

within the hampers, were forced to quit their task and join the other portion of the party, dryly ensconced beneath those rocky coverts whose over-jutting ridges afforded ample shelter. Eloise, nervous from the first approach of the storm, uttered more than one terrified cry as vivid lightning-flashes illumined the almost solid sheets of down-rushing rain, and were promptly followed by furious roars of thunder. Reginald and Beatrice were on either side of the frightened girl, and to Reginald there was something like a direct mockery of his own position in the intensity of contrast between the separate demeanours of Eloise and her companion. One face wore a childish terror that well suited the occasional plaintive cries issuing from its lips; the other face was a trifle paler than usual, perhaps, but full of sweet, serious composure, suggesting a natural awe restrained by a gentle though firm sufficiency of self-possession.

The lightning at length abated, and both rain and wind palpably lessened. There was even manifest a certain brightening of the sky, too, when suddenly a fresh mass of yet blacker cloud brought a deeper dimness, and new peals of thunder alternated with fresh and intensely brilliant flashes. Eloise's fears, diminished by what she believed to be the end of the storm, were now re-awakened with more than their first force. She threw her arms about Beatrice, uttering wretched little cries, and buried her face impetuously against the other's bosom. Many soft words of comforting assurance were spoken by Beatrice, in tones so full of womanly strength, of unconscious placid superiority, that once more the same mockery of contrast struck with telling effect upon Reginald.

And now there occurred, after a momentary lull in the tempest, one flash of such livid luridness that every eye which met it involuntarily closed, while with simultaneous rapidity there pealed forth a great crashing outburst to which the other

thunder-claps had almost been of slight volume.

'That struck somewhere near!' exclaimed Willard, as the hollow reverberations were yet rolling boomingly away. And indeed, not many yards distant, a large hickory, standing somewhat alone and far overtopping all adjacent foliage, showed to every eye a great splintered gash through its midst and an utter ruin of several stalwart branches. Eloise, however, should be excepted from those who really witnessed the effect of this terrible bolt; for her condition had at once become wildly hysterical, and her moaning screams resounded with shrill sharpness, while she clutched Beatrice in an actual agony of tearful alarm. The storm at once permanently decreased, and both peals and flashes showed signs of its pacified condition; but Eloise, her noisy spasms having ceased, now seemed overcome by a complete prostration, like a vaguely-conscious swoon. Beatrice not only bathed her temples with a rain-drenched handkerchief and performed every attentive office which the occasion would allow, but repeatedly assured Alfred Austin, in low placid words, that she felt convinced the attack would soon pass over, that Eloise had before suffered in much the same way, and that there was no occasion for the least anxiety. Austin was the only one of the party who exhibited any marked worryment at the sufferer's condition, and his nervousness and pallor were both plainly evident. Reginald remained watchful, making no comment. Wallace Willard, ready in whatever suggestions of relief occurred to him, seemed to partake of the same tranquil coolness that marked Beatrice.

In a quarter of an hour the storm had wholly departed, and the sun was once more shining upon drenched foliage and sodden country. All were so confident that Mrs. Ross would have caused a vehicle to be sent after the party as soon as the weather per-