift.

But Adelaide had other friends to take leave of, and fearing that her mother would grow impatient, she hastened to discharge her obligations. Miss Holyoke was engaged in the school−room with her pupils. Adelaide entered, and with a grace peculiarly her own took leave of her companions. There were some who, in spite of the injurious whispers which had been circulated in regard to her, could not but be won by the gentleness and goodness which she had ever displayed towards them. These followed her to the door, and shed tears at the thought of her departure. Miss Holyoke unbent so far as to kiss the cheek of her pupil, and shake her hand at parting. The intercourse between her and Adelaide had generally been friendly, if not affectionate; but still there wereconsiderations of policy, which modified the regret of the instructress at her pupil's departure.

Adelaide found the carriage at the door, and Mrs. Winfield seated in it awaiting her arrival. As she was about ascending the steps, old Cossack came limping round the corner, barking as if aware that her departure was to be a prolonged one. Adelaide stooped and patted him on the headgwhile old Norah came forth and threw a lasso about his neck to keep him from following the vehicle.

Entering the carriage, Adelaide took the seat opposite to her mother, and leaning back in one corner, put her handkerchief to her eyes to hide her tears.

The carriage rolled on in the direction of the steamboat that was to convey the party to New York.

CHAPTER XI.

How shall I woo her? I will gaze
In sad and silent trance
On those blue eyes whose witching rays
Speak love in every glance:
And I will tell her, eyes more bright,
Though bright her own may beam,
Will shed their witching spell to−night
Upon me, in my dream.
— Anon

When Fleetwood re−entered the parlor at Mr. Gordon's, he found that during his brief absence the ladies had disappeared.

"Amuse yourself with a book, Frederick, while I recall the fugitives," said Mr. Gordon, quitting the room.

But Fleetwood found that the company of his own perplexed meditations was quite sufficient. Let us leave him to them, while we follow Mr. Gordon in quest of his daughter.

He abruptly entered her sleeping−room, and standing with his back leaning against the closed door, and his arms folded, he regarded Emily for some moments in silence. She was sitting in a large, old−fashioned easy−chair, with her clasped hands resting carelessly in her lap, and her eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the floor. On seeing her father, she started from her posture, and rising, turned on him a half apprehensive and guilty glance.

"Have you not dutifully obeyed my injunctions?" he said, in a bitter and measured voice, lingering upon every word as if to wring from it all the severity of which it was capable. "What, girl! would you have betrayed me—thwarted me— foiled me—your own father?"

"No, sir; indeed I intended to say nothing that should throw a suspicion—that should raise a doubt as to your—"

"Have a care, girl! Luckily your inuendoes were misinterpreted. I heard them all, and watched their effect—the self−satisfied youth construed them as the wild and broken manifestations of a sentimental fancy for himself—he supposed you were in love with him—but it was not through any fault of yours that his eyes were not opened, and my plans defeated."

"O, my father," exclaimed Emily, wringing her hands imploringly, "abandon this unholy scheme! If adversity threatens us, let it come! Do not try to avert it by unrighteous means, by injustice, by deception. While we have free souls, what though—"

"Have done with this tiresome canting. What is it that I demand of you? That you so exercise the fascinations you possess that this young Croesus, who is now below, shall make you his wife."

"Is Mr. Fleetwood then still below?" asked Emily, in a despairing tone. "I thought he had quitted the house."

"He returned to escape the storm—he remains here to−night—and—mark you—I expect you to go down, and make yourself more agreeable than you have seen fit to do as yet."

"My father, did you not tell me that he was engaged—that he was under a promise to marry this very week?"

"And what if he is? How very scrupulous you have grown all at once! Why, girl, I have seen you so play the Syren before now as to make men faithless to their wedded wives—as to make lovers forsake their affianced mistresses, whom they fancied they adored till they saw you. Have you forgotten the bloody duel—the suicide—which are among the trophies of your heartless coquetry?"

"My father, this is cruel—it is—

"It is true—and you know it."

"Ah, then let me not add to the catalogue of my offences. Let me not break the heart of an innocent girl by driving the lover, to whom she has confided all her hopes, to perfidy!"

"Bah! Why will you talk so, when you know I despise cant? Girl's hearts are not so easily broken—as you are well aware. Listen to me. There are two all controlling reasons why this match should be prevented. One is, that Fleetwood must marry you and no one else—and the other is, that of all women in the world he must not marry

Adela—the girl to whom he is engaged."

"And why should she be proscribed more than others?"

"For reasons, on which your prosperity and mine and that of all my family may depend."

"Indeed! I thought she was a nameless, obscure girl—how can we be affected by her marriage?"

"It is no time for explanation now. Let me be obeyed, unless you would see me ruined."

Ah! do not urge me to this step. Do not drive me to that, at which my conscience, my heart revolts!"

"Your heart! How long is it, Miss, since you had such a toy? But I know the cause of your refractoriness. You would wed that beggarly Count, La Salle—you would wed him—and not for love—but for his title."

Emily hung her head as if a part at least of the accusation were true.

"Look you, daughter," continued Mr. Gordon, detecting at once the effect of his remark; "were you a fool—a green girl—it might be cruel in me to urge you as I do upon this point. But you area woman of the world—from a child you have been a sort of pet in the lap of society—you have been bred to luxury, and must ever feel the need of it—you have loved and been loved—you are at an age when the reasoning faculties should be predominant. Do I ask you to make a repulsive match? On the contrary, would not nine hundred and ninety−nine women out of a thousand, ay, and men too, say that Fleetwood was infinitely the Count's superior in intellectual and personal advantages, as well as in those which the world prizes so highly? You shake your head. Damnation, girl, do you pretend to compare the two? Why, La Salle is unworthy to lick the dust from the other's shoes. Ah! but I forgot—the Count has in one thing the advantage—Fleetwood doesn't play on the fiddle—the one has the manners and attainments of a gentleman—the other those of a dancing−master."

"Why will you compel me to injure a being who has never done me harm?" asked Emily.

"Her very existence does you harm—does all of us harm," exclaimed Mr. Gordon, with violence. "Look you, girl, am I a man to be subjected to the indignities, the humiliations, the crushing, heart−wearing annoyances of want, after having been accustomed from my very birth to affluence and the ready gratification of all my tastes? Should I, think you, receive with patience the sneering condolence of men who have for years looked up to me with envy? Should I listen with equanimity to their heartless commentaries upon my ruin? Or, do you imagine, that should the time come, as come it will if you thwart me in my plans, when my grocer will refuse to trust me for a barrel of flour until my last quarter's bill is paid—do you imagine, that under such a mortification, I would consent to live?"

"Ah, my father, surely, surely there is no danger of any such event. We can reduce our establishment many thousands a−year, and still live comfortably, respectably."

"Reduce our establishment! Why, girl, I have lived for the last twelve months solely on the credit of my splendid establishment. Take it away, and absolute ruin would stare me in the face. A whole legion of creditors would beleaguer me. Listen. The stupendous expenses which I have been at for the last ten years, have not been indulged in without seriously impairing my fortune. On my last return from Europe, I found that I had been in the habit of spending more than double the amount of my income. Instead of husbanding my resources, selling off all my costly superfluities, and moving into the country for a while, until I had made up my losses, I foolishly launched into speculation in the hope of retrieving in a few days the extravagances of spendthrift years. I have been unsuccessful in all my movements in Wall−street. A few misdirected operations on a large scale in stocks have been sufficient to rob me of a fortune. Everything that is supposed to be my own is mortgaged for its full value. My means of raising money are exhausted. The little sum in cash which is left to my credit in the bank is ebbing daily. What am I to do when it is quite gone? Bred as a gentleman, with no profession, no pursuit, to what can I turn my hand, whereby to wring from the hard world a pittance for the support of myself and family? I look around, and see but one means of escape from degradation and ruin. It is in your marriage with Fleetwood. I made you cultivate that odious Mrs. Dryman with the view of meeting him. You have succeeded; and circumstances have favored us far more than we could have hoped. I know the exact extent of Fleetwood'specuniary resources. They are immense. He is a gentleman by birth and character, and any girl might be proud of him as a husband. She, to whom he has rashly engaged himself, is—a disreputable person. There are ways of proving this to his satisfaction—and it will be done. How then can you have any compunction, on her account, about securing Fleetwood for yourself?"

"Do you mean to say," asked Emily, "that in any event, and independently of aught that I may do, you shall break off this match of Fleetwood's?"

"Unquestionably. We have but to let him see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears, and there is no fear but that he will repudiate the girl, and with good and sufficient cause."

Emily was deeply concerned at the revelations her father had made. She had no reason to doubt them, for he had never deceived her. Accustomed to plenty, and never knowing what it was to have a demand for money refused, she recoiled with dismay from the prospect of actual poverty. And then there were duties which she owed to others. Her father's family was large and expensive. The mother had died about two years before, leaving six children, of whom Emily was the eldest. The remaining five were considerably younger; and, from motives of economy, Mr. Gordon had placed them all at boarding−schools. What would become of them in the event of such ruin and disaster as threatened them, unless she came to the rescue? Visions of orphan asylums, of milliner's apprentices, and boys sent out to cruel task−masters to learn a trade, flitted across her imagination, until, after pacing the floor a few moments in an excited state of mind, she placed her hand in her father's, and exclaimed: "I'll do it!"

"That's a brave girl—that's my own daughter," said Mr. Gordon, rapturously. "Forgive me, Emily, if I have been harsh—and forget the cutting things I may have said."

"You had reason in saying them, my father. Had I dreamed that your necessities were of so serious a nature, you would not have found me so obstinate. I had scruples, it is true, but what you say of the impossibility of Fleetwood's marrying when he knows the truth in regard to her to whom he is affianced, has set my mind at ease. But do you not exaggerate the power of my charms to captivate this young man?"

"Not at all. If you do but set about it with a will, you can easily accomplish your object. But you must forget all about the Count, my dear."

"That I will try to do, my father—although, I must say, that I think you were a little too hard upon him."

"Perhaps so—but you will confess that Fleetwood is certainly the more eligible match of the two?"

"Yes," said Emily, with a sigh—"the more eligible."

Mr. Gordon was right in calling his daughter a woman of the world. But she occasionally indulged in day−dreams of what she might be could the better part of her nature once gain the ascendant and keep it. They had faded now.

"But we are wasting time," said Mr. Gordon. "We must not leave Fleetwood any longer alone."

Emily cast a hasty glance at the mirror on her toilet−table—re−arranged a stray curl—and, with the glow of an anticipated conquest mantling her cheeks, passed out of the room in advance of her father. She descended the stairs slowly and thoughtfully, as if to collect her thoughts in reference to the kind of tactics which she ought to adopt towards Fleetwood. He was already under a misapprehension in regard to the state of her affections. Should she encourage it, and win his pity under the pretence of a misplaced passion, or should she, by an apparent invincibleness and a cold indifference to his fascinations, pique his vanity and awaken the appetite of pursuit? She was still undetermined as to the course which it would be most expedient for her to choose, when she entered the parlor.

Fleetwood was pacing the saloon. His thoughts were of Adelaide: he was trying to fix before his mind's eye a perfect representation of her features. But the expression varied like the shifting lights upon a tree, whose leaves are blown by the wind. Emily was near enough to touch him before he was aware of her presence.

"Your thoughts must be pleasant ones," said she, while he started on regarding her—"I trust I have not put them to flight."

"Had they been sad ones, most assuredly you would have done so," replied Fleetwood.

"Ah, would that I might believe I had even that power over you!" sighed Emily.

"Will you take a seat, or will you walk?"

"I will walk."

What could Fleetwood do but offer his arm?

"And is she very beautiful—she to whom— who—" and Emily turned away her head as if to hide her agitation. Then appearing to rally her spirits, she exclaimed: "Of course, she is beautiful —and she loves you devotedly—passionately?"

Fleetwood felt her arm tremble in his. What reason had he to doubt the reality of her apparent emotions—to doubt that he had suddenly become to her an object of the tenderest attachment?

But did he waver for an instant in his loyalty towards Adelaide? Not for an instant. And yet a dangerous pity

for Emily, who under such circumstanceshad conceived for him so utterly hopeless a passion, began to pull at his heart−strings.

The storm, which had been increasing in severity, was now accompanied by tremendous peals of thunder. Emily had inherited a nervous susceptibility to the sound. It never failed to awaken a sort of frantic alarm, under the influence of which she entirely lost her self−control. And now, at the first peal, she clung with unaffected terror to Fleetwood's arm. She had composure enough, however, to say:

"I am not myself when it thunders—pray, call my father quickly—quickly!"

Fleetwood led her to a sofa, and went to pull the bell. A minute elapsed, and no one came. He was moving towards the entry to call Mr. Gordon when another thunder−crash more violent than the one which had preceded it, seemed to shake the whole house.

"Do not leave me—do not leave me!" shrieked Emily, darting towards him, and almost fainting in his arms.

He lifted her to bear her towards the sofa. Her breast heaved against his own.

"There is no affectation here," thought he, as he felt the quick and violent throbbing of her heart, and saw the color forsake her cheeks.

He sat by her side—he held her hand—her head rested upon his shoulder—and his left arm circled her waist. Her curls brushed his cheek.

The door was opened—opened noiselessly—and when, after a brief interval of silence, Fleetwood looked up, he saw Count La Salle standing before them.

With folded arms, his eyes flaming with jealousy, and his lips quivering, La Salle stood and regarded them. Fleetwood did not attempt to move Emily from her position. At length her eyes opened, andthe first object they rested upon was La Salle. She rose instantly to her feet, and assumed a look of proud and dignified composure.

"I see I have entered inopportunely," said the Count. "I am de trop—I wish you joy, Mademoiselle, of your new conquest. What pretty things hearts are to play with! Won't you have another?"

"Had I ever given you any right, sir, to use this language," returned Emily, "it would still be insolent; but having none, you are doubly unmannerly."

"O, I did not expect to take you off your guard," said the Count—"not at all! A woman, who has made up her mind to play the game, of which you seem to be fond, must of course have tact and self−possession. But why not give a hint to your footman not to admit visitors on such occasions as the present? These contretemps must be provoking to so consummate a diplomatist as yourself in affairs of the heart. But I beg pardon. I am detaining you from more agreeable pastimes."

Emily bowed, and replied: "I shall be pleased to see you prove that you are truly aware of that fact."

"It is a loving and a fair reply, Mademoiselle, and one which I had reason to expect from the character of our past intercourse."

"There has been nothing in that, sir, which you are not at liberty to proclaim to the whole world."

"You have said it, Mademoiselle: and you are impatient at my stay. I humbly take my leave."

"You can take nothing, with which I would more willingly part," retorted Emily, borrowing a line from Hamlet.

"I thank you for your amiable attempts to exasperate me, Mademoiselle," replied the Count, his accents tremulous with rage. "But I shall compensatemyself for this treatment by deeds—not by words. As for you, sir," continued he, turning to Fleetwood, "you have been a party to it—an innocent one, perhaps, and yet a responsible one."

"You may put what construction you please, sir, upon anything I have done or may do," replied Fleetwood, coldly.

"I thank you, sir, for the privilege," returned La Salle. "As the man says in the play, the time may come when I can cry quittance! Till then, sir, farewell! And farewell to you, Mademoiselle."

La Salle strode out of the room without any farther exhibition of his jealousy and spleen.

There was a cessation in the storm without.

"His conduct is inexplicable," said Emily. "I assure you I have avoided that man and his attentions as much as possible."

"Not knowing the relations that might exist between you, I could not venture to say much," said Fleetwood.

"There are no relations save those of ordinary acquaintanceship," replied Miss Gordon.

"Since we are no longer likely to be interrupted by the thunder, perhaps you will let me hear the sound of your harp−strings again?" said Fleetwood, taking her hand and leading her towards the instrument.

"What shall be the theme?" inquired she. "Pardon me—I forgot—there is but one theme suitable to your frame of mind." And she heaved a deep sigh.

"Nay, Miss Gordon, my sympathies are not so very exclusive as you seem to suppose. Sing to suit yourself."

After a long and melancholy but exquisitely melodiously prelude, Emily sang those lines of Viola's, "She never told her love," so exquisitely wedded to music by one of the masters of the Englishschool. Nothing could be more touching and earnest than the expression she gave to the passage. It seemed the out−gushing of a breaking heart. Fleetwood was sensitively alive to the influence of sweet sounds; and his ears drank in the last vibrations of her voice and harp with eager attention—with subdued feelings of commiseration —almost tenderness. Emily, after she had finished the strain, buried her face a moment in her hands; and then, looking up, with an apparent effort to be gay, she said: "I will sing you something less grave—less—in earnest." The last two words she uttered in a whisper, as if to herself, but they were not unheard by Fleetwood. Dashing her hand over the strings, she carolled in a clear, triumphant tone Ariel's enchanting strain, "Where the bee sucks, there lurk I."

Fleetwood was charmed—any lover of music would have been—by her singing.

"Good night, Mr. Fleetwood," she said, rising suddenly at the conclusion of the melody. "It is growing late—the servant will wait upon you to your apartment—or, if my father has not retired, I will send him to you. Good night!"

Her utterance was slightly choked, as she hurriedly said these words.

"Good night, Miss Emily; and may your dreams be as pleasant as Ariel's own."

Emily was moving towards the door. She turned as if to reply to Fleetwood's kind wish, and then as if she dared not trust her voice, she abruptly quitted the room. Shortly afterwards Mr. Gordon entered, and conducted his young guest to the apartment he was to occupy for the night.

The style in which this sleeping−room was fitted up, accorded with the magnificence of the rest of the house. The walls were hung with crimson silk. The carpet was one of the softest and thickestever woven by a Turkish loom. The bed was small, low and simply constructed, but gilt so as to resemble massive gold. Two immense mirrors, reaching from the ceiling to the floor, and imbedded in the wall, occupied the principal part of the space on either side of the richly carved marble fire−piece.

Fleetwood held a candle in his hand, and as he advanced towards one of these mirrors, he started and trembled at the reflection of an image, the lineaments of which were stamped indelibly upon his memory. Was it a false creation "proceeding from the heat−oppressed brain?" For a moment he stood spell−bound. He then turned his head slowly to see whence the reflection came. It was from a painting on the wall—a painting of a young and beautiful female—how like it was to Adelaide!

"Whose portrait is that?" he earnestly asked.

Mr. Gordon hesitated, and bit his lip with suppressed vexation. But Fleetwood's eyes were fixed upon the painting, and he did not notice his host's confusion.

"That is a fancy−piece," said Mr. Gordon, quickly recovering his self−possession. "The artist was painting Emily, but failing in the likeness, he converted it into what you see."

"Strange!" murmured Fleetwood—"it is so like Adelaide Winfield, that I should suppose she had sat for it."

"Ah, a lover's eyes sometimes detects resemblances which no one else can discover," said Mr. Gordon, assuming an indifferent tone. "May you be haunted, Frederick, by no visions less fair! Good night!"

"Good night, sir! This room looks like the very sanctuary of sleep—tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep! One can hardly tread thecarpet without a sensation of drowsiness. Good night!"

Once more Fleetwood was alone. He stood for some minutes with the candle uplifted over his head, gazing at the portrait, which had excited his surprise and curiosity.

"A singular coincidence!" murmured he, at length placing the candle upon the mantel; and then, sinking into a chair, which invitingly spread its arms before him, he mused upon the occurrences of the day. "Poor Emily! How she struggles to hide the misplaced and wholly hopeless affection which cannot be disguised! I will avoid her henceforth. Could I ever have loved her, had I not seen Adelaide? Let me compare the two. The one debarred from all society, possesses yet a native dignity and grace far more winning than any that education could give. She only knows the world from books. With few to love and very few to praise, she has the besoin d'aimer to a

degree that is all the more intense because it has never found objects on which to lavish its wealth. Look on the other picture—here is Emily, who for years has been a pet of society—has had admirers, lovers, perhaps, without number—still she seems to preserve her freshness of feeling—although occasionally the traits of the hackneyed woman of the world break forth. She is an enigma—and must be studied profoundly to be known. On the contrary, you can read Adelaide's character at the first interview. Her ingenuousness is the most perfect that I ever witnessed in a human being. She is the only woman I ever met, whom I could not believe to be capable of a stratagem. Feminine in all her attributes, she has yet acquired from intercourse with masculine minds in books a certain intellectual vigor, which it is hard to reconcile with her uniform gentleness. Compare the two in point ofpersonal attractions, and Adelaide's superiority must be unquestioned. In accomplishments too she excels. Both are musical—but Emily's voice reminds me of concert−rooms and prima donnas, while Adelaide's suggests dreams of angelic harmonies. Yes, Adelaide, thou art in every way the worthier of my choice—ay, worthier, notwithstanding thou art nameless, friendless and unclaimed— worthier even wert thou scorned by all the world, save my own idolizing heart!"

Fleetwood took one last look at the portrait; and then, perceiving by a glance at his watch that the hour was late, he laid himself down to sleep— nor did he long have to woo the influence of that power which "knits up the ravelled sleeve of care." A soft but profound slumber soon sealed up his senses.

All at once he started from his bed with his eyes wide open, and a vague consciousness of the presence of some one in the room. He looked about him, exclaiming at the same moment, "Who's there?" The weather had changed since he had been asleep. The storm had passed away, and the moon rode brightly in the skies, pouring a flood of lustre into the room through the openings in the saffron curtains, which fell in rich folds before the windows.

Fleetwood started to his feet. He could have sworn he saw a shadow move across the wall opposite to the windows. He turned in the direction of the light. He distinctly saw the curtain move, and heard it rustle. Repeating his exclamation of "Who's there?" he rushed to the embrasure. The window was closed—so it was not possible that the wind could have created the motion. There was no one behind the curtains—no vestige, no sound of a visitor. Nor could he discover any mode of egress. There were inside window−shutters. He unfolded them. The wall seemed solid behind them—and there was no sign of any contrivance by which they could be made to give way.

"Pshaw!" said Fleetwood, returning to his couch. "It must have been a delusion—I was dreaming."

CHAPTER XII.

I am in, And must go on: and since I have put off From the shore of innocence, guilt be now my pilot!
— Massinger

After parting with his daughter on the stairs, previous to her entering the saloon where Fleetwood was in waiting, Mr. Gordon anxiously revolved in his mind the circumstances which had that day come to his knowledge.

"So!" muttered he, as he pushed his fingers through his hair, and lifted it from his hot forehead —"my young man has chosen for a mate that very girl, whose existence for the last ten years has given me so many uneasy moments—and, who threatens to stand soon, like the inexorable angel of fate, between me and renewed affluence. Hell itself must have brought about this conjunction. How shall it be averted? Emily's fascinations will not be enough to break his allegiance. He is of a constant and generous temper. Nor will it be enough to persuade him that Adelaide is doubly the child of shame. No circumstance of birth will alter his feelings of attachment. But could he be made to believe her individually unworthy!—for instancecould he be made to imagine that some hereditary wantonness lingered in her blood—that would be devilish!—no, no, no—it were a plot worthy of fiends!"

Mr. Gordon walked hastily across the entry, as if to escape the suggestion which had presented itself to his mind. What he at first shuddered at, he at length embraced.

"It is the most sure and effective mode," said he, resuming his soliloquy—"indeed it is the only one, which I at present see for detaching him from the pursuit. But how is it to be managed? Ay, that indeed! We must first discover how the land lies. I must see Augusta at once, and learn what I can about the girl. If the mother is bent on this match, the obstacles in the way of its prevention will be formidable. But perhaps she is ignorant of it as yet—for it is very evident that Fleetwood knows nothing about her—his prospective mother−in−law. We must move promptly if at all in this affair. I will seek Augusta this very hour. Ha! that was a rousing peal! Poor Emily must be in hysterics by this time. How the rain pours! No matter. The game is an important one to me—and must be won. The luck has held good thus far,—why should it not continue to the end?"

Throwing his Mackintosh over his shoulders, and seizing his hat and umbrella, Gordon issued from the front door into the wet and gloomy street. The water poured in turbid torrents along the gutters on either side. The roar of the wind and the dashing of the rain drowned every other sound. The gas lights shed but a dim lustre through the thick drops that were flowing down the glass sides, that protected them from extinction.

Gordon hurried along the sidewalk of the stately street, in which he dwelt, until, reaching the main thoroughfare of the city, he traversed it for nearly half a mile, and then turned the corner into a cross street, where the houses were mostly of a mean and squalid appearance. Onwards he hurried, until he stopped before one, which though surrounded by inferior habitations, was in itself neat and commodious in its external appearance. Without pausing to question himself as to the purpose of his mission, he rang the bell vehemently. While he yet stood on the steps, a carriage was heard rattling over the pavements; and, the moment afterwards, it drew up before the house. The coachman descended from his seat, and opened the door of the vehicle. A female thrust out her head, and cried: "coachman, give the bell a thundering pull!"

Gordon recognised the figure and voice of the speaker. It was she, whom he had come to seek. So leaving it to the coachman to summon the servants to the door, he approached the carriage to make himself known to the inmate and offer the protection of his umbrella.

"Why, Gordon, you don't say this is you?" said Mrs. Winfield as the light of the coach−lamp struggling through the surrounding mist was reflected on his features.

"Hush! I did not perceive that you had a companion," said Gordon drawing back so as not to be observed.

"Do not be concerned," whispered Mrs. Winfield: "she does not know you, though you may know her—it is Adelaide."

"Saints and fiends! Is it possible?" exclaimed Gordon in a low, husky tone. "But this is strange!"

The door of the house was at length opened by a black female servant. Gordon handed Mrs. Winfield up the steps into the entry; and, returning to the coach, accosted Adelaide as she was descending and offered her his arm.

"It is a fearful storm, young lady—let me assist you into the house," said Gordon, an involuntary emotion of tenderness coming over him.

Adelaide accepted the proffered support—and the next moment Gordon stood in the entry with the two females. He looked from one to the other with undisguised interest and astonishment. The door was closed—and the carriage was soon heard rattling away.

They followed Mrs. Winfield up stairs to a parlor neatly furnished, and lights being brought, Adelaide gazed inquiringly around, and then sank fatigued into a chair.

"You are weary, my dear," said Mrs. Winfield, patting her on the forehead. "Nay, you must not feel disappointed because your lover did not meet you at the boat to escort you. It was hardly fair to expect him in such a storm."

"Irene," said Mrs. Winfield, addressing the black, "show Miss Adelaide to the sleeping−room over head. My dear child, you need repose. Do not doubt but your lover will be here to see you the first thing in the morning. Rest content."

"Your advice is good," returned Adelaide; "I feel strangely wearied and depressed."

She approached as if with the intent of kissing her mother's cheek, but as she drew near she seemed to recoil, and then with an effort she lifted her hand to her lips, bade her good night, made a slight courtesy to Mr. Gordon, and, addressing Irene kindly, bade her lead on to bed.

"And now, tell me, Augusta, what does all this mean?" exclaimed Gordon, rising hastily and taking a seat by Mrs. Winfield, as the door closed upon Adelaide and her attendant.

"It's a long story, Gordon, and I have not made up my mind whether or no I shall tell you. WhileI am considering the matter let me know what has brought you here?"

"I have learned by the merest accident that Adelaide is engaged to be married."

"Ay. You have not been misinformed."

"You know it yourself, then?"

"To be sure I do! Proceed."

"Fleetwood, the young man, to whom she has affianced herself, has been my guest this very day —he is now at my house, and will pass the night there—I had the intelligence of his engagement from his own lips."

"That is strange indeed! strange, strange indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Winfield. "How have we managed, Gordon, without any concert, to get both the lovers into our hands? I do not understand that."

"It was partly accident and partly design," replied Gordon. "I did not know when I invited Fleetwood to dine with me to−day that he had any intention of marrying, or that he knew such a being as Adelaide—I was damnably startled, as you may suppose, when he communicated the fact."

"Well; and now that you know it, what would you do?"

"Prevent the union for both our sakes."

"I can see how it will affect your interests, but not so readily how it will reach mine."

"Do you wish to part at once with all control over Adelaide—to have her wedded to a man, who will forbid your ever seeing her again, when she is once his wife?"

"And is Fleetwood such a man?"

"Most undoubtedly. He comes of a haughty family, and, if he marries Adelaide, he will only do so upon condition that she drops all intercourse with her mother—with you. She will place herduty to her husband far above that which she owes to you, whom she has known hardly a week."

"From what I have seen of the girl I think you have judged her rightly, Gordon. Not to keep you longer in suspense, I have already made up my mind that she shall not marry Fleetwood were he ten times as rich as he is."

"I rejoice to hear it. You consult your own dignity and happiness in rejecting this alliance. Adelaide must either not marry at all, or she must be sent abroad, and marry a foreigner."

"I have my own plans for the girl, Gordon. She would succeed admirably on the stage, and I have told her so."

"We will not discuss that question now," said Gordon impatiently. "What we must consider is, how shall we break off this match—for I suppose you are aware that the marriage day is fixed."

"O, I know all about it. Will you believe me —the little hussy refused to yield to my entreaties, my commands to accompany me to the city. It was only by stratagem that we got her here."

"Indeed! How was that?"

"You must know that there is another party, who has taken an interest in the affair. You remember young Glenham—the unmarried one, I mean?"

"I have a bowing acquaintance with him, as a member of the same club."

"He is himself as anxious as we can be to prevent this marriage—either from love for the girl or hatred of Fleetwood, I don't know which. At any rate he suggested and carried out the contrivance, by which we have been able to induce Adelaide to come with me peaceably to this place."

"And what was Master Glenham's notable project?"

"He persuaded the girl to address a letter to herlover asking his consent to accompany me. After that, it was an easy matter to frame such a reply as suited our purposes."

"Ah! I perceive—the way it was done was by forgery."

"Exactly."

"But has Adelaide suspected nothing?"

"I have yet seen no serious signs of distrust. The only surprise she has evinced was on board the steamboat, when, after reading and re−reading the letter and examining every fold, she exclaimed, 'I wonder why he did not seal it with that little watch−key he carries, containing a stone engraved with his initials—but perhaps he was in so much of a hurry that he took the seal, which was most convenient—and yet what could have been more convenient than that?' These were her very words."

"It will be an easy matter," returned Gordon, "to procure the watch−key should we have occasion to send her any more letters. But where is Glenham? He may be made useful."

"He will be in the city early to−morrow."

"Send him to me the moment he arrives. You agree with me in the determination to prevent this marriage?"

"To be sure I do! If it cannot be prevented by fair means, it must be by foul."

"My sentiments precisely! and Master Glenham's too, if I may judge from the trouble he has already taken."

"I readily detect your motives, Gordon, for defeating the plans of the lovers. You are afraid that Fleetwood may be rich enough to buy a certain—"

"Hush! hush!" said Gordon, anxiously placing his hand before the lips of the speaker—"you misapprehend—indeed you are mistaken—cannot you make a shrewder guess?—have you forgotten thatI have a daughter about Fleetwood's age, or perhaps a year or two older, whom I would see married? And who more eligible than he?"

"True! that may be an additional reason why you would break up this threatened alliance," said Mrs. Winfield. "But at the same time, I know well enough, that you are afraid I may be bought —that I may"—

"I protest against your entertaining any such suspicion," exclaimed Gordon, looking around, as if fearful there might be listeners. "Do not suppose me so ungrateful—so unjust—"

"Well, well—it matters not," said Mrs. Winfield, "we are agreed upon the point, which immediately claims our attention—Fleetwood must be made to give up the idea of marrying Adelaide— how is that to be done?"

"We have three days yet," returned Gordon, "in which to contrive something—he will not probably leave the city till Friday. If Glenham is really jealous I am willing to trust to his invention to plot the means of effecting our object—there is nothing which so sharpens the inventive faculties as jealousy."

"You are right. We will therefore come to no decision until we have consulted with Glenham."

"Now then, I will take my leave," said Gordon, rising—"you need repose after your journey—good night, Augusta!"

"Good night to you, Gordon—I shall see you again, soon, I suppose?"

Gordon moved towards the door—then paused irresolutely, as if he had something to say, to which he did not well know how to give expression.

"I had but a moment's glance at Adelaide," said he at length—"but I could see that she has grown up into a beautiful and well−bred woman—she will be secure—that is, she will meet with nothing toexcite her distrust—under your roof? She knows nothing yet, I presume, except that you are her mother?"

"You would know if my biography is familiar to her?—do not be alarmed—I will be discreet— she shall meet with nothing to awaken her distrust, if I can help it."

"Everything depends on you, my dear. So, once more, good night!"

Gordon hastened homeward. The thunder shower had ceased by the time he reached the door of his house; and

the moon broke forth from a circle of purple clouds, displacing the thick gloom which had enshrouded the city.

"Let me consider—is there anything more for me to do to−night?" mused he as he stood upon his door−steps. "Ay—there is the seal, which Adelaide missed—how shall I procure it? I have it— Fleetwood shall occupy the crimson sleeping−room —the spring door behind the window−shutter will admit me—I can easily detach the watch−key from the chain. Should he miss it in the morning he will naturally suppose that he has dropped it on the carpet—ay, that will do—but is not this business villainous?—no matter—the first step has been taken, and it would be dastardly now to retreat."

Gordon turned to ring the bell, when the door opened, and La Salle made his appearance.

"Good evening, Count! Are you in haste?" said Gordon.

"I am in haste," replied La Salle. "I wish you good evening, sir."

"Something has ruffled him," thought Gordon, as he entered and closed the door—"can it be that Emily has made love before his eyes to Fleetwood? That must be it! Ay, she has played her part well. If so, we may yet find it for our advantage to make La Salle one of the dramatis personœ ofthis little plot. I have a dim, floating idea that he can be made useful—but how?"

CHAPTER XIII.

He shook—twas but an instant—
For speedily the pride
Ran crimson to his heart,
Till all chances he defied.
It threw boldness on his forehead;
Gave firmness to his breath.
— Barry Cornwall

The Friday following the events we have just recounted, Fleetwood having completed his business with Mr. Dryman, sat down to address notes to the two friends, whom he had selected to accompany him with their wives to Soundside, to witness the ceremony of his marriage the next day. He had already spoken to them in regard to his wishes, and they had readily accepted his invitation. His present object was to apprise them of the hour fixed for the departure of the steamboat. The weather was bright and warm. The fountain in the Park was leaping and flashing in the sunlight, and the foliage of the adjacent trees waved cheerily in the fresh, clear atmosphere.

Fleetwood had hardly set pen to paper, when he was disturbed by the entrance of a servant, who brought in Mr. Glenham's card with the announcement that the gentleman was waiting in the corridor.

"Show him in!" said Fleetwood eagerly; for he thought his visitor might bring news of Adelaide.

The acquaintance between these two young men had begun at college; and though it had never ripened to anything like intimacy, it was yet of that character, which is apt to make associates of persons, whenever accident or convenience brings them together, where they are almost necessarily thrown into each other's society. Fleetwood had always regarded Glenham as a good−natured sort of person, rather selfish, perhaps, but harmless— one of those characters—

"Who want, while through blank life they dream along, Sense to be right, and passion to be wrong."

He little supposed that under a sluggish exterior, were concealed impulses of the most reckless and ungovernable nature. His first disgust at Glenham was in his last interview with him, when the latter spoke disparagingly of Adelaide. But Fleetwood was one who wrote the injuries he received on sand—the benefits, on brass; and as Glenham now entered he rose and extended his hand with an air of cordial welcome.

"You are welcome from Soundside, Glenham. What news do you bring?" said he, drawing him into the room and placing a chair for his accommodation.

The expression of Glenham's face was gloomy, and even stern; and he returned Fleetwood's salute simply by a pressure of the hand.

"Why, what is the matter, man? You look as serious as an undertaker. What has happened? Is Adelaide unwell?" Fleetwood spoke earnestly; and his looks betrayed that he felt even more concern than his words expressed.

Glenham leaned forward; and, taking Fleetwood's hand in both of his, he pressed it, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Well—out with it, Glenham—in Heaven's namewhat has happened?" asked Fleetwood, striving to curb his emotion.

"Ah, Fleetwood, summon all your philosophy to your aid; for you will need it," said Glenham at length accompanying the remark with another long−drawn sigh.

"Good heavens! I understand—I see—Adelaide is dead!" exclaimed Fleetwood, while the color forsook his cheeks, and his knees smote each other.

"No, no, it is not death, Fleetwood—it is something worse—something worse."

"In mercy's name, what do you mean? Do not keep me in this state of suspense. You will drive me to frenzy. What have you to communicate?"

"I have learned, my dear friend, that the mother of the unfortunate girl, in whom we have both become so much interested, is an infamous person —that her very name is a by−word among the dissolute—and that it is enough to disgrace either man or woman to be seen entering her house."

"Can it be? Alas! alas!"

Fleetwood covered his face with his hands, and groaned inwardly.

Glenham walked to the window and looked out upon the fountain, on the principle of letting one arrow take full effect before he sent another, which should go straight to the heart.

"Shame and infamy! Can I—can I wed this girl," thought Fleetwood, "under these dreadful circumstances? The stain of illegitimacy was nothing compared to this! My love—my single, ardent and still increasing love—easily cleared that barrier. But this—gracious powers! can I consent to become the son−in−law of a—pah! the word sticks in my throat—I cannot breathe it even to my own soul! What would my father, with his lofty and chivalrous notions of what a woman should be—what would my high−born mother, whoalone of all women, exemplified those notions in her character—what would they have said, seeing me in this conjuncture? Stay! It is not what they might have said, blinded by the mists of earth−born prejudice, which should guide me—but what they would say now—illuminated spirits—receiving from God himself an influx of wisdom and love —of light and life. Would they say, desert this poor girl, now that you find her parentage infamous —desert her, though she be an angel—though she be the elected one of thy heart, for whom its first, best tribute of affection has been poured out—desert her, not for any misdeeds of her own, but because from her very birth she is the child of misfortune—would their advice be of this complexion? Would they not rather say—take her, and save her from the pernicious influence and example of an unworthy parent—save her from the jeers of the world and the insults of brutal men—save her while she is yet innocent and young!—if her moral nature be tainted with hereditary evils, thy love, thy care, thy generous devotion shall eradicate them—but good angels seem to have already spared thee that task—for, as you have eyes to see, and a mind to apprehend, is she not good and fair? Such would be the language of those parents now —yes; I could almost believe that they had, by some spiritual telegraph, hardly more wonderful and incomprehensible than that which we call magnetic, communicated their will to my soul. I obey —and cheerfully! Dear Adelaide, your cause has triumphed—invisible advocates have pleaded for you—and yet not more eloquently than my own heart!"

Fleetwood rose suddenly, and paced the room with firm and regular strides. The generous resolution, at which he had arrived, had lit up his whole face with an expression of radiant benignityand intrepid self−reliance. He looked every inch the hero—the hero in that moment of greatest conquest—the conquest over the suggestions of selfishness and fear of the world's displeasure.

Glenham could not conceal his surprise, as he turned and regarded his companion after the interval of silence which both had observed.

"An agreeable family to marry into—is it not?" said he, supposing, as a matter of course, that Fleetwood had arrived at a conclusion favorable to his wishes.

"My purpose remains unaltered," said Fleetwood. "What you have told me in regard to Adelaide's parentage is painful enough, as you may suppose, but it does not affect my confidence in her own purity and worth. I am fixed in my resolution to marry her to−morrow."

"But Fleetwood—ahem! Are you not a little too precipitate in this affair? Would it not be well for you to examine a little more closely into the history and character of this young person?"

"I am willing to stake my life—or what is more, the happiness of my life—on her truth."

"But think of the world's sarcasms."

"It would be cowardly in me to regard them so far as to break my plighted faith to one whom I believed worthy to be my wife."

"Well—as a married man it won't do for you to visit your mother−in−law yourself—but you must not be surprised if some of your bachelor friends should ask you for letters of introduction."

"You grow impertinent, sir. I can dispense with your farther presence."

Glenham saw that he had gone too far.

"I ask your pardon, Fleetwood," said he, with apparent earnestness; "but if I have seemed to taunt you, it was to induce you to break off this match without communicating to you all the reasonswhich render it impossible for you to consummate it. But I see that I must tell you all—in doing so I cannot fail to agitate—to distress you—but you will forgive me when you become satisfied of the truth."

"Against whom are your intimations levelled?"

"Against Adelaide."

"Then I refuse to hear them. Leave me! O, this is a worthy office for a man—to attempt to blast the prospects

of an unprotected and unfortunate girl!"

"My friendship shall steel me against your rebukes. It is my duty to proclaim to you the truth. The girl is unworthy of you—she has not only inherited dishonor, but won it for herself—she is—"

"Insolent liar!" shouted Fleetwood; and with one bound he sprang upon Glenham, and seizing him by the neck forced him upon his knees. "Unsay," he continued, gaspingly—"unsay that dastardly slander, or, on the spot, I will tear out your filthy tongue by the roots!" And as he spoke he nearly choked Glenham in his ungovernable wrath.

"You will repent this—indeed you will," ejaculated the latter, struggling in his iron grasp.

"Leave me, coward!" exclaimed Fleetwood, dashing him from him so that he fell upon the floor.

Glenham rose and re−arranged his dress, which had been somewhat ruffled under the severe treatment to which he had been subjected. His face was of an ashy pallor, and his lips quivered with the fury he was tasking all his powers to suppress. He paced the room three or four times, and then approaching Fleetwood, who stood with folded arms regarding his movements, he said:

"I shall expect reparation for these indignities in due time. You deserve no farther mercy at my hands, and did I desire the most consummate vengeance, I need do no more than urge on this disgraceful alliance, upon which you seem bent. But even under the smart of most unwarrantable injury I will not withhold intelligence which I should feel bound to communicate were you my deadliest foe. Your visit to Soundside will be wholly unnecessary. Adelaide Winfield is not there. She is now in this city—in her mother's house—and if you wish to convince yourself of her unworthiness, I can give you an opportunity of doing so beyond the shadow of a doubt. By the testimony of your own eyes, your own ears, you shall satisfy yourself that she is—"

"Beware!" shouted Fleetwood, his fingers working as if he were half inclined to try their sinews again upon the speaker's throat—and then, as the possibility of the truth of the revelation flashed across his mind, he sank with relaxed limbs into a chair, and fixed a searching gaze upon Glenham.

"You say you can give me visible proof of the truth of what you aver," he began—"how can you do it, and when?"

"How I can do it, I will not describe. It is enough for me to assure you that I will do it to your perfect satisfaction. As for the when I can do it—it shall be this evening, at eight o'clock."

"Fool! I see it all—you would detain me here till it is too late for me to leave for Soundside so as to be punctual to my appointment. It is all a wretched conspiracy!"

"At what time are you obliged to leave in the steamboat this afternoon?"

"At three o'clock."

"It is now half past twelve. Meet me here at half past one, and, before two, you shall see what shall convince you of my truth—my zeal in your behalf—and your own ungrateful rashness."

"Could you do that, you would make me themost abject as well as the most miserable of men, so that you would be sure of ample reparation for the outrages you have encountered. If you are lying—as I believe you are—the sooner you fly from my path the better for your safety. I will be here at the hour you have named. Be prompt to a moment—to the fraction of a second—or I shall spurn your proposition to accompany you. Now leave me—for you have made me inconceivably wretched."

"This is but a joke to the dose that is to come," muttered Glenham. "Oh, my dear friend, but you shall pay dearly for this day's frolic!" And then speaking aloud, he said: "In less than an hour I will return—you will be here—I will take such steps that you shall be under no doubt either as to my motives or the truth of my communication."

"Once more, sir, I say I will a wait your coming," returned Fleetwood, impatiently.

Without more words, Glenham took his departure, and Fleetwood, his eyes fixed upon his unfinished letters, reflected upon the scene which had just transpired, and the startling communications which had been made.

"Nothing but ocular proof of the most unequivocal character shall make me doubt her," he soliloquised. "Mere circumstantial evidence shall not be enough. It must be open as day—audible and visible! But should she be innocent, as she undoubtedly is, with what face can I meet her after listening for a moment to Glenham's monstrous insinuations! But he says she is here—in the city; and he offers to prove it to my satisfaction this very hour. Surely he would not hazard such an assertion except upon sufficient grounds. No, no! He has met some one in the street who resembles her —Emily Gordon, perhaps—and his busy imagination has built up this story of

shame and guilt.May heaven in its mercy strike me lifeless should it prove true!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Was it not a web worthy of fiends?

— Washington Allston

A bright and beautiful morning succeeded the stormy night of Adelaide's arrival in the city. The atmosphere had been purified by the thunder, and the streets by the profuse rain. But no sunshine, however radiant, could render interesting the prospect upon which Adelaide looked out, when, after a profound and protracted slumber, she threw open the blinds which were attached to the windows of her sleeping−room. Dilapidated sheds, dirty areas, and decayed fences were the principal features in the picture. How different from the view which would have greeted her in her own little room at Soundside! She thought of the friendly elm, which with its strong arms extended as if for protection, kept "watch and ward" beside her till she almost persuaded herself it had a sort of affection for her presence, and would wave its leafy boughs more joyously as she approached. She now missed the spectacle of its glistening verdure freshened by the thunder shower of the past night.

Anxiously throughout the day did Adelaide expect Fleetwood's coming, or some message from him expressive of the cause of his delay. It was not till evening that her apprehensions were quieted.A letter was then placed in her hands, and on looking at the seal a smile of satisfaction came over her face on seeing that the impression she had formerly missed was there. The writer said that business of a sudden and imperious nature had taken him out of the city. Had his own interests merely been involved, no inducements could have made him forego the pleasure of being the first to greet Adelaide on her arrival; but unfortunately there were persons who looked to him for countenance and support, and he could not disappoint their reasonable expectations. He would return to the city probably before Saturday—at any rate nothing should detain him beyond that day—and he saw nothing to defer their nuptials beyond the period originally fixed.

The tone of the letter was affectionate—and Adelaide attributed to haste the defects of style which she could not but notice. A few passages from the diary she was in the habit of keeping will not be inappropriate here:

Tuesday.—"At length I am in the city. We arrived here last night in the midst of a thunder shower. I am in my mother's house. Oh! dare I entrust to these pages, with their locked clasp, the thoughts which that word awakens! Why should I prefer the solitude of my room to companionship with one who is bound to me by the tenderest of ties? Why should I recoil from her embraces? Why should I shrink from her very touch? Is it not because I have lived so long within myself—because I have so narrowed by disuse the circle of my sympathies? Alas, I fear this is not the only cause. She is distasteful to me. I shun her as I never shunned living thing before—I, who have often lifted a wounded snake in my handsfrom the dusty road, and placed it where it might recover and be secure from harm!

"And yet she has not shown herself ungentle. She lives all alone in this well−furnished house, and keeps two colored servants to wait upon her. She receives few visitors, and does not go at all into society. A gentleman named Gordon met us here last night on our arrival. He seemed to be an old friend of my mother's. His manners and appearance were such that my heart warmed towards him strangely at first. And then a sense of distrust came over me—I knew not why—it must have been from the wavering of his glance while he regarded me.

"I was wretched enough last night at not meeting Fleetwood. Why was he not at the landing−place to receive us? Or, why was he not at least in waiting for our arrival here? Could the storm have prevented him? That was hardly a sufficient excuse. He must have been unwell. Nothing but illness could have detained him on such an occasion. And why does he not make his appearance or send some message to me this morning? It is strange indeed. I have been pacing my room these two hours; and my imagination has conjured up a thousand different reasons for his absence. This suspense is dreadful. I have taken up my pen as much to escape from the anxious thoughts that pursue me as to add another page to my well−filled diary.

"At the breakfast table this morning my mother, strangely and abruptly enough, asked me how I would like to be an actress. Is it possible that she contemplates my entering upon such a pursuit? Does she expect to prevent my union with Fleetwood? Poor woman! She will find that she is powerless to induce me to reject him. No humanauthority shall avail to make me violate my plighted word. I am prepared to grapple with the sternest obstacles—and yet, why should there be any? How could a mother object to her daughter's marriage to such a

man as Fleetwood?

"I have no predilections in favor of the stage. I have been taught to regard it as a school of depravity. And yet I see no reason why it should not be made a great moral engine. How can an important moral truth be impressed so forcibly upon the conviction as by a picture of life itself—of the workings of the passions—and the consequences to which they lead? But the accompaniments of the stage—the abuses to which they tend—are, it is said, pernicious and demoralizing. Perhaps so. I have never entered a theatre in my life. But I will not believe that a man like Shakespeare would have upheld an institution, which he believed essentially injurious to his fellow−men:—and who had such opportunities and such capacities as he had of judging of its effects? Luther recommended the acting of comedies even in schools. 'In comedies,' he says, 'particularly in those of the Roman writers, the duties of the various situations of life are held out to view, and as it were reflected from a mirror. The office of parents and the conduct of children are faithfully delineated; and what to young men may be advantageous, the vices and characters of profligate women are exhibited in their true colors. Excellent lessons are given to them how they should conduct themselves towards virtuous women in courtship. Strong exhortations to matrimony are brought forward, without which state no government can subsist: celibacy is the plageu of any nation.' Well said, Luther!

"It is notorious that St. Paul did not think it unbecoming to quote a line from Menander, the Greekplay writer, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, when writing on a subject as awful as the resurrection of the dead. The same apostle cites more than once expressions from the dramatic poets; and although theatres were numerous in the times of our Saviour they seem to have provoked no censure from him and his disciples. Archbishop Tillotson, speaking of plays, says 'they may be so framed, and governed by such rules, as not only to be innocently diverting, but instructing and useful, to put some follies and vices out of countenance, which cannot be so decently reproved, nor so effectually exposed and corrected any other way.'

"It has been a favorite custom with the members of certain sects among us, not only to denounce the stage, but to decry dancing as an immoral pastime. Ah! to the pure all things are pure. The mind viciously disposed can extract poison from the purest and holiest amenities of life. That which is a salutary and refreshing food to some souls may be deleterious to others according to their state of reception. So where the physical system is concerned—the ripe and luscious fruit, which refreshes one, may injure another—but must we therefore cut down our fruit trees? Must dancing be abolished because to some it may not be attended with the same cheering and blameless influences, which it brings to others? And thou—

'Thou, my sweet Shakespeare,—thou, whose touch awakes
The inmost heart of virtuous Sympathy;—
Thou, oh! divinest poet, at whose voice
Sad Pity weeps, or guilty Terror drops
The blood−stain'd dagger from his palsied hand—'
Shall we be told that thou art pander to the crimi nal?

"It is night−fall; and yet Fleetwood has not come—he has not sent even a message—a tokenCan it be that—hark! There is a ringing at the door bell! Can it be he? The door opens— closes—there is the sound of a footfall on the stairs —alas! it is not his—it is the black waiting−woman, Irene—what can she want?

"At last a letter from Fleetwood! And the little seal I missed from his last letter is here! I have read it. Business has called him from the city—business, in which the interests of others are involved. It is well. I have no cause to complain.

"Shall I ever forget one of those expressions he made to me during our walk on that eventful day, when he first surprised me by the avowal of his affection? 'I have none but you,' he said, 'to love me and to love!' Ah, Fleetwood, I may say the same in regard to yourself—for although I have found a mother, I feel that I should be more desolate than ever, but for that more precious and all−compensating tie, which binds my fate to yours. Is it not strange that we should both have lived up to the very period of our betrothal so separated from kindred and from friends? I sometimes almost feel a pang of regret that I am not still on an equality with Fleetwood in this poverty of kindred connections—I sometimes almost wish that I were motherless still! This is ungrateful—it is impious —I must conquer such thoughts.

"Thursday. A day has passed since I last took up my pen to record what has transpired in my own little world of thoughts and emotions. I have had no new message from Fleetwood. Ah! if he knew with what veneration I

cherished the slightest token from his hand he would surely write. I have driven out with my mother several times in a close carriage with the blinds down. Why should she be thus careful to conceal herself from the public gaze? Or is it I she wishes to keep hidden?There is some mystery about this. She objects even to my walking in Broadway, although the weather is most inviting at present. But this restraint must soon end. Fleetwood will be here by Saturday, and then—I hear my mother's step upon the stairs."

Adelaide clasped her book, and laid down her pen, as Mrs. Winfield entered.

"I have brought you good news, delightful news," said this woman in a coarse, loud voice.

"Has Fleetwood returned?" exclaimed Adelaide starting up.

"Not that I know of—it has nothing to do with him," replied Mrs. Winfield.

"Then it cannot be good news," sighed Adelaide, sinking back into her chair.

"Oh, but it is good news—if you have any heart, I am sure you will think so—what will you say when I tell you that your brother has returned— that he is at this very moment in the city!"

"My brother!"

"Yes; but I suppose you didn't know that you had one. Oh, but he is a fine young man, and so improved has he been by foreign travel that I hardly knew him."

"But why did you not tell me before, that I had a brother?"

"I reserved that intelligence for a pleasant surprise, my dear—till I could tell you that he was in the city—that he was waiting to see you—waiting to embrace his own, flesh−and−blood sister, whom he has not seen since—since she was a mere infant."

"Is it possible? A brother! When shall I see him? Let us meet at once. Is he here?"

"Not yet. I chanced to encounter him as he was ascending the steps of the Astor House, followed by a porter carrying his luggage. How enchanted the dear fellow was to see me! And when Itold him of you—of his sister—and how you had grown into a beautiful young woman, I thought he would have gone out of his wits with joy. As he has business with the Custom House, he will not be here till this evening. Then you shall meet. Dear Ernest! How rejoiced I am that he has come back at last!"

"Then his name is Ernest?" said Adelaide, looking up with a smile that made her face radiant with cheerfulness and hope. "From what you say, I think I shall love brother Ernest."

"That you will, my dear. Do you know he has been so long absent from his native country, that he speaks English with a slight foreign accent?"

"I shall laugh at brother Ernest if I detect any thing of the kind. I hope he is not too much wedded to European habits and modes of life."

"Ah, my dear, I can only say that he wears a moustache."

"Then I will see if my sisterly authority cannot make him shave it off. I would have him look like an American, and be proud of the name of one."

At this moment, Irene entered and told Mrs. Winfield that an errand−boy was below with a note, to which he wanted an answer.

Adelaide being left alone added this passage to her diary:

"Another surprise! My mother tells me that I have a brother—an own brother—that his name is Ernest—that he is now in the city after passing many years in Europe, and that he will be here to−night to see—to embrace his sister! I am sure I shall love him dearly. I find myself continually repeating the words brother Ernest—then I wonder if he looks like me—I imagine what the color of his hair can be—and picture in fancy his face and figure. How I hope that he and Fleetwood will be friends! If they love me they cannot be otherwise.Yes, they must—they shall be friends. And Ernest has come just in time to witness my nuptials! He will be present. He will give me away. I am strangely happy. It is Fleetwood I may thank. I hardly dare look into my own heart when I think how wholly I have rendered up to him its wealth And yet is it therefore bankrupt in love? Oh, no! Bountiful faculty, which increases the more it imparts—which like the magnet, loses by hoarding, but enriches itself by giving!"

The clock struck two. The sound seemed to dispel the gay illusions, in which Adelaide had been indulging. A sensation like that she experienced when she first heard the carriage−wheels grating over the gravelled walk at Soundside, at the period of Mrs. Winfield's arrival, came over her heart. She paused as if in expectation of something—she knew not what. Then smiling and shaking her head she muttered, "how very fanciful I have grown!"

"Your brother is below, Miss, and waiting to see you," said Irene, abruptly thrusting in her ebony head and withdrawing it as speedily.

"My brother! Joy! Joy!" exclaimed Adelaide, bounding from the apartment, regardless of every thing but the thought of being clasped for the first time to a brother's breast. "We did not expect him for some hours—but he was impatient to meet me—no wonder he was impatient."

CHAPTER XV.

Look there! If words will not convince thee, look!
And let the assurance of unquestioned deeds
Prove she's unworthy.
— —Anon.

In a state of gloomy and bewildered expectation, Fleetwood sat regarding the hands of his watch, resolved, that if Glenham failed in his appointment by the fraction of a minute, he would refuse to accompany him. How earnestly did he hope that such might be the result! The five minutes preceding the hour fixed, seemed to him like days of torture. Every sound of a footstep in the corridor made his heart beat, and his breath come thick and heavy. He felt like a culprit, who has sold his soul to the arch fiend, and who is awaiting the moment when the purchaser is to come to claim his own.

But two minutes remained of the allotted time.

"He will not come—the coward will not come!" exclaimed Fleetwood, starting from his seat, and pressing his forehead with the palms of his clasped hands. "Oh, what a fool I have been to attach the least importance to his wretched calumny! He would have been here long before this if he means to return at all. He has done all that he could do to make me miserable—and he has succeeded for a time—but his act of childish vengeance is now ended. He has done his worst. Vengeance! May he not have been really deceived? May he not have been laboring under a gross but sincere mistake—and may he not have been actuated by pure and honest motives in apprising me of what he believed to be true? Poor Glenham! I should notwonder if such turned out to be the real state of the case. And now having become assured of his error he stays away, fearing, after my recent violence, that we may have a more serious quarrel in consequence of his blundering officiousness. I have done him injustice. Poor fellow! I should not have been so rude. I will ask his pardon. I will make ample reparation for my ruffianly conduct towards him. It was too bad! It was"—

Fleetwood glanced again anxiously at his watch.

"But ten seconds remain," he muttered, almost gasping for breath, such was the emotion of solicitude under which he labored. "Eight seconds— six—he has broken his appointment, and his story must be false as hell!"

At that instant he heard steps approaching. A solitary knock—and then, without pausing for an invitation, Glenham threw open the door, and entered.

"I believe I am punctual to my appointment," he said, coolly placing his hat upon the table, and throwing his gloves into it.

"Ay, you are punctual," groaned Fleetwood, standing motionless as if petrified by the unwelcome appearance.

Glenham took a seat, and carelessly tapped his boot with his cane.

After a pause, full of anguish to one at least, Fleetwood stamped his foot, and exclaimed: "Come, Sir, I am ready for you. Lead on. I await your damnable proofs."

"You are in a hurry, then, to be satisfied? All in good time. I have a carriage in waiting at the door. The drive will not be a long one."

They proceeded together down stairs, and out of the hotel to the sidewalk. A coachman stood holding open the door of his carriage. He immediately let down the steps as he caught sight of Glenham.

"Will you enter first?" said Glenham, politely touching his hat

His brain on fire, Fleetwood precipitated himself carelessly into the vehicle. Glenham gave some minute directions to the coachman, and followed. The steps were folded up—the door closed—and, the next minute, they were rattling up Broadway.

"I would exact a promise from you," said Glenham, after they had driven nearly a quarter of a mile in silence.

"Name it."

"Promise me, that should you see Adelaide you will keep silence, and not attempt to discover yourself for at least five minutes."

"Why do you wish me to do that?"

"Because if you make yourself known prematurely, you will defeat the very object we have in view. You must

wait as patiently as you can until the worst is revealed."

"There is reason in what you say. I will fairly test your charges. O, wo to you, if I find this is a plot of yours to wrong her!"

"A plot! Well: perhaps it was foolish in me to enlighten your blissful ignorance. I begin to wish that I had not interfered. What do I propose? Simply that you shall see and judge for yourself. I do not deal in vague suspicions, or circumstantial trifles. I say, come and satisfy yourself with your own eyes and your own ears whether or no I have spoken truly."

Fleetwood shuddered at the air and tone of conviction, with which these words were uttered. "O, strike me to the earth if there is any truth in what you have asserted!" he exclaimed. "Buffet me— trample on me—crush me—you will find I shall not resist. Heap indignity on indignity—it could not rouse me from the horrid stupor into which I should be thrown."

"My objects are friendly," returned Glenham. "I would save you from a rash, disgraceful marriage. The discovery will be painful to you, I am aware. But surely, it had better come before marriage than after."

"I will not credit the testimony of my own senses!" exclaimed Fleetwood.

"In that case we had better turn back," said Glenham coolly—"for I acknowledge I have no better witnesses than your own eyes and ears."

"Oh, go on—go on!" groaned Fleetwood, "and bring this infernal errand to a conclusion as soon as possible."

"We are at the house," said Glenham, as the driver suddenly drew up his horses.

"We are not there yet! I hope we are not there yet!" ejaculated Fleetwood, who felt sick at heart as he witnessed his companion's confident manner.

The young men entered the house. Fleetwood, pale and trembling, could hardly drag himself along. He felt for the first time in his life like a coward. Was it strange that he should have entertained a certain mistrust—a dread of what might be—under the circumstances? He had undoubtedly been impulsive and precipitate in thus surrendering into Adelaide's keeping his heart's best hopes, before he had weighed all the circumstances of her position —before he had satisfied himself fully of the truth of her story. A consciousness of his error could not but come to him now, although he tried to evade it. He was appalled when he found how suddenly the passion, which had been fed by hope, had sprung up "consummate at its birth"—when he saw the abyss of disappointment and wretchedness into which he would be plunged, should the horrible charges against Adelaide be confirmed. He did not know that his nature was capable of emotions so intense as those he now experienced. Hedid not dream that he had so staked his happiness on a chance.

Glenham led his companion into a room, from which the light was almost wholly excluded.

"What is the meaning of all this?" asked Fleetwood, choking with agitation.

"Be patient, and you will see," was the reply; "and remember your promise not to utter a word until the test is ended."

"Proceed!" said Fleetwood, who felt as if the hazard of a die was about to decide whether the gates of Paradise were to be closed upon him forever.

Glenham stepped softly towards the leaves of a sliding door, which opened upon a room where the light came unobstructed through windows that looked out upon the street. The aperture though slight was sufficiently large for a person to stand unobserved in the darkened apartment and distinguish objects clearly and easily in the other.

Drawing his companion towards this aperture, Glenham asked in a whisper, "Do you recognize that man?"

"I do—he is Count La Salle—but he is alone," replied Fleetwood.

"He will not be alone long—wait awhile," said Glenham.

There was a pause—unbroken save by the sound of footsteps, which came from the room, where La Salle was pacing the floor. Glenham had always regarded this man as one of the handsomest he had over seen. His figure was perfect in all its proportions. His head and shoulders might have served a sculptor as a model for an Antinous; and his countenance when in repose was full of all masculine grace. But now Glenham thought it hideous. An expression of fiendish exultation seemed to distort its lines and curves, and to convert what was beauty into downright ugliness.

"This is hell," muttered Fleetwood, seizing Glenham by the arm—"Torturer! how long—"

"Hush! La Salle seems disposed to soliloquise," said Glenham—"What he has to say concerns you, I will swear."

"I did not come here to be an eaves−dropper," returned Fleetwood, flinging from him the arm he had grasped.

"You promised to be silent," said Glenham reproachfully. "Listen, and observe. If I told you a man was plotting against your life would you refuse to satisfy your doubts by watching and over−hearing him? Is not your honor dearer than your life?"

Glenham had closed the sliding doors while he uttered these remarks. He now re−opened them. At the same moment, La Salle was heard speaking as if to himself. Looking at his watch, he exclaimed: "Two o'clock! How long does the little witch mean to keep me waiting? Beautifying herself, I suppose! That is needless. Poor Fleetwood! He little dreams of the compensation I am taking for the caresses he lavished on Emily Gordon. Tit for tat is fair play. Ha, ha! Who was it said, revenge is sweet? He had reason. But I fancy I am the gainer by this exchange. Emily will do; but Adelaide—Adelaide—"

At this moment the door−handle was turned. Fleetwood drew in his breath, and the moment of suspense seemed an eternity of torture.

Yes; it was Adelaide, who entered! Never had she looked so beautiful. A smile almost as joyous as that which made her face radiant when she first placed her hand in Fleetwood's as the pledge of her fidelity, was on her lips. With a step of triumph and delight, she entered the room with both arms extended, as if inviting an embrace. La Sallecaught her to his bosom, and stopped her mouth with kisses.

"Hush!" whispered Glenham, as he saw Fleetwood gasp under the pressure of the acutest agony that can wring the human soul. "Remember your promise to be silent."

But a mist came over Fleetwood's eyes—his heart seemed as if thrown from its centre by a convulsion—he threw out his hands for support, but they touched nothing but the smooth surface of the wall—and then, with a suppressed groan, he fell to the floor.

"I thought so," said Glenham, quietly closing the leaves of the sliding door. He threw open the shutters. A flood of light poured into the room. He approached Fleetwood, and lifted him to a sitting posture. As he did so the blood poured from his victim's mouth, and stained the delicate linen of his shirt.

"He has burst a blood−vessel!" said Glenham, alarmed at the serious effects of that internal struggle, which he had imposed on Fleetwood. Placing him on a sofa, he rang the bell.

"Tell your mistress to come here at once," he said, addressing the black waiting−woman of the house.

Mrs. Winfield was soon on the spot. At first she imagined that Fleetwood had been stabbed. On learning the truth, a momentary pang of compunction seemed to visit her seared and indurated heart.

"Poor fellow! poor fellow!" she exclaimed. "And so good looking as he is! Had I imagined it would have hit him so hard I never would have engaged in this ugly business. Irene, run this instant for Doctor Mott. There! Raise him gently. We must carry him up stairs, and lay him on a bed. Poor, dear young man! And this beautiful whitevest—how stained it is with blood! Come! he shall have good care taken of him any how. I didn't look for anything as serious as this. If I had, I would sooner have been burnt at the stake than suffered such goings−on in my house. This way, Mr. Glenham!"

Still insensible, Fleetwood was carried to an adjacent room, and placed upon a bed. The best surgical attendance was speedily procured, and before the lapse of half−an−hour, animation was restored. Two days afterwards he was pronounced sufficiently out of danger to be removed to the house of Mr. Gordon, where the apartment he had occupied a few days before was assigned to him. Passively and tacitly he assented to all the propositions for his own personal accommodation made by those by whom he found himself surrounded. He put no inquiries and uttered no complaints, but seemed like a person, whose mind is brooding in silent apathy over one haunting thought. The only emotion he manifested, was when on entering his room at Mr. Gordon's, he glanced anxiously at the wall. But the painting which had formerly excited his attention, had been judiciously removed; and, with a sigh, he turned away.

When he was sufficiently recovered to reflect with comparative calmness on the occurrence to which he owed his present state of prostration, he discovered nothing in the cause and its effect to suggest a doubt as to the truth of all Glenham's representations. Had he seen Adelaide fly to the embrace of any man but Count La Salle, perhaps a misgiving as to the deceitfulness of appearances might have arisen—perhaps the thought might have occurred, "may not this be the result of management, and may not Adelaide be under a delusion?"

But the plot was contrived with diabolical ingenuity to crush the suspicions which might have suggested themselves under different circumstances. The very man was selected, who alone of all others could, by his apt

introduction, confound reflection at a blow, and carry conviction home with terrible power. La Salle was a foreigner; and therefore it was unlikely that he could in any way be related to Adelaide by the ties of consanguinity. He had threatened Fleetwood with vengeance, to which he was impelled by one of the most active and malignant of the heart's passions, jealousy. Unfounded as that jealousy might be, he still believed that he had cause for it. And then the soliloquy he uttered while pacing the room, was but too effectual in preparing Fleetwood for the meeting, which followed. Were not the proofs all−powerful under the circumstances? Eagerly would Fleetwood have grasped at the slightest apology for a doubt, but he could find none. The last ray of hope had been shut out from his heart. It was not because he had been robbed of a beautiful prize—because he had lost her, to whom he had surrendered all the hoarded affections of his soul—that he felt so keenly his betrayal.

Had she died—died young and innocent—he knew that, after the first burst of grief was over, he might have recovered his happiness and even his cheerfulness, in the anticipation that their parting was but for a season. But what he lamented in bitterness of spirit, was the loss of those dreams of feminine goodness and honor, which he had cherished, and which—dreams though they might have been—were still the sunshine of his waking hours—that chivalric sentiment of respect for the sex—that faith in human dignity and worth—those convictions of the existence of a love surmounting time and death—the loss of these was one, which the world could never more supply.

CHAPTER XVI.

Oh! she was innocent;—
And to be innocent is nature's wisdom!
O surer than suspicion's hundred eyes
Is that fine sense, which to the pure in heart
By mere oppugnancy of their own goodness
Reveals the approach of evil.
— —Wordsworth.

The closing of the folding−doors was the signal to La Salle, that the object of the plot had been accomplished. His manner towards Adelaide instantly changed.

"Why, brother, you have almost taken away my breath," said she. "Is it the fashion abroad to salute one's sister so rudely?"

"But then consider," said he, "how long it is since I saw you. You must recollect—twelve years ago—when we parted—no—I forgot—you were at school. School changes a girl sadly—you don't remember me, then?"

La Salle spoke like a man who is thinking of something else than the topic on which he is trying to talk. He looked in Adelaide's face, but she could see that his attention was not fixed on her, however his glance might be. He was listening to what was going on in the adjoining room, and pondering on the circumstances of the little drama, in which he had become an actor.

"Why, what are you thinking of, brother Ernest? Does any thing disturb you?" asked Adelaide.

"Disturb me? Oh, yes—I—I was thinking of an oversight of mine, by which I shall lose a considerable amount of money. But what of that, so long as I have found a sister?"

"Oh, leave me instantly if your interests requireit," said Adelaide—"do not stay a moment on my account—though I shall be sorry enough to lose you so soon."

"But I will return speedily, Adelia, and then—"

"Adelia! That is a pretty joke! You have forgotten your own sister's name. Call me Adelaide, if you please, Sir;" and playfully putting her arm through his, she clasped her hands, and looked up in his face. "By the way, brother Ernest," she continued, "how lucky it is that you have arrived just in time to he present at my wedding. Perhaps you do not know that I am—to be married to−morrow."

La Salle started, and regarded her with a glance full of compassion. He was sufficiently well versed in human nature to recognize the perfect purity and innocence of her character. This young man was not a libertine. Jealousy had taken full possession of his soul, but it had some noble traits still, which even the clouds of passion could not wholly obscure.

"And are you well assured," he asked, "of the loyalty of him, who has promised to marry you?"

"Ah, if you had only known him you would not ask that question," she replied.

"And are you quite sure he will be here to−morrow to fulfill his promise?"

"Not altogether—a steamboat may blow up, or get detained—a carriage may break down—there are hundreds of contingencies that may prevent the punctual and literal fulfilment of his promise. He will be here if he can be, without detriment to the interests of others. Of that I am quite certain."

"Poor thing! Poor thing!" thought La Salle; "what a blast must soon fall on her young hopes!"

There were two or three trifling incidents which puzzled him exceedingly, although he had been fully prepared for much that had happened, by those whohad enlisted him in the conspiracy. The faint exclamation which had proceeded from Fleetwood's lips on his witnessing from his place of supposed concealment, the meeting between Adelaide and La Salle, had not passed unnoticed by the latter. Although hardly audible, yet so expressive was it of intense, heart−felt anguish, that La Salle, who had set down Fleetwood as a mere flutterer, was amazed at seeing him evince some token of feeling. He had inferred, moreover, from the language of those who had led him to be an actor in the scene which had just passed, that Adelaide occupied a relation towards her lover different from that which he was now convinced she filled. The suspicion flashed across his mind that he might have been deceived —that her own story was the true one—that Fleetwood—

"Can he be such a double traitor," thought La Salle, "as to seriously make love to another after he has solemnly pledged his faith to this poor girl? But did I not see his arm about Emily's waist—her head resting upon his bosom? Either she must be very liberal of her blandishments, or he must be false to Adelaide. Time alone can unravel these perplexities. I will wait patiently its developments."

La Salle's attachment towards Miss Gordon was sincere and disinterested; and the moment when he saw her in Fleetwood's arms, had been the bitterest of his whole life. In his jealousy there was hardly any act so base that he would not have stooped to it to be revenged on the man, who he believed had supplanted him in the affections of the woman of his choice. Glenham, who was but a tool in the hands of Mr. Gordon, had found La Salle an equally pliable instrument in his own hands; and, for the paltry triumph of robbing his enemy under his very eyes of an imagined mistress, theCount lent himself to the petty scheme, by which Glenham hoped to bring about a lasting separation between Fleetwood and Adelaide. But no sooner had the plot been carried out under the circumstances which we have related, than La Salle felt truly ashamed of himself for what he had done. He began to conjecture whether he had not been too precipitate, and to raise questions in his own mind as to Glenham's motives in urging on the affair. Blinded by jealousy, he had hitherto abstained from inquiring into the object of the plot in which he was involved; but now he determined to be satisfied. The mischief that had been done might be undone. Should it be really true that Fleetwood had intended making Adelaide his wife, such an explanation should be given as would satisfy him that they had all been the victims of Glenham's duplicity.

"I must leave you now," said La Salle in a tone of kindness, taking Adelaide's hand.

"I will not detain you, brother Ernest," said she; "for you seem pre−occupied, and I am sure you have left undone something, which you ought to do."

"Or done something, which I ought to have left undone," said he with a melancholy smile.

"Ah! if you think so, you must be over−scrupulous," said Adelaide with charming eagerness in defence. "For I am sure you would do nothing seriously wrong, brother Ernest. One has merely to look in your face to be sure of that."

"Good bye, Adelaide! I shall return soon. There is one thing, of which I am resolved my conscience shall not accuse me; and that is, neglect of your interests. You shall not lack a brother's protection. Farewell!"

He hurried from the room. In the street he encounteredGlenham, who had just quitted his victim's bed−side.

"Well, Sir, what was the result of your chivalric plot?" asked the Count. "I thought I heard Fleetwood utter a cry of pain, and then fall to the floor. What has become of him? Where is he now?"

"Oh, you are quite mistaken," replied Glenham, with ready volubility. "It was I, who uttered the cry of pain. Fleetwood—confound him!—trod upon my little toe, the one with the corn—and I pushed him so that he fell. We had to close the doors to prevent our laughing being heard."

"But was he not startled at seeing the girl rush to my embrace?"

"If he was, he took devilish good care to conceal his emotion. 'Umph!' said he—so the girl fancies him—I am glad of it—there is one expensive incumbrance taken off my hands—just in time, too; for Emily would make a row about it, should she find it out.' Such was the purport of what he said."

"The heartless villain!" exclaimed La Salle. "He has persuaded that innocent girl that he intends marrying her to−morrow."

"I suspect he has persuaded a good many innocent girls of the same thing," replied Glenham. "But of course he will not dare to break his word with Emily Gordon."

"Is he then really engaged to her?"

"Oh, undoubtedly. The marriage day is fixed."

"Then I will call and congratulate the lady," said La Salle, with compressed lips. "As for the gentleman, I will seize the first opportunity of letting him know that I consider him a villain of the deepest die."

"And why so?"

"The treachery he has practised towards Adelaideis enough to prove it. I will lay my life on it, that she is pure and unsullied. He is an insolent boaster if he says otherwise. I have not studied women all my life to be deceived now. You may look as incredulous as you please; but I am right in my convictions. That he has won her affections, I do not deny. In the full expectation of being honorably united to him, she has yielded up the first, passionate devotion of her young heart. He will be her murderer if he plays her false. You may laugh; but I have seen such instances before now, and I am a judge of temperaments. I will confront this man, and tell him what I

think of his conduct. His death would be a far less serious blow to the woman he has deceived than his infidelity. I will fight him. To save her feelings, I will shoot him. Where is he to be found?"

Glenham was perplexed and taken aback by the earnestness with which the Count spoke, as well as by the extraordinary determination expressed in his concluding words.

"Ahem! Fleetwood has gone—that is, he was to leave the city immediately for his country−seat," said Glenham hesitatingly. "You will not be able to see him to−day."

"Then it shall be to−morrow, or the next day, or as soon as he returns," said the Count. "He shall find that the poor girl, towards whom he has acted so unfeelingly, is not without an avenger."

"Do you mean to take her under your protection? That is just what Fleetwood would like," said Glenham, who began to tremble for the success of some of his own ulterior plans.

"She shall be spared the sort of protection you allude to," replied La Salle. "But here we are in Broadway. My rooms are at the Globe. Do you walk up or down?"

"I will take leave of you here," said Glenham. They parted. Glenham watched the Count till his figure was lost in the crowd, and then retracing his steps, he re−entered the house, from which he had issued but a few minutes before, and found his way to a room, where Mr. Gordon sat in solitary meditation.

"How is the patient?" asked Glenham.

"Out of all danger," was the reply. "He will be well enough to be removed to−morrow or the next day."

"Do you think so? Well; what I have come back to tell you is, that there are new and unexpected dangers ahead. La Salle, whom we have believed we could manage so easily, is disposed to give us trouble. He begins to suspect that there has been foul play, and is resolved to satisfy his misgivings before lending himself further to our plot. It will be hazardous to suffer him to have another interview with Adelaide."

"To be sure it will. That must be guarded against. How shall it be done?"

"It will be equally dangerous to suffer him to communicate with Fleetwood."

"I can easily provide against that contingency. Fleetwood will be obliged to keep his room for some weeks yet, and as I intend having him transferred to my house, it will be an easy matter to keep the Count out of the way, and at the same time, exercise a wholesome surveillance over my patient's correspondence. And now the question is, how to dispose of Adelaide?"

CHAPTER XVII.

Say, in the visions of romantic youth,
What years of endless bliss are yet to flow!
But mortal pleasure, what art thou in truth?
The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below.

The third morning after his removal to the house of Mr. Gordon, Fleetwood had so far recovered his strength, that permission was given him by his physician to quit the chamber, where he had been confined, and walk in the rooms below. Leaning on the arm of his host he proceeded down stairs, and entered the parlor, where he had first encountered Emily.

"Where are you, Emily? Not here to welcome our invalid guest!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon.

Emily was sauntering in the conservatory, sewing upon some light muslin work. She threw it down on hearing her father's voice; and as she issued through the open window with its background of leaves and flowers, she looked the embodiment of grace and beauty. Hastening through the intermediate parlor and saloon, she approached Fleetwood, holding out both her hands, while an expression of animation and delight gave a new charm to her features.

"I am glad to see you after your accident, Mr. Fleetwood," she said in a grateful and musical, because a sincere tone of voice.

"You are very kind," replied Fleetwood, smiling faintly, while he gave her his disengaged hand.

"Pray, my dear," said Mr. Gordon, looking at his watch, and addressing his daughter, "pray take my place as a walking stick for our friend. I have an engagement at this hour. I rely upon you,Emily, to take care of him. She is a capital nurse, I assure you, Fleetwood. Good bye!"

And without giving his guest time to reply, Mr. Gordon substituted his daughter's arm for his own as a support, and withdrew from the apartment. Fleetwood unconsciously frowned. Although physically convalescent he still felt sick at heart, and in no mood for female society, especially Emily's. He had been stunned by the terrible blow which had fallen upon him, and had but partially recovered from its depressing effects. He craved repose—he implored peace. His solitude had been almost uninterrupted from the moment of his accident up to the present time. He had not seen Emily at all, and her father but once or twice. He appreciated the disposition thus shown to humor him; and in gratitude for what had been done he resolved not to exhibit if possible his discontent.

In justification of Emily it should be made known, that she was as yet wholly unacquainted with the circumstances of Fleetwood's illness; although of this fact he was unaware. All that she had been told was, that he had slipped down and burst a blood vessel; and her natural inference was, that the accident was occasioned by too violent an effort on his part to save himself, while in the act of falling.

"I rejoice at our good fortune in having you again for our guest," said Emily; "at the same time I cannot but regret the cause."

"The cause? Ay, Miss Emily, the cause was not an agreeable one," replied Fleetwood, coldly, wounded at her incautious allusion to so delicate a subject.

"But you are quite over it, I trust? The effects are not serious, apart from a temporary weakness?"

"Oh, of course not!" said Fleetwood, bitterly. "It is foolish to feel any emotion of regret at suchoccurrences—to show such a thing as a heart capable of being wounded by treachery and falsehood where it looked for fidelity and love. Bah! Do not laugh at me for my simplicity."

"Laugh at you!"

And Emily looked wonderingly in the face of her guest, half afraid that his wits were in an unsettled state.

"I do not understand you quite," she said, after a pause.

"Can you ask me," said Fleetwood impatiently, "if the effects of such a disclosure, as that which prostrated me body and soul, are likely to be serious? Do you imagine I have no feeling? I know not how you may be constituted, but for myself, I can say that such an occurrence brings with it a life−long gloom, which no subsequent events can wholly dispel. But we will not allude to this subject again; for I see it is one where our sympathies must be diverse."

"Excuse me," replied Emily; "but I fear there has been some misapprehension on my part. All that I have heard of your accident has been, that it was purely physical. I knew not that there were any painful associations connected with it: had I done so, believe me I would never have revived the topic. If I have erred, it has been through ignorance. Let me show you the blossoms on my new orange tree."

"And is it then possible," asked Fleetwood, "that you are uninformed of the disclosure, which— which has made me wretched? Do you not know that she—she, to whom—whom, in short, I had promised to make my wife—"

"Rest yourself on this sofa," said Emily. "You are agitated. You shall select another opportunity for this communication."

"No, no—I am very childish," murmured Fleetwood; and suddenly assuming an air of composure, he added: "She has proved herself unworthy of the addresses of an honorable man, Miss Emily. The last time I saw her she was in the embrace of your friend, La Salle."

"Are you certain? Was there no deception? Were you not duped—cheated by false appearances? Beware! beware! It may be that both of you have been the victims of a cunningly devised plot."

"My own eyes and ears could not have deceived me. I first saw the Count, and fully satisfied myself that there could be no mistake as to the identity. He was alone, or thought himself alone, pacing the room in the expectation of her coming. Some ejaculations which fell from him, in the way of a soliloquy, showed that the idea uppermost in his mind was that of revenging himself on me for robbing him, so he imagined, of you."

"Ah! I see—I see," interrupted Emily. "It is not then, as I suspected, a plot—but La Salle, in the recklessness of his resentment, has—and I—I have been the cause of all this ruin and distress! But, go on, sir."

"You may imagine what were my sensations while waiting for the appearance of the female, whom he was expecting. I would not endure another such moment for a world's wealth. She came—how could I mistake her? That fatal beauty, which seemed so hallowed by the very soul of innocence beaming from every lineament, was now not less beautiful, not less dazzling, than when I first yielded all too willingly to its spell. She bounded forward into his arms, and allowed him to cover her cheek with his licentious kisses. You may well start. My heart stood still at the sight, and refused to fultill its functions. Crushedand horror−struck, I fell to the floor. You have my story."

"She flew to his arms!" exclaimed Emily, in a hoarse but audible whisper.

"Ay, and in the very moment of her treachery, a smile of such angelic purity was on her lips, that it will haunt me to my dying day. I never could have believed that guilt could so have disguised itself."

"The caitiff!" muttered Emily, pacing the floor with rapid steps, while Fleetwood sank into an arm−chair. "The vindictive traitor! I thought he might seek a manly, honorable revenge, but little dreamed he would accomplish the ruin of one who had not injured him, for the gratification of a paltry spite against Fleetwood. Oh, that I were a man, that I might punish such heartless villany!"

"You are indignant; and with reason," said Fleetwood. "Not even so black a passion as jealousy should have driven him to so base an act."

"Fleetwood, I will be frank with you," said Emily, suddenly changing her manner, and standing with folded arms before her guest. "Pardon me; but I have been playing a part."

"What is your meaning, Miss Gordon?" asked Fleetwood, much surprised.

Emily looked cautiously around, as if fearful lest there might be a listener near. She walked towards the conservatory, and having satisfied herself that her apprehensions were groundless, she re−crossed the room rapidly to where Fleetwood sat regarding her movements.

"Yes, I have been playing a part," she said, in a low, earnest and hurried tone. "The confession is an humbling one, but it shall be made. At the time I first met you, that man, La Salle, and I were secretly affianced. He was, or rather seemed tobe, madly in love with me, and my feelings, if less ostentatiously, were not less deeply interested in him. I dreaded to communicate the fact of our engagement to my father, because I knew he had set his heart on my marrying a man of wealth; and it could not be denied that La Salle was poor. The night you met me at Mrs. Dryman's, my father had insisted on my going there simply for the purpose of cultivating the acquaintance of a family at whose house there was a chance of my encountering you. We met. My father called on you shortly afterwards, and you became our guest. In an interview we had that same day, he accused me of entertaining a partiality for La Salle, and indignantly forbade my extending to him the slightest encouragement. It was you

whom he wished for a son−in−law; and he threatened me with his heaviest displeasure if I did not instantly exert all my powers to win your affections. You remember our walk in the conservatory. Distrusting my own firmness in resisting these parental importunities, I begged you to fly at once, and marry the woman of your choice. My father's approach prevented my saying all that I wished. You neglected or misconstrued my warnings. A subsequent interview with my father—and my scruples were overcome—but by arguments the most touching and irresistible that could be addressed to the heart of a daughter. I will leave it to you to imagine what they were. I was weak enough to consent to play the hypocrite—to pretend to be in love with you, in order to awaken that pity which is said to be akin to love. Foolish that I was, I did not reflect that the heart of a man was rather to be won by apparent indifference than by obvious partiality. But in deceiving others we are often apt to deceive ourselves."

"And you did this, knowing all the while that Iwas betrothed to another?" asked Fleetwood, with undisguised disdain.

"But you must remember, I was assured that the person you were about to marry was unworthy of you—that the match was one which would be a life−long source of misery to you—that in short, it would be a deed of mercy to detach you from the pursuit, by inducing you to transfer your affections, even if I did not mean to requite them by the return of my own."

"Too true! too true!" sighed Fleetwood. "The event has proved, alas! that it would have been a deed of mercy. This consideration was perhaps some excuse for your conduct, so far as I was concerned. But how could you so deceive La Salle?"

"That part of my conduct I shall not venture to extenuate. You must consider, however, that in the first place I was under the influence of my father, who threatened me with his lasting displeasure should I prove contumacious and resist his authority. But I suspect that even that influence would not have availed to induce me to discard La Salle, but for the peculiar circumstances under which he found us on the evening of the thunderstorm. His insulting manner at once roused my woman's pride. He chose to put a prejudicial construction upon what he saw. Without stopping to learn the truth, he indulged in a malicious and offensive sarcasm. How could I condescend to undeceive him after that?"

"I must admit that you did not lack provocation."

"But how can I forgive myself, Fleetwood, for attempting to mislead you? No sooner had La Salle quitted the house, than I tried to persuade you that I had never encouraged him to hope for a return of his attachment. There, I blush to say, Iwas guilty of deception. But the man's forward vaunting of past favors stung me to the quick. I was angry and indignant; and felt as if I could have accepted the first man who proposed for my hand, if it were only to exasperate and punish La Salle. Little did I dream that he would have taken such a dastardly revenge. Oh, Fleetwood, it is I, after all, who have brought this misery upon you!"

"Do not say that, Miss Gordon. Is it not rather you who have saved me from a much worse infliction, that might have come at some future day? Think you, I should have been happy with the woman who, with so much facility, could be shaken in her loyalty? I feel no resentment towards La Salle. I rather thank him for subjecting her to the test. That she was found wanting was my misfortune, and not his fault. The world will expect me to fight him, perhaps, when I recover—but I shall consult my own tastes and my own convenience exclusively about that."

"You take a strange view of the matter," said Emily. "He has wounded me far less grievously than he has you, and yet I feel as if I could take the field against him with a hearty good will; for I now detest him as heartily as I once loved him."

"You have dealt candidly with me, Miss Gordon," said Fleetwood, rising, and once more accepting the proffered support of her arm—"you have dealt candidly with me, and I thank you. I can find a thousand excuses for the little imposture you practised; and your frank confession takes away the ungraciousness which it might otherwise wear. I acknowledge that I was duped—that I was conceited enough to believe you were enamoured of so humble a person as myself—but I hope you will not think the worse of me when I say that the belief gave me far more pain than pleasure. Why should we not confide in each other? My mind has been strangely diverted and relieved already by this mutual explanation; and now knowing each other's heart, we need not hesitate to communicate our thoughts freely and unreservedly."

"To me," replied Emily, "such an interchange will not fail to be some compensation for what I have suffered and must continue to suffer. Notwithstanding La Salle's conduct at our last interview, I must confess I entertained

hopes that time and circumstance would bring us once more together; but since he has proved unworthy, those hopes are annihilated. Let us trust to time, the great physician, my friend, to teach us endurance, if not cheerfulness, under our mutual wrongs."

They paced the room for a moment or two in silence.

"I could not have believed," said Fleetwood, "that my heart could so have misled me as it did in regard to that child—for child she seems to be, with that face of child−like innocence and beauty."

"But so young—so inexperienced as she is— what resistance could she offer," said Emily, "to the arts of so consummate a man of the world as La Salle?"

"Do you then find excuses for her?"

"Yes, many for her, but none for him. I cannot speak my detestation of his baseness."

"But the circumstances under which I proffered her the protection of a husband—the relations in which we stood to each other, and to the world, were of such a character that—alas! it is folly to deplore the past. Let me hear music, Emily— music that shall bring a new and more welcome train of thoughts."

A smile of pleased surprise passed over her lips. It was the first time he had addressed her by the familiar name of Emily.

Fleetwood experienced a relapse in his maladythe day after this interview, and was obliged to keep his bed for a considerable time. Mr. Gordon contrived that Emily should be his nurse and constant attendant. She beguiled the tedious hours of his illness by reading, conversation and music. Her harp was transported to his room, and, at his request, she brought her embroidery work and sewing, with which to occupy herself when wearied with other employments, or when the invalid had sunk into a momentary slumber. With her own hands she poured out the fever draughts which the physician had prescribed to be given to him at regular intervals. With her own hands she administered food, and supplied fresh pillows for his heated head.

The scheme was prospering beyond Gordon's most sanguine hopes. A few hints to the physician, who was, by the way, a very accommodating person, and it seemed as if a successful termination might be speedily brought about.

"I should recommend your making a visit to Europe, my young friend," said Dr. Brisk, one morning, when he found himself alone with his patient.

"I have been thinking of the same thing, Doctor," replied Fleetwood. "When can you let me go? I will leave in the very next steamer."

"That will depart in a week; and I see no reason why you should not be well enough to embark in her," said the doctor.

"See that I have a good birth secured at once, my dear doctor," returned Fleetwood. "I can speedily make my arrangements to quit this country. I have no longer any ties to detain me here."

"No ties?"

"None whatever! Should I die, 'who will there be to mourn for Logan? Not one!'"

"Do not be too sure of that. Either my observationshave deceived me most unaccountably, or there is one at least, who will lament your absence and sigh for your return."

"You must be under a mistake, doctor. To whom do you refer?"

"To Emily Gordon."

"Confess now, doctor," said Fleetwood, "that you are less sagacious than you believed yourself to be. Emily's attachment is not a serious one. She has told me as much with her own lips. She was in love with La Salle, until he proved himself recreant."

"But in finding a worthier object, may not her affections have been transferred with redoubled strength?"

"Ah, my dear doctor, affections are like season tickets to a theatre, not transferable."

"My own experience contradicts that remark," said the doctor. "How long is it since Emily gave you to understand that you were an object of indifference to her?"

"It was on the day I first went down in the parlor after my removal to this house."

"Exactly; but there may have been a change since that time in her views. You make no allowance for the effect upon a woman's heart of tending upon a young man in the capacity of a nurse. Pity melts the soul to love; and in this case I am sure that another element than friendship enters into the watchfulness, with which I have seen her sit by you while you slept, and start to anticipate your wants when you awaked. Why, man, she has

actually become pale and thin, though you may not have remarked it, with the confinement of this sick room and the care she has bestowed upon you."

"She has indeed been an attentive nurse," remarked Fleetwood. "It was selfish in me not toperceive that she was injuring herself by her unwearied attendance on her invalid guest."

"Could you but have seen what I witnessed the other day," said Dr. Brisk, "you would not entertain much doubt as to the truth of my surmises in regard to the state of her affections."

"And what did you see?"

"It happened the night before last," said the doctor. "I had told Emily, that I should call during the evening to give you a composing draught. Accident detained me till past midnight. Fortunately Mr. Gordon had given me a pass−key, so that I entered the street−door without wakening the family. Ascending the stairs on tip−toe, I opened the door of your room so noiselessly that my entrance hardly created the slightest sound or motion. Emily stood by your bed−side."

"And had she sat up so late to watch by me?" exclaimed Fleetwood.

"She seemed like one who had neither slept nor coveted sleep for many hours," resumed the Doctor. "She held a lamp in her hand, the light of which she shaded from your face, while she regarded you with a smile, which spoke nothing if not the tenderest affection. She placed the lamp upon a chair, and bending over you, listened intently to your breathing as if to satisfy herself that you were in a grateful slumber. And at length, removing the hair gently from your pale forehead, she stooped and pressed her lips to it, and then, as if frightened at her temerity, turned suddenly and screamed on beholding me."

"Indeed! I never should have suspected that she felt thus tenderly towards me," said Fleetwood.

"Because pride makes her disguise her feelings," replied the doctor. "On seeing that I had inadvertentlybecome possessed of her secret, she simply remarked, 'Doctor, I rely upon your discretion, your honor,' and quitted the apartment."

"And do you really think, doctor, that I would do wisely to make her my wife?"

"It seems to me, that under existing circumstances, you could not take a more judicious step," said Dr. Brisk. "Your health is likely to be delicate, your spirits variable, for some months, perhaps years, to come. In your travels you will feel the want of an intelligent companion, and one, who, like Emily, has showed herself no unskilful or inattentive nurse. So much for the selfish view of the subject; there is another, that I am sure will appeal with no less force to your heart. A visit to Europe is quite as important at this time to Emily's health as to your own. Indeed I should have serious fears for her life, should you leave her behind, hopeless and desolate. Recent circumstances have affected both of you in such a manner as should waken the keenest sympathies of each. Why not study to make amends, each to the other, for the wrongs you have experienced?"

"Doctor!" exclaimed Fleetwood angrily; "when I have a physical wound, I will ask your advice. Those of the heart do not need your tending." And then, remarking the bland and innocent expression upon the physician's face, he added—"Pardon me if I was hasty—but you touched me nearly. I will give due consideration to what you have said. I will reflect calmly and dispassionately upon the course, which it is incumbent upon me to pursue. In short, I will take Shakspere's advice, and negotiate for myself in these affairs. I thank you for your counsel, believing it to be dictated by a sincere regard for my welfare."

"I fear I have been too obstrusive, too meddlesome," said Dr. Brisk; "but you forget that you encouraged me by asking my advice."

"So I did," returned Fleetwood; "and I beg your forgiveness for having received it as I sometimes do your medicine, with wry faces."

The doctor took his leave, and Fleetwood paced the room in an anxious and perturbed mood. That same day he was informed by Mr. Gordon, that La Salle had left the city with a young woman, who, from the description, was evidently Adelaide. The news created no surprise in Fleetwood's mind, for, after what he had himself witnessed, no additional proof of her infidelity could strengthen his convictions. Being left to himself he pondered intently on all that Dr. Brisk had said, and on the circumstances in which he found himself involved.

"Can it be," he asked, "that Emily will be content with such a dull, dead heart as I should bring her? What is it like but the wasted and blackened frame−work, which is all that remains of some brilliant fireworks, that flashed gloriously for a moment upon the night, and then went out in utter darkness? But I will judge for myself whether the Doctor is right in his surmises. I will test for myself the state of her feelings towards me; and if it should

appear that her happiness is really dependant in any measure on my movements, why, then— then I will leave it to the impulse of the moment to do what is most becoming—to guide me aright."

Fleetwood rose the next morning, feeling far better in health and spirits than he had done since the day of his prostration. It was one of those delicious mornings in June, when the very sense of existence is a joy, so graciously smile the heavens —so invitingly blooms the earth—such luxury is it to breathe the fresh, fragrant and elastic air! He attired himself with more than ordinary elegance, as if nature had set him an example, which he wasbound to imitate. Entering the suite of luxurious apartments below, he paced them with a tread more buoyant than he had been accustomed to practice. The windows that led into the conservatory were open, and the eastern sunshine streamed in among the verdure, while the soft summer breeze sent a flood of odors stolen from the flowers through the apartments. The canary birds in their gilt cages were singing as if ready to split their little throats in greeting with honors due the beautiful day; and the very fountain, as it sprang glistening from its marble basin, seemed to send up from its falling waters a sort of bell−ringing music, expressive of delight.

"How sweet, how animating are these influences!" thought Fleetwood. "God never takes away from us so much, that he does not leave us enough to awaken our continual wonder and gratitude—enough to fill our hearts and occupy our thoughts! In this conservatory alone, there are materials for a life−time of absorbing study and observation. There is not a leaf, which does not preach of omnipotence and infinity, had we but the ears to listen."

At that instant he heard a door open and close, and, as he issued from the conservatory into the parlor, he encountered Emily. Her eyes seemed heavy, as if "with unshed tears," and her cheeks were unusually pale. Poor girl! She had just come from an interview with her father, and the task that he had imposed upon her was a severe one.

Fleetwood did not fail to notice the change in her aspect, and called to mind the observations which Dr. Brisk had made the day before.

After congratulating her on the beauty of the morning, he offered his arm for a promenade. Each seemed absorbed in thought for some moments, as if studying how to frame a remark. Fleetwood was the first to speak.

"Thanks to your kind watching, Emily," he said, "I am again on the road to recovery. But my physician recommends that I should visit Europe— what think you of the idea?"

Emily remained silent. There was a terrible sense of oppression at her heart. She had been commanded by her father to play the hypocrite—to pretend to be the victim of a passion which she did not feel—and a reluctant consent had been wrung from her. The consciousness that her very agitation would now be construed falsely by Fleetwood added to her anguish, and yet she dared not undeceive him, such had been the terrible imperiousness of her father.

"Emily, we promised each other that we would speak frankly," said Fleetwood; "you first set me the example, and I am sure you will not think the worse of me for following it. So recent is this affliction that has bowed me to the earth, that you cannot suppose me capable of replacing at once, by a new tie, that which has been so fatally severed. Ah, I cannot tell you what I have lost in her! If you knew how I had stored my future with all bright things because of her, and how it now seems all weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, you would not wonder at the crushing effect which the discovery of her unworthiness has had upon me. My heart seems closed to any new affection—arid, dark and desolate, love and joy must ever find there but an inhospitable reception. But the blow which felled me to the earth, has fallen lightly upon you; and I have been told—remember, we have promised to be ingenuous—I have been told that my departure would take from your own lot some of its brightness—that—"

A suppressed sob from Emily interrupted him in his remarks. Withdrawing her arm from his, she covered her face with her hands.

"Hear me to the end, Emily," he continued. "I frankly tell you how bankrupt is the heart I have to offer you. In love with you I am not, and never can be, in the romantic acceptation of the phrase. But you have won my esteem, my admiration, as you must that of all who can appreciate the beautiful and the good. I should make you a true and indulgent, if not an affectionate husband;—and if I can contribute to your happiness by assuming that relation towards you, I pray you let us join our fates. I offer you my hand—will you accept it?"

With a despairing gesture, Emily sank upon the sofa, and bowed her head upon the pillow. Then suddenly rising, she said, with sudden energy:

"I will repay your noble candor—I cannot see you deceived by my own acts into supposing that—"

At this moment she looked round the room distrustingly, as if hearing a sound which bade her pause, and then,

with a shudder, she placed her hand in Fleetwood's, and exclaimed:—

"Fleetwood, I am yours!"

Mr. Gordon immediately made his appearance, and, seeing Fleetwood's arm about his daughter's waist, gave utterance to a significant cough.

Fleetwood turned, and telling Emily, who seemed violently agitated, to be calm, said to Mr. Gordon:—

"Congratulate me, sir, on my good fortune. Your daughter has promised to be my wife."

"Most heartily do I rejoice at it, my dear Fleetwood," replied Mr. Gordon, taking him by the hand. "You have made this the happiest day of my life."

"When shall we be married, Emily?" askedFleetwood. "Let it be without delay; for I care not how soon I leave this country for Europe."

"Do you not hear, Emily?" said her father. "Frederick asks you to fix the happy day."

"Let it be when you will—when you will," replied Emily—and, with a sigh, she fainted in the arms that were supporting her.

"Poor child! She faints from very excess of happiness," said Mr. Gordon, ringing the bell, and calling for a tumbler of cold water.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At lover's perjuries, Jove laughs.

— Shakspeare

Two weeks after her interview with her supposed brother, Adelaide might have been seen seated in the room where that interview had taken place. She sat lost in thought—her eyes fixed and dilated, as if the subject, in which she was so absorbed, was painful in its nature.

It may be remembered, that Mr. Gordon, on learning from Glenham that there was danger of La Salle's disclosing the plot, of which he had been made the centre−wheel, had concluded that it would be necessary to remove Adelaide from her present place of abode, in order to prevent a discovery which would materially interfere with the success of his plans. On consulting with Mrs. Winfield, they abandoned this idea. All that would be necessary would be to prevent the Count's seeing Adelaidein the event of his calling, and to persuade him if possible that she had left the city, so that he might discontinue his visits. The scheme thus arranged was successfully carried out. La Salle had been baffled in all his attempts to learn whether or no she was in the house.

The same devices, which had been hitherto employed to mislead Adelaide in regard to the cause of Fleetwood's absence, were continued with success for some days after the period which he had fixed for their wedding. And then, as she began to grow solicitous and alarmed, Glenham appeared and helped to keep up the delusion, by assigning new and specious reasons for his friend's apparent neglect. In one of the forged letters which she had received, Fleetwood had been made to commend this young man to her confidence; and though she experienced an indefinable sort of dislike towards him, she had never yet distrusted the genuineness of his professions or the truth of his assertions. His inventive faculties were pretty severely tasked by the questions which she put. The absence of her supposed brother, as well as of her lover, was a matter which required explanation. Adelaide united a child−like ignorance of the world, as experience shows it, to a premature knowledge of it as exhibited in books. It was not difficult to persuade her that "Ernest," as she called him, had encountered some opposition at the Custom House, which required his immediate presence in Washington, as well to vindicate his character as to look after his interests.

But Adelaide had other reasons beside that natural distrust, which must soon have sprung up in her mind, for her present disturbed and anxiously meditative mood. At his last two visits, Glenham had thrown out mysterious hints in regard to Fleetwood, which had awakened her intensest solicitude.At first these givings−out were mere expressions of amazement at his prolonged absence, and declarations of inability to explain why he should suspend writing to Adelaide. Then came the dark inuendo, the deprecatory insinuation. the torturing doubt. Under the mask of a disinterested concern for her welfare, Glenham succeeded in winning her confidence. He had promised her that he would satisfy himself once for all whether Fleetwood was, as he had pretended to be, at his country−place, detained by engagements which he could not neglect, or whether he had arrived in the city, and had deferred calling from illness or any other cause. She was now waiting, in a state of cruel suspense, the coming of Glenham, who had promised to bring her some definite information on the subject that morning.

To doubt was to despair with Adelaide. She would not, therefore, even entertain a suspicion of Fleetwood's truth; but she feared that some accident had occurred to him, the effects of which were dangerous, and which he was trying to keep concealed from her, from motives of generosity.

Suddenly Glenham entered the room, and, without pausing to salute her, began pacing the floor as if agitated and indignant.

"What has happened, Mr. Glenham, that you appear thus excited?" exclaimed Adelaide, in a tone of alarm.

"Ah! how shall I communicate it to you, Miss Adelaide?" said Glenham, shaking his head mournfully. "I fear that you cannot bear it, or that you will not believe it—and yet nothing can be more true."

"Does it concern Fleetwood?"

"It does."

Adelaide was silent for nearly a minute, while her heart beat violently and her cheeks grew pale, and she grasped with both hands the arms of thechair in which she sat. At length, as if nerving herself to endure the worst, she said: "Speak freely. I am prepared to hear."

"To keep you no longer in suspense, then, Miss Adelaide, Fleetwood has forsaken you—and he is now affianced to another."

Adelaide instantly rose, her hands resting upon the arms of the chair. She surveyed Glenham a moment with an expression of incredulous scorn, uttered the simple exclamation, "Slanderer!" and sank back into her seat.

"I was prepared for this incredulity," said he; "but you do me injustice; and—I grieve to say it— I can point out to you the means of satisfying yourself at once, that what I have told you is true. The lady, to whom Fleetwood is engaged, resides in this city. Her name is Gordon—Emily Gordon."

"Emily Gordon!" exclaimed Adelaide—"and does she reside in Camden Place?"

"It must be the same," said Glenham, much amazed. "Are you acquainted with her?"

"No; but I found a card bearing that name and address, in a book which my mother procured for me the other day. I will instantly call on Miss Gordon."

"No—n−n−no! that would never do!" stammered Glenham, who did not know what might be the result of such an encounter. "That would not be the best way to satisfy your doubts."

"Doubts! I have no doubts!" said Adelaide scornfully, rising and moving towards the door. "But I owe it to the lady to tell her what I have heard this day. Good morning, sir."

And she quitted the room.

Glenham rang the bell violently and asked for Mrs. Winfield. She was not in the house. He was in despair. Should he run to Mr. Gordon's, and put him on his guard? The hour was onewhen that gentleman was almost certain to be from home. While Glenham was yet hesitating what to do, Adelaide, who had donned her bonnet and shawl, passed out of the front door into the street. He thrust on his hat, and rushed after her—but what could he do? Any remonstrances he might make would excite her suspicions. He found himself caught in his own toils. The straight forwardness of Adelaide's character had been more than a match for his own craft. Her decision had baffled his calculating and elaborated policy. He slunk along the streets keeping his eyes fixed upon her movements, without daring to let her know that he was following her, and without being able to invent any new lie, by which he could defeat her purpose.

Adelaide had little difficulty in finding the house of Mr. Gordon. She rang, and asked to see Miss Emily. The servant replied that she had gone out to walk. "I will wait for her return," said Adelaide; and the servant ushered her into the parlor, bowed and left the room. The weather was warm; and Adelaide, attracted by the sight of flowers and falling water, moved towards the conservatory. She had not been there two minutes when she heard the sound of footsteps and a voice, which made her tremble. Indeed so powerless did agitation render her, that she was obliged to cling to the nearest object, which happened to be the trunk of an orange tree, for support. As she looked through the leaves, which concealed her from view, into the suite of rooms beyond, she saw Fleetwood enter with a lady on his arm. They approached a sofa, upon which they sat down as if fatigued by their stroll. The sight seemed to paralyse the functions of motion in Adelaide. For an instant, she could not move—she could not speak. She thought she must be under the influence of some horrid night−mare,and that all that had passed and was passing before her was but a dream.

"To−morrow, then, Emily," said Fleetwood, "to−morrow sees us united! Why do you sigh? One would think you had half repented of this engagement."

"Oh, no—no!" replied Emily. "We ought to be very happy. I am sure I shall make one person happy, and that is my father—and I shall try, Fleetwood, to make you happy also."

Adelaide had been from compulsion a listener to these words. Their first effect was terrible; and she thought she would have swooned. But a sense of her situation, and, perhaps, an emotion of pride came to her relief, and made her sinews bear her "stiffly up." The conclusion at which she at once arrived was, that Fleetwood, surrounded by the luxury and affluence visible in this abode, had become ashamed of his allegiance to one, who was the child of obscurity, perhaps of dishonor. The sickening feeling of desertion, of desolation, then came over her, and almost bowed her to the earth. But she knew if she gave way to it she was lost.

What should she do? Should she pass out of the room before the eyes of Fleetwood and the new companion of his choice, or should she escape unobserved by a side−door, which led into the passage communicating with the front entrance of the house? She feared that her remaining strength would give way should she confront Fleetwood; and what purpose could the meeting answer? The evidence against him was irresistible. There could be no delusion in what she had seen and heard. What further testimony could she ask?

But even in that moment of doubt and desolation, she could not endure the idea of skulking like a criminal from the presence of her whom she had come to seek; and severe as the trial was, she resolvedto take the bold and ingenuous alternative. With a bearing at once modest and majestic she stepped forth from her place of concealment, and advanced towards Emily. Fleetwood started up with amazement, as if appalled by the sight of a spectre; for Adelaide, with a little aid from the imagination, might well have passed for one, such was the luminous pallor of her countenance.

"If this is Miss Gordon," said Adelaide, "it is she whom I came to seek. But I have already attained the object of my errand, and it is unnecessary that I should say more. I will take my leave."

She was moving towards the door.

"Adelaide!" exclaimed Fleetwood, gasping for utterance.

"Adelaide! And is this Adelaide?" asked Emily in a tone of pity and surprise.

Adelaide turned, cast a glance full of mournful dignity upon Fleetwood, and then slowly resumed her steps towards the door.

"Adelaide! speak to me!" exclaimed Fleetwood in a tone of the acutest anguish—"was it not all some horrid delusion—a dream—a trick of the senses?"

Adelaide paused; there was a mystery in Fleetwood's interrogation, which she could not fathom. The moment was a crisis in her fate. A straw might turn the balance either way—so as to result in a triumphant explanation of all doubtful circumstances or in a renewed conviction of her unworthiness. Alas! her evil genius prevailed.

At that juncture, Mrs. Winfield burst into the room.

"Why, my dear, dear daughter, are you here?" she exclaimed approaching Adelaide, who inadvertently recoiled from her touch. "How could you leave your old mother? Come home—come home, and all shall be forgiven. Has the villainforsaken you after promising you marriage? Never mind, my dear—never mind!"

"Oh, this humiliation is too much!" groaned Adelaide, rushing from the room.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said Mrs. Winfield, turning to Emily. "Was it not a sin and a shame. Miss, for that Count what−d'ye−call−him to treat the child so basely? I could tear his eyes out— I could!"

Fleetwood was confounded. If the day−dream had ever occurred to him that there was still a possibility of Adelaide's innocence, this last occurrence must forever dispel it.

"Poor, degraded Adelaide!" he exclaimed. "Did ever sin so clothe itself in the vesture of an angel!"

Mrs. Winfield rejoined her daughter on the outer steps, and hurrying her into the carriage, which stood in waiting at the side−walk, drove home in silence.

For days, Adelaide could not weep, although she ever repaid with a faint smile any little office of kindness proffered by those around her. But the fountain of tears seemed to have been parched up.

It is related of Southey, that during the eclipse of his magnificent intellect in his latter days, when a gloomy derangement had shut out the immortal soul from the regular use of its accustomed medium of communication with the external world, he retained to the last his old affection for books. He would find his way to his splendid library, and there sit with a black letter volume open on his lap, gazing on one page for hours, and at times moving his fingers, as if making written extracts.

And Adelaide, having been accustomed to find a never failing solace in books, now sat with some favorite volume in her hands, and her eyes fixed on some page, although her thoughts might be far away. At length a passage, which she had gazedat for a long while without taking in its meaning aroused her attention. The lines were these:

"Nature hath assigned
Two sovereign remedies for human grief;
Religion, surest, firmest, first and best,
And strenuous action next."

"Ay, it is true," she said, with a melancholy smile. "I feel that it is true—but this desolation of the heart—this tearless, passionless sorrow seems as if it were without a remedy—as if death only could end it."

The thought had hardly found utterance when a strain of music from the street beneath the window at which she sat, fell on her ear. It was the noisy garish hour of noon, and the rumbling of cars over the pavements, joined to the cries of the peripatetic venders of radishes, strawberries and other articles of summer consumption, afforded little opportunity for the musicians, whosoever they might be, to make themselves heard. But above all the chaotic

tumult, and running through it like a vein of pure gold through a rocky mass composed of baser substances, floated a melody, which at once made her start and listen as if her very life depended on the hearing.

Where and when had she heard that strain? And why should it bring back such a throng of happy images and thoughts? It was as if her soul were suddenly transported over dreary years to a time of contentment and joy in the sunny season of childhood. She seemed to breathe

"A purer ether, a diviner air!"

It was as if her spirit had thrown off the memory of all intervening events, and, by some miracle, had renewed its youth. While she listened, her tears fell profusely—her breast heaved—and, when the music ceased, she exclaimed half sobbing and halflaughing—"I have wept at last! I feared I should never weep again!"

The melody was one which she was accustomed to hear years before when she lived in the family of Greutze, the German musician. Looking out of the window she saw two females and a boy, who, by their dress, were evidently foreigners. The younger female, a pale and interesting girl, played upon the harp, and the other sang in a feeble but sweet and cultivated voice. From the strap over the boy's shoulder, and the cap in his hand, it was apparently his office to carry the harp and receive the scanty pennies, which the passers−by, who lingered to listen, might choose to bestow. There was that in the appearance of each member of the group, which spoke their superiority to the common class of strolling melodists. Moved by the unobtrusive and unsuccessful appeal, which they made for charity to their audience, as well as by gratitude for the effect which their music had produced, Adelaide took a gold piece from her purse, and hurrying down stairs into the street, placed it in the hands of the harp−player. The young woman looked at the gift and at the giver with astonishment. She held the gold piece displayed in her hand, as if tacitly enquiring whether there was not some mistake—she could hardly realize that such munificence was real.

"How long have you been in New York?" asked Adelaide in German; for, from an exclamation, which the boy had made, she at once guessed the country of their birth.

"We came here last winter, Miss," said the elder of the two women, who was apparently agreeably surprised to find that their benefactor could speak their native language. "We came in the expectation of meeting a brother, who had sent for us, and who promised to provide for our wants. On arrivingin this city we learned that he had left for Hamburgh in a ship, which has never since been heard of. Our little supply of money was soon exhausted; and had we not met a friend, who lent us this harp, with which to earn what we may, we should soon have been utterly destitute."

"Is this your sister?" asked Adelaide, pointing to the younger woman.

"I thank Heaven that I can say she is," was the reply—"for what would I and my five motherless children do without her? Is she not our support and our pride—laboring for us all day, although we have no right to look to her for a penny?"

"Where did you learn that tune you played last?" asked Adelaide turning to the younger sister.

"I lived for some months in the family of a musician named Greutze," replied the harp−player. "He returned to the village where we dwelt, some years since from this country. Seeing that I had a taste for music he was kind enough to instruct me, although, Miss, I was a mere servant in the family."

"It was like him to do so!" exclaimed Adelaide, while her eyes filled again with tears. "Did you leave them well—the Greutzes?"

"And did you know them, Miss? Is it possible?"

"I lived with them for some years, and loved them much. How could you have abandoned such a home?"

The harp−player hung her head; and the elder sister, leading Adelaide away a few steps, said, in a whisper: "Poor child! it was no fault of hers. A young man in the village had promised her marriage. He forgot his promise one day, and having thrived rapidly in the world, married a daughter of the musician. Minnie (that's my sister) never would tell her wrongs, for she saw that her young mistress loved the man. About that time cameour brother's invitation to us to visit New York. 'Let us go,' said Minnie. 'It is best for me that I should leave this place.' I saw her meaning. We straightway left Germany—and—and—you know the rest."

Adelaide had been visibly agitated while the woman was relating these circumstances; but seeing that several inquisitive individuals among the passers−by had stopped to stare at her, she concluded to bring the interview to a close, although anxious to ask many questions about her old friend Greutze and his family.

"In what part of the city do you live?" she asked, turning to the younger and more intelligent woman.

"I see you have a pencil. I will write the direction for you on the blank leaf of your book," said Minnie.

In her haste Adelaide had retained in her hand the book, which she had been reading. She handed it with her pencil to the harp−player, who wrote and returned them.

"God bless you, sweet lady," said the woman, and the words were echoed both by the sister and the boy.

"I hope to see you again soon," said Adelaide; and, with a smile and a wave of the hand, she left them, and re−entered the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

O night, and shades!
How are ye join'd with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of the virgin,
Alone and helpless!
— Milton

"Ungrateful that I have been!" thought Adelaide as she ascended the stairs to the room, which she had recently occupied. "This poor, uneducated peasant girl sets me an example of fortitude and patience! I will follow it. I will no longer waste my days in idle repining. I will go forth into the world. I will exert the talents which God has given me. I will make myself useful to my fellow−creatures."

While entertaining reflections like these, a servant brought in Mr. Glenham's card, remarking that the gentleman was below. Adelaide had declined seeing Mr. Glenham on all the occasions— and they were many—that he had called, since the day of her visit to the house of Mr. Gordon. But now, as the first step towards keeping her new resolutions, she determined to give him an audience.

Glenham could not disguise the admiration, with which he regarded Adelaide, as she now entered the room where he was sitting. Distress of mind had robbed her features of none of their charms. They had lost a certain archness and piquancy of expression, which they used occasionally to wear; but in its place there was a composure, a serenity, such as limners give to their angels.

After interchanging greetings with him, Adelaide asked: "Do you hear anything of my brother, Mr. Glenham?"

Glenham turned away his head, and appeared confused.

"You hesitate! Has anything happened to him?" continued Adelaide in a tone of alarm.

"Ah, Miss Adelaide," said Glenham, "why is it my lot ever to come to you as the messenger of unhappy tidings? I hardly dare tell you all that has come to my knowledge in regard to circumstances, in which you have been recently involved— but I owe it to you—to myself—to disburthen my mind. You have been the victim of a conspiracy. He whom you believed to be your brother was an impostor. He is no kinsman of yours."

"Ernest not my brother! Impossible! I could not have been deceived. There was all the brother in his look, when we parted," said Adelaide.

"O, I doubt not that he played his part quite adroitly," said Glenham; "but he was nevertheless an actor in a plot—an infamous plot!"

"How could my mother have been imposed upon!" exclaimed Adelaide.

"Ah, there is the most afflicting part of what I have to communicate!" replied Glenham.

"Speak out, Mr. Glenham—there are few things, which I cannot now bear to hear with calmness," said Adelaide.

"And yet what I have to say must inevitably strike you with consternation and grief," resumed Glenham; "and I fear that I shall again have to make you distrust my veracity."

"No," said Adelaide, with a mournful movement of her head: "after what has passed there is little fear that I shall be again incredulous."

"Your mother, Miss Adelaide—"

"Ah, what of her?" exclaimed Adelaide, with an involuntary shudder.

"Hush!" said Glenham, sinking his voice to awhisper, and looking cautiously around the room. "Are we in no danger of being overheard?"

"And what, sir, if we are?" replied Adelaide. "There can be no secret between us in any event."

"Alas! I know not that," said Glenham mysteriously. "Your mother, Miss Adelaide, was a party to the plot laid for your ruin."

"How, for my ruin?" asked Adelaide, in a tone of amazement.

"Must I speak plainly?" said Glenham. "Know then, that your mother—that this house—pardon my agitation. In a word, Miss Adelaide, you cannot be seen entering this house or issuing from it, without being considered

infamous in the eyes of the world. Your mother is unworthy of such a child as you. She is a degraded woman; and, what is worse, she does not hide her degradation."

In spite of her predetermination to be calm, Adelaide could not but feel the crushing effect of this last blow. She seemed to writhe like the tortured Laocoon in the folds of the pestiferous serpent; and she pressed against her eyes with her closed fists as if to shut out the hideous thoughts which Glenham's words had suggested. Unconsciously she sighed several times like one in the extreme of pain; and for a minute the internal struggle that was going on threatened to rend her delicate frame. At length, with a sudden effort, she recovered her presence of mind, and sat erect with the mien of one nerved to a heroic calmness.

"Why was I made to believe," she asked, "that I had a brother?"

"Can you not imagine?" returned Glenham. "The young man came here for the most detestable purposes. He had the consent of your mother to reduce you—if he could so far undermine your principles of virtue—to her own infamous level. But you are faint?"

"Go on, sir. You see—you see I am quite composed."

"The young man," said Glenham, "was struck with contrition on finding you so young, so innocent; and he left you—to expostulate with your mother, who then ordered him out of the house."

Adelaide rose and laid her hand upon the bell−rope.

"What would you do?" exclaimed Glenham, alarmed.

"I would see my mother, and hear what she has to say to your charges," replied Adelaide.

"Stay but a moment," said Glenham, imploringly, arresting her in the act of ringing.

Adelaide withdrew her hand.

"Ah me! What's to be done, should this prove true?" she exclaimed, as if addressing the question to her own heart. "With such a mother I am more bereaved than an orphan—without a brother —without a friend—what shall I do?"

"Do not say you are friendless, while I am here, Adelaide," said Glenham, with a sad attempt to look irresistible.

Adelaide recoiled from him at this familiar use of her name. With what joy she had heard it, when Fleetwood first addressed her with the same absence of form!

"Hear me, Adelaide," continued Glenham, without perceiving her aversion. "Accept the honorable refuge, which I offer you, from all your dangers and griefs. I tendered you my hand when I thought your position as unexceptionable as my own—when I believed you to be wealthy, courted and caressed—and now, when these illusions are gone—when I see you discarded, exposed to insult and degradation, and subjected to social exclusions by the stain of birth, I renew my offer, and beseech you to listen to my suit. Surely the generosity,the disinterestedness of my attachment are now placed beyond a doubt."

"You must have strange ideas of generosity, sir," said Adelaide, approaching the bell, and ringing it, "to select an opportunity like this for addressing to me a renewal of your offensive proposal."

It may be well to say in this place, that Glenham's pretended disclosures contained some truth, mixed up with a considerable quantity of falsehood. Whatever may have been Mrs. Winfield's delinquencies in past years, she was now, and had been from the time of Adelaide's birth, so far as outward appearances were concerned, perfectly respectable. She lived secluded, and, although she kept a carriage, and was evidently in the enjoyment of abundant means, yet there was no disposition evinced on her part to attract public attention, or to make a show. She belonged, ostensibly at least, to one of the most rigorous religious sects; and, as she gave largely to the church of which she was a member, she was regarded even by those who were aware of her history, as a reclaimed sinner, who deserved to be countenanced and upheld. She was visited by none but persons of character and respectability, and Adelaide had never detected aught that could be recalled to substantiate Glenham's assertions. And yet when she recollected an occasional coarseness of expression or a trait of vulgarity, she dreaded lest they might all be true.

For reasons, which we must leave it to the sequel to explain, Mrs. Winfield was now exceedingly anxious that Glenham and Adelaide should be united; and she had recently had several anxious conferences with the gentleman for the purpose of arranging some new plot for the achievement of their purposes. The notable one which he finally hit upon, was that, which may be inferred from his interviewwith Adelaide. He thought it would be an easy matter to persuade her, that her only chance of receiving honorable protection was in uniting herself to

him, and that it was a moral duty as well as a matter of advantage for her to accede to his proposal. The necessity of speedy action on his part was evident from the recent visit which she had made to Emily Gordon. Had he not, by the merest accident, met Mrs. Winfield in her carriage, and put her upon her guard, a developement fatal to their plans would inevitably have been the result. He had, after some persuasion, induced this woman to agree to his present scheme, and to uphold, should it be necessary to do so, in order to influence Adelaide, all the falsehoods he had told her in regard to the reputation of her mother's house.

Having received Adelaide's summons, Mrs. Winfield now entered the room. Her demeanor was not, as it was habitually, imperious and bustling; but she had the air of a culprit, who shrinks from the interrogations to which he is about to be subjected.

"Is it true—what this man tells me?" exclaimed Adelaide, advancing and looking her firmly in the face. "O, tell me, is it true? Have I been indeed deceived? Was he not my brother, who met me here as such, and who received me with what I supposed a brother's embrace? You are silent— you hesitate! "Can it be true? And are you then my mother?"

"Forgive me, Adelaide; but—"

"Forgive you! And do you then admit that I have anything to forgive? O, you cannot be my mother, if what he tells me is true! The same blood flows not in our veins—the same instincts plead not in our hearts—the same fire kindles not our souls! O, are you indeed my mother?"

"And how dare you, sir," said Mrs. Winfield,turning to Glenham with well−feigned resentment, "how dare you slander me to my own child?"

"You cannot deny, madam, the truth of what I have told her," replied Glenham. "You cannot deny that the person you introduced as her brother was an impostor. Be careful, or I shall bring witnesses to prove all that I have said."

Mrs. Winfield looked abashed and turned away without replying.

"You do not speak, madam—you do not indignantly repel his charges!" exclaimed Adelaide. "O, tell me, have I a brother, or did you deceive me in telling me that I had one?"

"Pray don't take on so, child," said Mrs. Winfield, apparently not knowing what to say. "Where was the harm, if, for the sake of a joke, I made you think the young man was your brother?"

"A joke! Alas! mothers do not joke in that manner," replied Adelaide. "I have been betrayed! Is there no one on whom I can rely? Am I alone—all, all alone in the wide world?"

"Ah, Miss Adelaide, let me guide you in safety from this house," said Glenham. "I will protect— will succor you. If you will not suffer me to be a husband, you will at least grant me the privileges of a friend."

"And you, madam, are you willing that I should place myself under his protection?" asked Adelaide, turning a look of piercing inquiry upon Mrs. Winfield.

"Yes, child, go!" said Mrs. Winfield, "since he has persuaded you that you are not sufficiently protected in my house."

Adelaide paused, and seemed to be in deep thought for a moment. And then, glancing at Glenham, she said, "Wait till you hear from me," and quitted the room.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Winfield, as thedoor closed. "Do you know, Glenham, that I was several times on the point of coming out with the whole truth?"

"And, if you had, I should certainly have strangled you," said Glenham. "Do you not see she is wavering, and that before another day she will consent to an immediate marriage? Once let her place herself under my protection, and it will be easy to persuade her that her reputation is gone forever unless she becomes my wife."

"I don't know what to make of her sometimes," said Mrs. Winfield. "Gentle and soft as she seems to be, I felt while she was talking just as if I should have gone down on my knees, and confessed everything if she had but said the word. I wish that you and Gordon had been further before you led me into this business."

"Nonsense! I shall make her a pattern of a husband," said Glenham; "and she will be much happier with me than she would have been with that purse−proud Fleetwood."

"I would not harm the poor child for the world," rejoined Mrs. Winfield; "and if I thought you would ever ill−treat her, Glenham, I would not give her to you for twice the amount of her dowry."

The conversation between these partners in iniquity was continued nearly an hour longer; when Glenham becoming impatient at Adelaide's prolonged absence, requested Mrs. Winfield to go in search of her.

"She is not in her room," exclaimed this woman, returning from her search; "but on her dressing−table, I found this note."

Glenham seized it—saw that it bore his name as the direction, and, tearing off the envelope, read these words: "With the blessing of Heaven, I can protect myself. Farewell. Adelaide."

"Fools, idiots that we have been! The girl hasescaped!" exclaimed Glenham, stamping his foot with rage. "She has foiled us after all! After all our plotting—all our manœuvring, she has foiled us!"

"Gone! Has the child really gone?" said Mrs. Winfield, in tones of alarm.

"To be sure she has, old woman!"

"Old woman indeed! Don't old woman me, sir," said Mrs. Winfield bristling with choler.

"Forgive me, I did not know what I was saying," returned Glenham. "I will start instantly in pursuit. Perhaps I may track her yet. We are friends again, Augusta?"

"I don't know that. But go! find out if you can, where the child has gone to, and bring me word immediately. It would be ruinous were we to lose her at this time."

CHAPTER XX.

Against the threats
Of malice, or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call chance, this I hold firm;—
Virtue may be assail'd, but never hurt,
Surpris'd by unjust force, but not enthrall'd.
— Milton

The attempt to deceive Adelaide in regard to the character of her present home had been successful. The confused and indecisive manner in which Mrs. Winfield had met the gross accusations brought by Glenham seemed a conclusive proof of her guilt. But the parties to the deception little dreamed that the result would be so different fromwhat they had calculated. They little imagined that Adelaide, destitute and deserted, would reject the protection of Glenham, even when offered under the pretence of friendship.

Appalled by what she had heard, her first thought was to escape from the house immediately, and at any hazard. After that had been accomplished it would be time enough for her to consider what was to become of her. She ran up stairs into her room, hastily seized her shawl and bonnet, and gliding gently down to the street−door, opened it and issued forth into the open air. Hurrying round the neighboring corner, she took a circuitous route from street to street, until she found herself at the gate of St. John's Park. The gate was accidentally open, and, unaware that the residents of the stately houses which surrounded the square, were alone privileged to walk in this shady retreat, she entered.

"Did that lady show you her ticket of admission, Patrick?" asked one of the deputy gardeners of another.

"Isn't that face of hers ticket enough, you fool?" replied Patrick. "Who would think of asking a lady, the likes of that one, for a ticket?"

Adelaide passed on, and took a seat in the shade of a catalpa tree. It was not till then that she began to revolve the question, where shall I go? It suddenly occurred to her to see how much money she had remaining in her purse. Alas! it was empty. Her last half−eagle had been given to the wandering minstrels, who had roused her by their music under her windows. But stay! She had their address—it was inscribed on the blank leaf of one of her volumes—could she but recall it to mind! Ay, memory now serves her a good turn. She remembers the street—the number of the house. "I will go to them!" she said. "I could not have been deceived in their looks. They mustbe honest, though nothing but vagrant minstrels. Poor as they are, they are the only friends I have in this crowded metropolis. To whom else can I look for shelter and protection!"

She rose and moved towards the gate. As she reached it she looked up to see a splendid olive−colored barouche roll by, with its liveried driver and footman. It contained Fleetwood and Emily Gordon!

Adelaide paused as if a sudden heart−ache had shot through her frame. But in an instant she was firm, and walked on with a proud and elastic step. Was it an emotion of envy that brought the cloud to her face? Ah, no! It was a momentary regret that her young heart's creed had been so early trampled on—that her faith in human honor had received so severe a shock. But then came the consciousness that she herself had never wronged a human being by thought or deed, and she was re−assured and sustained.

After an hour's search Adelaide reached the house, of which she was in quest. It was a more respectable looking building than she had expected to find; but she soon discovered that it was occupied by some dozen families, and that it would be a matter of no little difficulty to learn which apartment was occupied by her German friends. After knocking at several doors and instituting a number of fruitless inquiries, she found herself in the attic story of the house, with a door on each side of the landing−place at the head of the stairs. She rapped with her sun−shade at the nearest of these doors, and her summons was speedily answered by a woman of somewhat elderly appearance who wore spectacles, and, as she opened the door, stood bent over in a position to keep a parcel of silk stuff, on which she had been sewing, from rolling from her lap.

"Can you tell me where a German family, named Mulder, reside in this building?" asked Adelaide.

"Pray walk in, Miss," said Mrs. Rugby, for that was the name of the elderly woman in spectacles.

Adelaide readily complied with the invitation, for she felt fatigued by her long walk. The room into which she

entered, though an attic apartment, was large, and received the light from four windows, so that it had a bright and cheerful aspect. The front exposure looked out upon the North River; and the Hoboken ridge, with its green woods, was plainly to be seen on the opposite bank.

A girl apparently not more than ten years of age, and beautiful as a sylph, was whirling about the floor with an airy, graceful movement as Adelaide crossed the threshold. But on seeing a stranger, she stopped, curtsied, and walked to the window, which was open.

The furniture of this apartment, though scanty, was neat and comfortable. A large double bed stood in the remotest corner. A black walnut bureau, a wash−stand, a piano or harp stool, a music rack, half a dozen chairs, a round table containing a work−box, surrounded by tassels, spangles and skeins of bright colored silk, were the objects which the eye took in on a hasty survey.

"Pray take a seat, Miss," continued Mrs. Rugby, throwing down her work, and placing a chair. "The poor foreigners, after whom you ask, are out traversing the streets in the hope of picking up a few pennies. They live in the opposite room; and will be back soon—as light as they went, I will be bound! Poor things! If it hadn't been for the five dollars you gave them, the landlord would have turned them neck and heels out of the house before this."

"And how did you know that it was I who gave them the money?" asked Adelaide, surprised.

"O, they could speak English words enough to describe you to me very well, Miss," said Mrs. Rugby; "and the moment I set eyes on you, I knew that you must be the person they meant. It was very good of you, Miss, to help them; for they are as deserving as they are poor."

"I suspect I am not the only one who has helped them, if I may draw an inference from the harp−stool without the harp," said Adelaide.

"It is very true, Miss, that I lent them my harp, which I treasure, because it belonged to my only daughter, who is dead and gone, and who was the mother of that poor child you see there. But, dear me! the mere lending a harp is little enough to do for one's next door neighbor. The will must be taken for the deed in my case."

"You are the friend of these poor people, madam," said Adelaide, abruptly—"you know their resources —the extent of their accommodations. Think you, they could receive me for a brief time, and let me lodge under their roof until I am able to earn for myself enough to support me?"

"Receive you!" exclaimed Mrs. Rugby, almost petrified with astonishment—"receive you as a lodger under their roof—why, Miss, what is the meaning of such a proposition?"

Adelaide hesitated, for she was debating with herself the propriety of revealing to one, who, until the last two minutes was an utter stranger to her, the cause of her abandoning a home, where she was surrounded by all the luxuries which wealth could procure. But she thought of the incident of the harp; and believing that the woman who would do such an act of kindness, would appreciate the motives of her conduct, she communicated with a simple earnestness of manner, and in a few brief sentences the whole story of her life up to the present moment.

When she had concluded, she looked up, and saw that her hearer had taken off her spectacles to wipe her eyes, which were literally suffused with tears. The little girl, too, had gradually drawn near, until, leaning on the back of her grandmother's chair, she listened with a look of premature intelligence.

"And are you utterly destitute, my dear?" asked Mrs. Rugby.

"Alas! yes, madam! I have nothing with me but the apparel which you see; and my purse is empty. Do you think it possible that I can induce these poor German women to give me shelter for a while?"

"They have not the power to serve you, my dear, however strong they may have the will."

"Then, what will become of me?"

"Become of you! Why, haven't I a nice large bed, and plenty to eat, with the Croton water at my elbow, as handy as a pocket in a shirt?"

"That's my own, dear, dear grandmother!" exclaimed the little girl, the tears springing to her eyes, while she threw her arms about the woman's neck.

"Child, child, you will choke me! Get away, Florinda!" exclaimed Mrs. Rugby, trying to make it appear that it was the child's embrace, and not her own tears which were choking her.

"Is it real?" exclaimed Adelaide—"and do you, madam, whose name even I do not know—do you offer me—a stranger, an outcast—protection and shelter?"

"To be sure I do!" said Mrs. Rugby, taking Adelaide by the hand. "And as for clothes, I have a whole trunk full of clothes that belonged to my poor daughter, and which I have been keeping for this child when she is big

enough to wear them. They will just fit you, my dear, and with a little altering they can be made as fashionable as you please."

"Ah! what goodness! Heaven grant that I may live to repay you! At present I can give you only my tears—a melancholy recompense!"

"Nonsense, child! Wouldn't you do as much for me, if I was as badly off, and you had the means? To be sure you would! Here I am, living all alone with this little girl, and with nobody to support but ourselves and Florinda's brother— Charley, we call him—who is at school in the country."

"Ah! I fear that I shall be a burthen. Can I not assist you in your occupations? What may be the nature of them?"

"We belong to the theatre, my dear. To be sure I am nothing but assistant costumer; but Florinda dances between the plays, and is called on the bills, Fanny Elssler the younger—Fanny Elssler, in very big capitals, and the younger, in the smallest possible letters. Ah, my dear, the day of the legitimate drama is gone by. Poor Rugby! It was a terrible blow to him, Miss, to see horses and clowns and wild beasts draw audiences, while Hamlet was played to empty benches. Rugby used to play the ghost of Hamlet's father, Miss. Ah! It was the death of him when he had to give up the ghost, and descend to melodrama and pantomime. He never held up his head after that. The degradation was too much for him."

"And was your daughter an actress?"

"Yes, poor thing! But she never took kindly to the stage. She used to play the walking genteel young ladies—Maria, in the School for Scandal, and such parts. She married Romaine—poor Tom —you may have heard of him, Miss—the best Mercutio on the boards, and a true gentleman. Poor fellow! He and his wife were blown up in the Moselle, while on their way to play at New Orleans. Their wardrobes had been put on board anotherboat, and they were saved. This child and her brother had been left behind under my charge. I shouldn't have cared to live a day longer but for that."

"And may I ask if you find your present employment profitable?"

"Ah, my dear, theatricals are at such a very low ebb, that we costumers can't make a third part of what we used to. And as for Fanny Elssler the younger, she has been put on half pay the last month—so you see business is not quite as flourishing with us as it was formerly. But hark! I hear the Germans on the stairs with the harp!"

Mrs. Rugby rose and threw open the door. She was apparently about sixty−five years old, this manufacturer of theatrical costumes—with a round, good−humored contented face, a figure decidedly stout, and a loud, hearty voice. She was dressed in a robe of dark calico, and her gray hairs were concealed by a muslin cap of unsullied whiteness.

"Come in, and see a friend!" exclaimed Mrs. Rugby, looking out upon the strolling minstrels, who were ascending the stairs.

As they entered, the women instantly recognised their benefactress, and pressed her hand to their lips with a show of unaffected gratitude. The boy, who had not seen her at the moment, set the harp down in its place with a look of discouragement and discontent.

"Poor luck to−day, eh, Gustave?" said Mrs. Rugby.

The boy showed his empty hat, and smiled bitterly; and then, seeing Adelaide, he approached, and, bowing respectfully, followed the example of his sisters.

Lest unfounded hopes of farther assistance might be awakened in the minds of her foreign protegés, Adelaide thought it best to apprise them at once ofthe circumstances, under which she came there. This she did in a few touching words; and when she made known the fact that she had come to ask of them—of them, the poor, despised vagrant minstrels—succor and protection—the sisters looked at each other with swelling bosoms and moist eyes, while the boy clenched his fists, and seemed to swell to the stature of a man.

The minstrels left the room, but in a few moments the boy returned, and took away the harp; and, on looking out of the window some moments afterwards, Adelaide saw them moving off with more than ordinary speed, to try their luck once more in the noisy, music−killing streets.

Mrs. Rugby had another visitor, but in this case an unwelcome one, before conversation was resumed between her and Adelaide. A bill for the last quarter's schooling of Master Charles Romaine was brought in by a stiff, severe−looking, monosyllabic individual, who presented the account in silence and in silence awaited a reply.

"Call again on Saturday," said Mrs. Rugby, while a visible shade of concern passed over her countenance.

"On Saturday," said the austere gentleman.

"This is the first time I have ever put off these schooling bills," said Mrs. Rugby, with a transient look of dismay. And then resuming her mood of habitual cheerfulness, she took up her work and began to chat as if nothing had happened.

But Adelaide was too much immersed in thought to talk, and Mrs. Rugby was delighted to find that she had so patient a listener.

"I must not be idle with such examples before me, and under the spur of such necessities," thought Adelaide. "But what can I do?"

CHAPTER XXI.

Beware! for my revenge
Is as the seal'd commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.
— Shelley

Notwithstanding the undisguised impatience of Mr. Gordon at the repeated delays of the consummation by marriage of the match between his daughter and Fleetwood, this event, to which he looked forward so anxiously, was, upon various pretences, deferred till late in the autumn. But at length a day, which had been definitely fixed for the ceremony some time before, had arrived; and nothing had occurred to induce either party to ask for a reprieve. In order to render it the more awkward for them to do so, Mr. Gordon had taken good care to send out invitations to a large circle of friends.

The ceremony was to take place at twelve o'clock. It wanted some forty minutes of that hour. Fleetwood, who always dressed with consummate taste, had not thought it worth while to make any other change in his attire than to put on a plain white vest in the place of that which he usually wore. In a mood half reckless and half indifferent he entered the parlor and flung himself at full length upon the sofa.

Some young men, friends of the family, began to drop in.

"Shall I introduce these people to you?" asked Rodney, the master of the ceremonies.

"Wait a while, my dear fellow," said Fleetwood; "it will be time enough by and by. Let me rest in quiet."

Rodney walked away; and Fleetwood, coveringhis eyes with his hand, seemed to solicit repose. In a few minutes, two young men, engaged in conversation, passed him and took seats not far distant. One of these interlocutors was Glenham; the other a Mr. Bettencourt.

"By the way, Glenham, have you heard of the new debutante?" asked Bettencourt.

"I haven't been to the theatre since the spring," replied Glenham, who was evidently bored by the assiduities of his companion.

"Then let me tell you that you have missed a great deal," said Bettencourt. "The prettiest girl I have seen this many a day appeared for the first time in opera the other night. Miserably slim house—nobody there—but she astonished the judicious few—that's a fact."

"Very likely. By the way, who makes your boots?"

"Kimball and Rogers. But let me tell you of the debutante. She played Amina in La Somnambula Anglicised—and devilish well she did it— that's a fact! Such a scene as she made of that at the end of the second act, where she sings 'I'm not guilty!' By George! the chorus and all the other actors on the stage seemed so stupified with wonder, that they forgot their cues. An old fellow, who sat in the box with me, and who has heard all the best singing of the last half century, applauded like a mad person, and, as the curtain fell, swore that Malibran had never equalled that scene."

"Very likely. Why the deuce don't the women come?"

"By the way, do you know this girl looks like Emily Gordon? A confounded sight prettier though, between ourselves! You must go to hear her, Glenham, if she plays again."

"Thank you—I care very little for music."

"She hasn't appeared on the boards since thearticle in the last week's Scorpion. Do you read the Scorpion? Capital paper! Full of fun! Has hits at every body—touches people on the raw in fine style—that's a fact. Well; if the Scorpion's story is true, this girl is under the protection of the fellow, who played the lover, Elvino, in the opera— what the deuce is his name? I forget. No matter! You would have said the same thing yourself, if you heard the way in which she sang 'Yes, I am thine, love!' It was perfect nature, and so earnest, that I am sure there could have been no sham about it. She meant every word she said. It wasn't acting—that's a fact!"

"Well, Bettencourt, since you have nothing better to do, why don't you cut out this Mr. Elvino, and carry off this Miss—what did you say her name was?"

"She was announced on the bills simply as a young American lady; but the Scorpion says, her name is Adelaide Winfield, and that she is the daughter of—. Why, what the deuce is the matter with you, my dear

fellow?"

Glenham started up, and crossed the room rapidly as if to seek a friend in the adjoining apartment; but in reality he was trying to hide his emotion.

Fleetwood raised himself from his recumbent posture, for he could not well avoid over−hearing Bettencourt's remarks, inasmuch as that gentleman always spoke in a remarkably loud and ambitious tone. But at that juncture, Mr. Gordon entered with a party of ladies, and Fleetwood, with a heavy heart, rose to his feet and bowed.

"Well, Fleetwood, my boy, enjoy your single blessedness while you may," said Mr. Gordon. "You have but ten minutes longer to lead the life of a bachelor. Had you not better join Emily in the room overhead?"

"I presume she will send for me when my presenceshall be acceptable," replied Fleetwood, walking away and seating himself in one of the luxurious arm−chairs in the saloon.

Mr. Bettencourt followed, and with the amiable intention of diverting him, drew a paper from his pocket, and said: "Have you seen last week's Scorpion, sir? Capital paper! The only paper in the city worth taking—that's a fact!"

"It will be time enough for the Scorpion, sir, after I am married," replied Fleetwood, removing to another seat.

"Very good—very good indeed!" exclaimed Bettencourt, after a pause, during which he seemed endeavoring to discover the drift of the remark. "Devilish odd fellow, that Fleetwood! One would imagine he thought it a confounded bore to get married."

In the mean while Mr. Gordon could not disguise his nervous, fretful and impatient mood, so different from that which was habitual with him. He looked at his watch repeatedly—wondered why the clergyman didn't come—put his head out of the window, and anxiously peered up and down the street—and then paced the room, as if dreading he knew not what. There was a violent ring at the door−bell. He shuddered as if it was some fearful summons; but was inexpressibly relieved when he saw the Rev. Mr. Trope enter in all the amplitude of his clerical attire. Mr. Gordon rushed forward and took him by the hand—then looked once more at his watch—saw that it was twelve o'clock—and hurried up stairs to protest against the least delay on the part of the bride and the bridesmaids. The next moment a servant entered, and whispered in Fleetwood's ear, that Miss Emily was expecting him.

"So soon? Well! I come," said he, rising and moving with an air, significant of anything but a joyful alacrity, towards the door.

An assemblage of some thirty ladies and about that number of gentlemen had now gathered in the large parlor adjoining the conservatory. They were distributed in numerous groups about the room, and the buzz of commingled voices was heard on all sides.

At length Mr. Gordon was seen to enter rubbing his hands with a sort of fidgetty satisfaction, and, approaching the clergyman, to whisper in his ear. The Rev. Mr. Trope immediately took his place near the lofty mirror between the two windows that led into the conservatory. Under the skilful marshalling of Mr. Rodney, the company then formed themselves in a semi−circle fronting the mirror, leaving an opening in the middle of the arc for the admission of the bridal party. They entered— Fleetwood and Miss Gordon first, arm in arm, followed by three groomsmen with as many bridesmaids, all of whom had been, with admirable fore−sight, provided for the occasion by the father of the bride.

Who was ever so churlish as to refuse to admit that a bride looked interesting?

"But how very pale she is!" said Miss Titter, in reply to a remark made by Mr. Bettencourt. "Doesn't that wreath of orange blossoms become her vastly?"

"Brides always look pale, and wreaths always become them," said Mr. Bettencourt. "By the way, Miss Titter, do you ever read the Scorpion? Capital paper that! Funny dogs, the editors must be! There's a first−rate hit at Parson Trope in the last number—wonder if he has seen it?—have a great mind to ask him—how it will make him fume!"

"Well, for a bridegroom, I never saw a man show so much nonchalance as Fleetwood," said Miss Titter, who had been looking through hereye−glass without attending to a word that her companion had uttered. "Look, Mr. Bettencourt! What is all that?" she continued, as she observed a movement, which seemed to excite considerable curiosity among the feminine spectators.

It was this. The parties to the ceremony were about taking their places, and the clergyman had drawn forth his book to read the marriage service, when a colored servant, one of those employed by the caterer, who had been

engaged to furnish the dejeuner a la fourchette, glided from the conservatory, making his way between two of the bridesmaids, and placed a note in the hands of Fleetwood, saying, at the same time, in a whisper— "read it before the ceremony." The movement was so rapid and so stealthy, that it was finished before Mr. Gordon could well distinguish its nature.

But when the recognition came, the expression of his face was terrible. He darted forward, and snatched at the note, but failed in the attempt to get it into his possession.

Fleetwood looked up amazed, and Gordon, with a convulsive laugh, said: "Wait awhile, my dear boy. This is no time to read notes. It is disrespectful to the company."

"Then the company must grant me their indulgence, sir," said Fleetwood; and leaving his position by the bride, he moved towards the nearest embrasure, and read the following words, written in large and legible letters, though apparently in furious haste: "Come to your own room, at once— before the ceremony—unless you covet a life−time of the keenest remorse that ever wrung a human soul. It is of Adelaide I would speak. Dare you hear the truth? Delay not a moment!"

Staggered by this sudden communication, Fleetwood pressed his hand to his forehead as if to collecthis thoughts; and then, crumpling the note in his hand, he passed rapidly out of the room without saying a word. The perspiration stood in big drops upon Mr. Gordon's forehead, while he watched his movements. He followed close upon his heels, and, as the bridegroom started to ascend the stairs, caught him by the arm.

"What is it, Fleetwood? What is it, my dear boy?" he said, with an unsuccessful effort to appear unconcerned.

"It matters not—I will use such dispatch as I may," replied Fleetwood, disengaging himself and darting up the stairs.

"Beware, sir!" exclaimed Gordon, hardly knowing in his frenzy what he said. "Beware, young man! I have been trifled with long enough. If this marriage is deferred again—"

Fleetwood checked himself, and folding his arms, descended, step by step, till he confronted Gordon.

"Well sir, and what then?" he demanded with a freezing hauteur.

"Beware, sir! I only say, beware!"

"A parrot can say as much, sir. I see nothing so wonderful in that. Look you, Mr. Gordon! If all hell were to cry beware, it could not withhold me, when honor cried go on!"

And without more words, Fleetwood ascended the stairs to his own room.

CHAPTER XXII.

You have displac'd the mirth, broke the good meeting, With most admir'd disorder.

— Shakespeare

The guilty see "in every bush an officer;" and Mr. Gordon had a vague fear that the note, placed in Fleetwood's hand, had reference to the disclosure which he had been so anxiously guarding against for some weeks past. But still he might be mistaken in his surmises; and so returning to the parlor, he asked the clergyman's pardon for the interruption—said that the bridegroom would return in a moment—and mingled among his guests, trying in a sort of desperation to escape from his fears. The bride and her companions took seats; and an attempt was made to get up a little conversation to relieve the awkwardness of the scene. The bridesmaids looked at one another, as much as to say, "Did you ever know such a dismal wedding?"—and the groomsmen pulled off their kid gloves, indulged in sidelong glances at the mirror, and then with a grave, self−satisfied air bent over to whisper to the ladies. Mr. Bettencourt, after some modest misgivings, approached the Rev. Mr. Trope, with the view of delicately broaching the subject of last week's Scorpion. Glenham stood alone and apart in a corner of the room, quivering with agitation, and anxiously regarding the countenance of the host.

At length the door was thrown open by a servant as if for the entrance of an important person in the little drama. All eyes were immediately turned towards the spot; and the bridesmaids rose, expecting to see the groom. But it was not he,who entered. It was Count La Salle. He was pale, and the perpendicular furrows between his eyes were deepened so as to give a frowning expression to his face; but he advanced with an air of serene good−breeding into the room, and bowing, while he held his hat in his hand, said: "Ladies and gentlemen! I am requested by Mr. Fleetwood to inform you, that unhappy circumstances, throwing no blame, however, upon the lady, have been brought to light, which must prevent his marriage with Miss Gordon."

"It is a lie—a trick!" shouted the wretched father, finding that the steps he thought he had ascended to the summit were slipping from under him.

"Oh, sir, here you are!" said the Count, sarcastically, while he approached Mr. Gordon. "If I mistake not, I have some little favors to thank you for. I was knocked down by bullies a month or two since while loitering in the neighborhood of your house to meet Mr. Fleetwood, your servants having denied me admission. I was confined to my bed for weeks in consequence of the injuries I then received. But this is not all. I addressed certain letters to Mr. Fleetwood. Perhaps you can tell who opened, read and destroyed them, without delivering them to the owner. I was on Tuesday lured on board one of the Liverpool packets at the Hook, in the expectation of meeting a friend—the steamboat which brought me, made off while I was in the cabin of the ship, and I found myself on the way to England. Fortunately a pilot−boat came along, and I was released. Perhaps, you can explain this little accident. For these and other agreeable favors, account me your debtor."

"This is an impostor, ladies and gentlemen!" exclaimed Gordon, absolutely foaming with rage. "I can prove that he made an attempt not longsince to pass himself off as a different person from what he now pretends to be. He is an impostor; and I call upon you, gentlemen, to assist me in arresting him. Where is Glenham? He can testify to the truth of what I assert. Glenham, come forward!"

Ever since the Count's entrance into the room, Mr. Glenham had been moving stealthily towards the door, with the view of making a precipitate exit unobserved. Much to his consternation, however, La Salle had suddenly caught sight of him, and thenceforth divided his glances between him and his senior accomplice.

"Ay, I would like to hear what Mr. Glenham has to say," exclaimed the Count in reply to the frantic menaces of the master of the house.

"Mr. Gordon must be under a mistake," said Glenham, who dreaded the Count far more than he did any one else in the room. "I can testify to nothing prejudicial to this gentleman. There must be some mistake."

"Why, thou double traitor!" exclaimed La Salle, pointing at him scornfully with his fore−finger protruded. "You know that there is no mistake—that what he says is true."

"You hear, ladies and gentlemen—he himself confesses!" exclaimed Mr. Gordon, stunned by Glenham's defection, and hardly knowing what he said.

"But he has not confessed all, sir? There is a sequel, which concerns yourself and this—shall I call him

gentleman?—no—craven!"

La Salle paused, and drawing himself up with dignity, looked about, scanning the faces of the company, till his eyes fell on Emily. She was sitting in a high−backed chair, supported on either side by her bridesmaids, her face of a deadly paleness, and her bosom heaving violently with the anguish, to which she was evidently a prey. This spectacle seemed to produce a sudden change in his feelings and intentions. An expression of tenderness played about his mouth. He turned to Gordon, and said: "These are matters, which had better be discussed in private. I will select a fitter opportunity for what I have to say. I need not inform you of my address. You have had occasion to acquaint yourself with it already."

And then, turning to the company, he added: "Ladies and gentlemen, it is due to you that I should express my regret—and I do so most sincerely—that I have been obliged to disturb this festive meeting by making disclosures to Mr. Fleetwood of a nature the most painful. These disclosures, I repeat it, do not in any manner reflect upon Miss Gordon. What they are, you perhaps may never know—but I beg you to take my assurance, that they are of such a character, that neither could I in honor refrain from imparting them, nor Mr. Fleetwood from acting as he has acted on receiving them. With this explanation I respectfully take my leave."

There was a long pause as La Salle quitted the room, unbroken save by the difficult panting of Emily, who was struggling against a fainting fit. Suddenly Mr. Gordon who had been looking at Glenham till that young gentleman seemed to think it would be a pleasant relief to be rolling down hill in a cask of spikes like Regulus, started, and turning to his guests, exclaimed:

"Come, since we are not going to have a wedding, let us have a feast at any rate. Let us adjourn to the dining−room. Mr. Glenham, hand in one of the ladies. Mr. Bettencourt, I am sure a little champagne can do you no harm. Suppose you persuade Miss Titter to accompany you. Mr. Rodney, let me see you lead the way with my fair cousin onyour left; and Mr. Trope, you and I will bring up the rear. Emily, my dear, I am glad to see you are recovering. We will give you five minutes longer to get over this little agitation, which, under the circumstances, is quite natural."

Emily made a gesture of acquiescence, and the company left the apartment.

"I say—what would the editors of the Scorpion give to get an inkling of this business?" whispered Mr. Bettencourt in the ear of his fair companion, as they passed out with the rest of the bridal party.

Emily remained alone, lost in conjecture as to the nature of those dreaded disclosures, to which La Salle had alluded so mysteriously, and which had sent Fleetwood forth at such a moment so abruptly, removing forever the prospect of their union.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The brave, the gentle and the beautiful, The child of grace and genius!
— Shelley

Mr. Dryman to Mr. Fleetwood.

My Dear Sir:—At the request of the gentleman, who will hand you this letter, and in conformity with my own duties as the protector of the interests of my client, I have carefully investigated circumstances in the history of a young lady known to you under the name of Adelaide Winfield. I have ascertained, and can satisfactorily establish, that she is the legitimate daughter of the late Edward Challoner, and that in her mother's right, who was a daughter of the late John Gordon, Esq., she is heiress to a considerable property. The incidents, which led to the concealment of her real name and history, are simply these: her father died suddenly, leaving his wife with her unborn child in humble lodgings, the very locality of which was unknown save to two or three persons. She had been discarded by her parents in consequence of her marriage, and knew of no one to whom to apply for relief. An old servant named Jenny was her only attendant. In the midst of her distress, and while in the very pangs of child−birth, which had been hastened by the sudden communication of the news of her husband's death, a woman named Winfield called upon her, and charitably ministered to her wants. The mother hardly lived to thank her for her kindness, however, but died in giving birth to a female child. The witnesses to the identity of this child with the young lady known to you as Adelaide Winfield,are Mrs. Winfield, the woman Jenny, and Dr. Brisk, who had accidentally been called in to the accouchement, as the nearest physician. In addition to these there are collateral proofs, which place the fact of the identity beyond a cavil.

I wish, for the honor of human nature, that I might stop here in my narrative, and not be compelled to unravel the conspiracies which have been formed against the freedom and welfare of this young girl. It appears that Mrs. Winfield, having received intelligence of the death of a daughter of her own, suddenly formed the determination to claim and adopt the infant thus suddenly left an orphan. By heavy bribes she induced the woman Jenny and the aforementioned Dr. Brisk to conceal the real name and history of the late Mrs. Challoner. At the coroner's inquest a different name was mentioned; and, in consequence, the family of the deceased were kept in ignorance of her fate; and her father, in his dying moments, overcome with remorse, left a clause in his will by which a third of his immense property was to be retained for eighteen years in the hands of trustees for the benefit of his missing daughter, or her child. If, at the end of that time, no intelligence of either had been gathered, then the property was to revert to the other heirs. It now wants but a day of the expiration of the trusteeship.

Not many years after the death of his father, the present Mr. Gordon was satisfied of the validity of the claims of the aforementioned Adelaide, as inheritress of the property, which was rapidly accumulating under the frugal management of prudent trustees. But instead of manfully promulgating those claims, he entered into a league with Mrs. Winfield to keep the girl Adelaide in ignorance of her true prospects and position, with the view of ultimately enjoying her wealth. In furtherance of this object,various plots and counterplots have been entered into by both parties, each distrusting the other in turn, and yet being all the while so held by the other, as to be afraid of coming to an open rupture.

On hearing of the occurrences at Soundside, in which you were an actor, Mrs. Winfield took the alarm and went immediately to remove Adelaide, whom she claimed as a daughter, to her own house in the city. In the village she encountered an acquaintance in the person of Mr. Glenham. Adelaide, true to her promises to yourself, refused to accompany her mother (as she supposed her to be) to the city. Fraud was then resorted to, and it was successful. A letter bearing your signature was forged, by which Adelaide was made to believe that it was your pleasure she should place herself under the protection of Mrs. Winfield. They came to the city; and here a new and important agent in the plot appeared in the person of Mr. Gordon. This man seems to have set his heart on two objects. One was to prevent any knowledge of the existence of his niece coming to the ears of the trustees of her property; and the other was to marry you to his daughter. To accomplish these objects no means seem to have been regarded by him as too base.

You must remember the night of the thunderstorm, when Count La Salle, on entering the parlor at Mr. Gordon's found Emily in your arms, and, in a paroxysm of jealousy, took leave of you both. In an evil moment he

was tempted to wound you in the same way that he believed you had wantonly wounded him. He was told that you were deeply enamored of Adelaide, at the same time that you spurned the idea of marrying her. The scheme, of which you were the victim, was proposed to him on the ground that it would save the young girl from your snares as well as punish youjustly for the wrong you had done him. He consented to pass himself off, before you, as the fortunate lover of Adelaide, and before herself as her brother. The success of the imposition was complete. Had you paused but an instant before jumping to a conclusion, and heard Adelaide's exclamation of brother Ernest! as she rushed to his embrace, you might have been undeceived; but the shock overwhelmed you, and the plot was managed by the contrivers with diabolical skill.

You will already have seen how important the agency of Mr. Glenham has been throughout in this conspiracy against the peace and welfare of a young, innocent and noble−minded girl. It was he, who lured her from Soundside by his vile forgery— it was he who suggested the plot by which you were to be made to believe she had been unfaithful—it was he, who baffled, by his falsehoods within falsehoods and his cowardly intrigues, the repeated attempts of Count La Salle to enlighten you as to the imposture that had been practised, or to communicate to Adelaide all that he knew and all that he suspected.

But it seems that traitors cannot be true even to one another. While Mr. Gordon was counting upon the zealous co−operation of his accomplices, Glenham and Mrs. Winfield, these two were contriving how they could best subserve their own interests apart from his. From prudential considerations Gordon had always deferred pledging himself in any manner by written agreements to compensate Mrs. Winfield in the event of the reversion of Adelaide's property to himself. But in Glenham she found a person not quite so wary and careful. He did not scruple to pledge himself both by written and spoken oaths to give her one half the property, which would come under his control on his union with Adelaide. These calculations were utterlybaffled by Adelaide, who not only refused to listen to his proposals, but fled from the protection which he proffered, as well in the name of friendship as of love.

I need not add more except that Mrs. Winfield has made a full confession of her entire connexion with this painful and extraordinary affair; and that she now seems truly penitent. The woman Jenny and Dr. Brisk have also both made confessions, which confirm the story I have related, in many of its important particulars. Count La Salle will himself communicate what must satisfy you, were all other testimony wanting, that you have been the victim of the most inhuman deception, and that Adelaide Challoner is innocent and pure. It is proper that I should mention that I have communicated to the trustees of her property the fact of her existence, and that measures have been already taken to substantiate her claims. I hardly think they will be disputed, inasmuch as it can be proved that the present Mr. Gordon has admitted them fully.

Hoping, my dear sir, that the young lady may recover speedily from her present serious indisposition, and that all happiness may be in store for her and you, I am,

Yours, faithfully, Littleton Dryman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

But there was round thee such a dawn
Of light ne'er seen before,
As Fancy never could have drawn,
And never can restore.
— Wolfe

The sunshine of a clear autumnal afternoon was streaming in at the western windows of the apartment where we left Adelaide in conversation with Mrs. Rugby. There had been little apparent change in the arrangements of this room, save that a bountiful supply of fresh flowers in vases adorned the tables and the mantel−piece. A cage containing a mocking−bird hung over the window−sill, and, though the door was open, the little prisoner seemed to prefer remaining where he was. His loud, varying notes, caught from the melodies of a southern forest—the sunshine turning to amber the white curtains that shook in the soft, elastic breeze—the sight and odor of flowers—and the green branches in the fire−place, all gave an aspect and a tone of cheerfulness to the place, which made one forget he was in the midst of a dusty, populous metropolis, where there were almost as many breaking hearts and aching heads as green leaves.

And yet, on the unopened coverlid of the bed, Adelaide lay an invalid, lost at the moment in a tranquil sleep. She wore a white morning robe, and was supported, in a half−sitting, half−supine posture, by pillows. By her side stood Florinda, with a fan to keep off the flies. Words cannot paint the look of adoring affection and tenderness with which this child regarded the sleeper. There was but one person more in the room—the grandmother; who sat quietly sewing by the window, occasionally turning to look at the face of the invalid, and then, with a suppressed sigh, resuming her work.

Suddenly Adelaide opened her eyes, and smiled on seeing Florinda. Then lowering her glance, as if in the act of concentrating her thoughts, she asked:

"Is it not almost time that he should be here?"

"Not yet, my dear—you have hardly slept half an hour," said Mrs. Rugby, pausing a moment, and then plying her needle with renewed activity.

"What, Florinda! Tears again! Naughty one!" exclaimed Adelaide, stooping forward, and wiping from the child's face the fluid signs of grief. "Why do you weep?"

"Sweet lady, dear lady, do not ask me."

"But I insist on knowing why you weep. Tell me, my own little Florinda, tell me!"

"It is because I so dread the thought of your leaving us."

"Is that all, little Bayadere? Why, you ought, then, to be all the more delighted while I stay. Come, not another tear! I shall get in a passion by and by."

And with a playful imperativeness of manner, Adelaide kissed away her tears till the child laughed under her influence.

Suddenly Adelaide checked herself, put her fore−finger to her lips, as if to enjoin silence, and changed the position of her small and delicately−slippered feet, till they almost touched the floor. Then starting from the bed, she exclaimed:

"It is he! I know his footstep!" She glided swiftly towards the door, opened it, and was clasped in Fleetwood's embrace.

They entered the room, with arms locked about each other as they walked, and eyes gazing intentlyin each other's face. Each saw the change—the sad, yet endearing change—in the other, and tears came gratefully to the relief of each.

"Miserable dupe that I have been!" groaned Fleetwood, kissing the pallid forehead, which seemed to invite his lips. "How wretchedly have I been deluded! Can you—can you forgive me— angel of goodness and of love?"

"All is understood," replied Adelaide. "All that was unpleasant, forgotten—all that was sweet, remembered."

"Oh, maledictions on the wretches, who—"

The grief that overpowered Fleetwood choked his utterance. He sank into a chair—covered his face with his

hands—and gave way to a burst of grief, which shook his frame as if with a convulsion. He wept like a child.

Adelaide rested herself lightly on his knee, gently struggled to remove his hands, then soothingly thrust her fingers through the locks that fell over his temples, and besought him to be calm.

"Think not of those who have wronged us," she said; "they deserve our pity, and of course our forgiveness. Do you remember the reply of the poet to his critic?

" 'I hate thy want of truth and love,—

How can I then hate thee?'

We should all regard our enemies in this spirit. In that they are our enemies, or the enemies of any human being, they deserve our commiseration, not our vengeance."

"Dear Adelaide, you are weak—you are pale— I fear that you have suffered—that you still suffer —much. But you will recover—O, say that you will recover—give me that blessed assurance—give me at least a hope!"

"There is nothing in death that awes me but thethought of leaving you, dear—husband," said Adelaide, with a slight pause in her voice before she uttered the last word. Fleetwood lifted her hand to his lips, and pressed it silently. "Nay, I am wrong," resumed Adelaide, turning to Florinda and her grandmother; "here are two who will miss me, and to part with whom will cause a pang. But, dear friends, be cheerful! It is thus that I would welcome death—with flowers, and sunshine, and music—with green leaves and floral odors— with happy voices and with smiles. They do wrong, who dress his altar with weeds of wo—and who salute him, on his approach, with lamentations; for does he not conduct us to a nobler and a happier life? Therefore may the dead be rather called the living than we who linger on this shore of time, fettered by material obstructions—by disease and pain. O, in our happiest estate, death should ever be welcome!"

"You will rive my heart with these words," said Fleetwood despairingly. "O, live, live, at least long enough for me to make amends for my dreadful injustice!"

"You shall not accuse yourself," said Adelaide. "As you loved me, how could you have acted differently? Ah, my husband, it was a sweet dream, though passing brief! Do you remember that rocky ledge on the sea−shore, where we first met, while the big waves rolled up their smooth, flashing undulations to my horse's feet? Should you ever revisit the place, you will love it for my sake."

"Ah, why will you thus try to shut out all hope from my heart?" exclaimed Fleetwood.

"Could any hope be so sweet as that of our reunion hereafter?" asked Adelaide. "With me the conviction that we shall meet again—meet happily —is interwoven with my spiritual being. Do you wonder then, that I am content? But I have somecommissions for you, dear husband; and you must expect a rebuke from me if you do not fulfil them. This child, Florinda, whom you see"—and here Adelaide sank her voice to a whisper—"will soon be left an orphan. It was my intention to provide for her liberally—to protect her as if she were my own sister. Alas! I know what it is to be an orphan! I leave her, my husband, to your care. She has a brother. You will look after him also."

"O, indulge no more in these melancholy anticipations," sighed Fleetwood. "You shall live, Adelaide, to scatter blessings with your own hand."

"Approach, Florinda," said Adelaide, feebly casting her eyes over her shoulders, as she lay in Fleetwood's arms.

The child drew near, and Adelaide, taking her little hand, placed it in that of Fleetwood, and said: "For my sake, you must love each other."

Fleetwood returned the pressure of the child's hand in silent anguish.

"Do you remember Cossack—my old dog, Cossack?" asked Adelaide abruptly, as if to divert the sadness of both. "Well, you must give him to Charley Romaine—that's Florinda's brother—to take care of."

"Ah, it will be time enough years hence for bequests like these," said Fleetwood.

"Bear with me if I am over−provident," replied Adelaide. "There is poor La Salle—I have been much concerned on his account. Pray assure him of my entire forgiveness, and tell him you heard me say that I wished he were indeed my brother— and give him, in token of my good will, a gold mounted riding−whip, inscribed with my name, which you will find in one of my trunks—Mr. Dryman will tell you where."

"You are exhausted—you need repose!" saidFleetwood, pressing her as if she were an infant in his arms.

"The Gordons, Fleetwood—I would say something of them," continued Adelaide. "Do what is best to rescue the father from those pecuniary difficulties that have driven him to deeds, which, in his better moments, he must

bitterly deplore. And as for Emily—cousin Emily, I must call her now— Mr. Dryman will tell you how I have remembered her. What others are there, of whom we should be thoughtful? I have already, through Mr. Dryman, sent such messages to Mrs. Winfield as I think must give her consolation; and I have provided a modest competence for some of my protegés, a German family among the rest. All that I ask of you in regard to Glenham is, that should you ever have an opportunity of doing him a benefit, you will not neglect it. I do not require a promise. I but make the request."

"I pray you now take a little repose, Adelaide," said Fleetwood, with a trembling voice. "You have fatigued yourself with talking."

"In one moment you shall be obeyed, my husband," said Adelaide; and then turning to the child, who sat weeping at her feet, she feebly murmured: "Come here, little Fanny Elssler the Younger: I have something to say to you in private. Bring your ear nearer my lips. It is bad manners to whisper in company, but I must be indulged this once."

And for nearly five minutes, Adelaide addressed the child in a whisper audible to her alone. Florinda listened with an air of rapt attention, glancing occasionally at Fleetwood, and then looking down as if in thought. Adelaide, in concluding, kissed her affectionately, and calling Mrs. Rugby, said: "You, who have been all to me that a mother couldbe, and who, in your humble and contemned sphere, have shown a heart so rich in all the good affections—take a chair near me now, and we will have music. Why is our mocking−bird so quiet all at once? Go, Florinda, and tell Minnie to come with the harp, and let her bring her sister and the dear children. I love to see their bright, contented faces. And now, my husband, you shall not have to urge me longer to take repose. One kiss more! Raise the curtain, Mrs. Rugby! While we are sitting before the window, we may as well enjoy the beautiful sunset. There! Is it not lovely beyond a painter's conception, dear Fleetwood? And the river—how the fresh breeze plays with its crimsoned waters, as it sweeps on—on in its perpetual flow to the great ocean! I always loved to look on flowing water—I know not why. But here come Minnie and the rest with the harp. Now, my husband, fix me comfortably in your lap, and let your arms clasp me about as if I were a child; for truly I feel like one, lying thus, my head against your breast. Another kiss! There! Good evening, Minnie! Good evening, Estelle! And good evening, children all! Now, Minnie, the old tunes—you know what I mean."

The children stood hand in hand, quiet and grave spectators of the scene; and Minnie played the tunes which she knew Adelaide loved to hear as associated with the memories of her early days. At the close of the music, Adelaide raised her head, and said, in German: "And now, Minnie, play the tune I taught you." And then, after claiming another kiss from Fleetwood, she again closed her eyes and nestled her head against his breast.

Fleetwood started. That tune—where had he heard it before? Yes, it was the same he had set to the little song in honor of Adelaide. which he had sung on the night of the serenade. Withpleased surprise he followed the air to its close. As it ended, the deepest silence prevailed in the room. Suddenly the mocking−bird poured forth a rich, exulting melody, so shrill and loud that all were startled and looked up to the cage; and then, as if he had but wished to call attention to the fact of his emancipation, the winged chorister flew out of the window, and up, up into the sky, till he was lost from view.

Turning to the sweet burthen he held in his arms, Fleetwood saw a smile of the serenest beauty upon the lips of Adelaide Challoner. He bowed his head to feel her breath against his cheeks. Alas, no breath came! Her gentle spirit had fled.

CHAPTER XXV.

Can I then love the air she loved?
Can I then hear the melting strain
Which brings her to my soul again,
Calm and unmoved?
And thou to blame my tears forbear;
For while I list, sweet maid! to thee,
Remembrance whispers, "such was she!"
And she is—where?
— Dale

Mrs. Davenant in Paris to a friend in New York.

Dear Madeline:—We have returned north, you see, with the return of warm weather, and here we are once more in the great metropolis of fashion and philosophy, of gayety and science, of revolutions and of arts. It is still the same delightful Paris—with much to admire and reprove, to fascinate and offend—an epitome of the world and an emblem of life itself, where you can partake of the influences of all that is most base and all that is most elevating in the institutions of man.

But I will come to that subject, about which I know you will feel most concern, my health. Rest content then, dear Madeline, for know that it has much improved since I wrote you from Leghorn. I was well enough last Wednesday to accompany Mr. Davenant and Florinda to the annual festivities at Longchamps. The weather was gratefully mild—so much so that we rode in an open carriage all the way. Florinda was as usual dreadfully stared at; and young men on horsebackwere continually riding by our carriage, obviously to get a sight at her.

You ask me, by the way, if the stories which Mrs. W. brought you from Italy in relation to my young charge are not exaggerated. I know not what those stories were, but can imagine that they may have seemed to you very extravagant and yet have been true. It is now some five years since Florinda was placed under my protection by my son−in−law's unfortunate friend, Fleetwood. I was, at the time, about visiting Europe. Fleetwood wished to cross the Atlantic in the same ship; and I cheerfully consented to take his little protégée under my care. She had recently lost her only remaining female relative. She seemed about ten years old. I have understood that she was of humble parentage—both her father and mother having been public performers at the theatre. But there are traces of gentle blood in her, more conclusive than family pedigrees. Her ancles, feet and hands are exquisitely symmetrical; her figure is perfect, and her temper angelic.

Florinda has a handsome annuity secured to her by the will of Fleetwood's short−lived lady−love, whose history you know. The bulk of Miss Challoner's immense property was, you may remember, left to Fleetwood himself; but, after adding to some of the legacies, which Miss Challoner had made, he transferred it to the Gordon family; and, I am told, it came very opportunely to lift them to affluence from threatened bankruptcy.

You ask me for some description of Florinda. I will not attempt it, for I am sure I should fail. I will only say, she is strangely beautiful. Until her fourteenth year, she was pretty constantly in the society of Fleetwood, who guided her in her studies,and imbued her with many of his own tastes and views. I have noticed that the pursuits in which she excels are precisely those to which he was most attached. She is the most consummate artiste in all the minor as well as the higher embellishments of life. She exhibits an original and a truly admirable taste in dress, which is allowed to be so superior, that by the tacit consent of the Parisians, young as she is and unmarried, she now fixes the standard for the season. She has made the fortunes of several poor dress−makers, whom she has chosen to employ; and yet her modes have this peculiarity, which renders them unpopular save with the few beautiful women, who here sway the fashions: they are so severely simple that they are adapted only to the most elegant persons. But Florinda pleases herself; and seems indifferent to the sceptre, which has been confided to her. I have heard of threats of disembarrassment among the fashionable modistes, who find themselves all at once shorn of their importance. Do you know what the term means? You are said to disembarrass yourself when you kill off by poison an individual, who incommodes or displeases you. A dainty phrase—is it not?

I have said that Florinda was pretty constantly in the society of Fleetwood, from the time I became acquainted

with her till her fourteenth year. He then left us for the east, and we have not seen him since. The settled melancholy, to which he was a prey after Miss Challoner's death, hardly seemed to have abated at the period of his departure. What travel and time may have done for him I cannot say. His chief solace used to be in superintending the education of Florinda; and he was accustomed to take long rides with her on horse−back, which I think were advantageous to the health of both. Suddenly he appeared to avoid the child's society as much as he had coveted it Whether anything had occurred to prejudice him against her I cannot say. I have my suspicion, however. It is this: He saw that Florinda, child though she was, was becoming altogether too much interested in him—in short, that she threatened to be in love. Indeed, from the earliest time that I saw them together, I was struck by the constant effort on her part to divert his melancholy, and engage his attention. She had no eyes for any one else while he was in the room—no ears for any one while he was speaking. She would anticipate his slightest wishes by his looks, and show an anxiety to please, which he at first placed to the account of childish affection and gratitude, but which he afterwards, I suspect, attributed to causes more calculated to awaken his solicitude.

There are other circumstances, which I can now call to remembrance, which go to confirm my suspicion. For a month or two after Fleetwood's departure, I recollect that Florinda visibly failed in health and in spirits. She became pale, reserved and thoughtful, and lost all that vivacity, that earnestness of disposition, which is perhaps her most winning charm. At length she roused from this depression—applied herself with redoubled ardor to her studies, and acquiesced in all that I proposed for her amusement or instruction. Two seasons since I introduced her into society. Her beauty, her figure, and that enchanting grace which marks all her movements, caught perhaps from her early practice as a danseuse, made her at once an object of extraordinary attraction. Her conquests have been numerous, and of the most brilliant description. But she has never stooped to conquer. She seems to shrink from the admiration which courts her. She is a perfect enigma both to the women and the men.

I think I have hit upon the solution. How else should it be that, at her age, she should pass unscathed, with such decorum and statue−like propriety, through the gay and tempting scenes, the bewildering allurements, to which she is subjected? How should it be that she should receive unmoved, save perhaps by an emotion of pity, the passionate devotion of the most accomplished, elegant and distinguished young men in Paris? Her heart's palladium, I am convinced, is a previous attachment— a strong, enduring and irreversible one. I tremble for her future when I ask myself—is there any likelihood that it will ever be returned?

We received a letter from Fleetwood about a week since, under the date of Constantinople. He writes that he shall be in Paris before June—and the roses in our garden are already in bloom! The color fled from Florinda's cheeks as I announced the news. Her agitation was so violent that I feared she would faint. I pretended not to notice her, and she gradually recovered firmness enough to remark: "Mr. Fleetwood has been absent a long, long while!"

Fleetwood cannot but be amazed at the change in his pupil's appearance. He left her a puny though lovely girl. He will find her in the full bloom of womanhood—with a figure developed to the proportions of the most consummate beauty— to which all the graces seem to "lend their zone" by turns—a face that would charm an anchorite, and give him purer dreams of heaven while itcharmed—a voice, that, in its commonest tones, is music—and, better than all, a heart

"Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold!"

He will find her surrounded by all that can distract the young and the healthy—courted, flattered and caressed—receiving the homage of the gifted, the noble and the proud—and yet, amid all these fascinations, retaining, as I am persuaded, his image enshrined in her soul as its dearest and paramount human object of veneration and love.

I have ordered his old apartment in our hotel to be made ready. We are hourly expecting his arrival. He will come; but will he still turn with dismay from the danger of awakening in this young girl an attachment to which he cannot respond? He has suffered much. He is alone in the world, without a relative. There are circumstances which should endear Florinda to him forever. Did they not exist, he might well be proud of her preference.

You will smile, dear Madeline, to see that I, who have inveighed so often against meddlesome matchmakers, am in danger of becoming one myself. But is not this a case wherein I might exert some influence, and venture upon some management, with propriety? I am full of anxiety on Florinda's account; and my concern for Fleetwood is not less lively. Can it be that he will shun the matrimonial haven, where he cannot fail to find

happiness after his wanderings and his griefs? I have no facts on which to base my calculations as to his present intentions and dispositions. Whether he is still sorrowing, or whether activity has allured cheerfulness to join its train, I cannot say. But be assured, if my influence can avail, it shall not be wanting to bring about a result which, according to mynotions of the fitness of things, ought to be among the pre−arranged adjudications of that place where, I can readily believe, some matches, at least, are made.

THE END.