

burying axes and leaving every now and then a mastodon behind them.'

'Well, if the Mound-Builders selected this site they showed good taste,' said Erminia, refusing, in her afternoon indolence, the argumentum nonsensicum with which we were accustomed to enliven our conversation. It was, indeed, a lovely spot,—the little meadow, smooth and bright as green velvet, the brook chattering over the pebbles, and the hills, gay in red and yellow foliage, rising abruptly on all sides. After some labor we swung open the great gate and entered the yard, crossed the brook on a mossy plank, and followed the path through the grass towards the lonely house. An old shepherd-dog lay at the door of a dilapidated shed, like a block-house, which had once been a stable; he did not bark, but, rising slowly, came along beside us,—a large, gaunt animal that looked at us with such melancholy eyes that Erminia stooped to pat him. Ermine had a weakness for dogs; she herself owned a wild beast of the dog kind that went by the name of the 'Emperor Trajan'; and, accompanied by this dignitary, she was accustomed to stroll up the avenues of C——, lost in maiden meditations.

We drew near the house and stepped up on the sunken piazza, but no signs of life appeared. The little loophole windows were pasted over with paper, and the plank door had no latch or handle. I knocked, but no one came. 'Apparently it is a haunted house, and that dog is the spectre,' I said, stepping back.

'Knock three times,' suggested Ermine; 'that is what they always do in ghost-stories.'

'Try it yourself. My knuckles are not cast-iron.'

Ermine picked up a stone and began tapping on the door.

'Open sesame,' she said, and it opened.

Instantly the dog slunk away to his block-house and a woman confronted us, her dull face lighting up as her eyes ran rapidly over our attire from head to foot. 'Is there a sulphur-spring here?' I asked. 'We would like to try the water.'

'Yes, it's here fast enough in the back hall. Come in, ladies; I'm right proud to see you. From the city, I suppose?'

'From C——,' I answered; 'we are spending a few days in the Community.'

Our hostess led the way through the little hall, and throwing open a back door pulled up a trap in the floor, and there we