

PROFIT, \$1,200.

"To sum it up, six long years of bed-ridden sickness, costing \$200 per year, total \$1,200—all of this expense was stopped by three bottles of Hop Bitters, taken by my wife. She has done her own housework for a year since, without the loss of a day, and I want everybody to know it for their benefit."—W.E. Farmer.

Mr. H. G. Barwick, for many years manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in St. Catharines, Ont., died at Canadajung, N.Y., on Sunday morning, October 22nd. He was removed to that place a few weeks ago, in consequence of having shown strong symptoms of a diseased mind, and placed in an asylum, where he had the very best medical attendance. He was a man of strict integrity, and as a banker leaves an unblemished record.

"That wonderful catholicon known as Mrs. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has given the lady a world-wide reputation for doing good. It is like a lying spring to the vital constitution. Her Blood Purifier will do more to cleanse the channels of the circulation and purify the life of the body than all the sanitary devices of the Board of Health."

THE SKIRMISHING FUND.

New York, Oct. 24.—The contributors to the skirmishing fund met again on Sunday. The investigating committee reported that it had discovered that the threatening cable message to Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Home Secretary at the time of the wholesale imprisonment of Land Leaguers, cost, instead of \$117, only \$12. It was said that the committee had proceeded as far as it could in the investigation of the charges made by Luke Clarke, of Wilkesbarre, Pa., respecting the collection of \$6,000 by Messrs. Devoy, Bourke, Luby and others in his neighborhood. The committee reported that it had had letters from almost everybody of note in Wilkesbarre and surrounding towns, and that all substantiated Mr. Clarke's charges. Mr. O'Dwyer reported that his committee had not yet come to a conclusion with the lawyers about commencing action against the trustees. Mr. Cronin said that he had received an anonymous communication, telling him that the trustees were about to make a report, and would have done so last week but for a disagreement. Captain Slyman said that he noticed that Trustee Reynolds, of New Haven, was receiving money to swell the Skirmishing fund. Some \$400 was acknowledged last week in the Irish Nation from people in Providence. He thought that Mr. Reynolds, as one of the trustees, should be applied to for an accounting. The Investigating Committee was directed to apply to him.

"A fair outside is but a poor substitute for inward worth. Good health inwardly, of the bowels, liver and kidneys, is sure to secure a fair outside, the glow of health on the cheek and vigor in the frame. For this, use Kidney-Wort and nothing else."

THRILLING ADVENTURE.

THE PERILS OF A BARE-HEADED MAN—MIRACULOUS ESCAPE.

OTTAWA, Oct. 25.—On the arrival of the night train on the Canada Atlantic Railway at the new station on Elgin street last evening, the unusual sight of a bare-headed man lying asleep on the cowcatcher was seen. How he got there was a mystery to many, and probably no other man but the engineer could explain the enigma. It seems that Mr. H. B. Wood, who resides at No. 37 Mosgrove street, went driving in the direction of Hurdman's bridge, about 8 o'clock last evening. He passed Cassidy's Hotel at the bridge on his return shortly after nine o'clock, and drove in the direction of the railway bridge. A few minutes afterwards Mr. Wood heard the night train coming with a rush, and the locomotive whistling "down brakes." It appears that Mr. Wood's horse wandered on to the railway track just south of the bridge, and Mr. Wood falling asleep, the vehicle was left standing at right angles across the rails, the horse a little to one side. On came the iron horse and in a twinkling the buggy was caught up by the cowcatcher, torn away from the horse, and hurled over the declivity into the river below. Mr. Wood, by the suddenness of the shock, was cleverly landed on the platform above the cowcatcher with the buffalo robe in which he was wrapped still around him. Strange to say he did not wake till the station was reached, but reposed calmly in his normal position while being whirled through the air at the velocity of thirty miles an hour. His hat was blown off during the involuntary trip, but he is thankful for his escape with only the loss of the buggy. The horse escaped with a scratch and was caught this morning.

Mr. W. Maguire, merchant, at Franklin, writes:—I was afflicted with pain in my shoulder for eight years—almost helpless at times—have tried many remedies, but with no relief, until I used Dr. Thomas' Eucalyptic Oil. After a few applications the pain left me entirely, and I have had no pains since.

HINTS FOR SLEEPERS.

Poor sleepers will find it advantageous often to raise the head of the bed a foot, and bring the head a little higher than the shoulders. The object is to take the work of the heart in throwing blood to the brain, so it will not throb so much. A low bed with the head almost as low as the feet, causes an easy flow of blood to the brain and prevents sleep. Persons who find themselves restless and unable to sleep at night would do well to place the head towards the north, as it is undoubtedly conducive to health. A hot mustard foot-bath, taken at bed-time, is beneficial in drawing the blood from the head and thus inducing sleep. A hearty meal and a seat near a warm fire after a long walk in the cold wind in winter will induce deep sleep in the majority of persons, no matter how lightly they ordinarily slumber. Active outdoor exercise and avoidance of excessive and long-continued mental exertion are necessary in all cases of sleeplessness. Where these means fail such remedies as are known to diminish the amount of blood in the head should be resorted to—of course under the direction of a competent physician. Opium, chloral, etc., increase the quantity of blood in the head and are highly injurious. Their use should never be resorted to.

Don't wear dingy or faded things when the ten-cent Diamond Dye will make them good as new. They are perfect.

THE LAST TWO WEEKS

Over 300 poor have taken advantage of the liberal offer made by M. Souville, ex-Aide Surgeon of the French Army, and furnished gratis with his Splanometer, for the cure of Catarrh, Catarrhal Deafness, Bronchitis, Asthma, and all diseases of the throat and Lungs. Call or address, M. Souville, ex-Aide Surgeon of the French Army, 13 Phillips' Square, Montreal, or 173 Church street, Toronto, offices for Canada. French and English Specialists attend to the poor gratis. 111

THE COMET OF A SEASON!

By JUSTIN MCCARTHY, M. P.

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

"I need not ask you, I suppose, why the poor girl did this?" "No," Montana said, "you need not. You can guess. But believe me, Marlon—I had nothing to do with it. I hardly ever spoke a dozen words at a time to the young lady. But some young women of that age must always be romantic."

"Yes, I suppose so. If it is not the curate or the music-master, it must be the first good-looking stranger that turns up. We must take her home to her father."

"Do what you think best," Montana said. "I need not ask you to be kind to her. I shan't see her again. I shall go out and not return till late at night, when I can feel certain that you and she are gone. I have something to say to you at some other time about Miss Rowan, but that will keep. Good-night."

Marlon clasped his hand with increasing warmth of friendship. In his eyes, now, Montana was invested more than ever with heroic and noble attributes. He now understood why Montana had sent for Geraldine, and why she had sent for her in that pert and mysterious manner. He appreciated all the delicacy of his conduct and his words with regard to poor Melissa, and he felt satisfied that no plottings, planings, or investigations could find out anything about Montana that was not to Montana's honor.

Presently Geraldine sent for him, and he went to her, and found Melissa in an unashamed and defiant mood. She declared that what he would, she would never go home. Geraldine and Marlon did their best to soothe her, and to promise her that everything should be done to save her from any distress. Mr. Aquitaine was to be telegraphed at once, in order to relieve him from alarm. Everything was to be made as smooth as possible—Marlon would take care of that.

Geraldine and Marlon would take the responsibility of all that had been done. It is to be feared that Captain Marlon sometimes went a little beyond the strict limits of the possible or the creditable in his assurances that there were numberless ways of making the whole affair seem the simplest and most natural thing in the world to Mr. Aquitaine. Marlon's heart misgave him even, while he was most earnestly endeavoring to re-assure the obstinate little fugitive.

Misses herself gave unhesitating expression to her utter scepticism. "Suppose," she said scornfully, "that we tell my father I got into the train by mistake, thinking it was a picture-gallery? He would be sure to believe that. Or why not say that I was walking in my sleep? Nothing is more common than for a girl to walk in her sleep; I have seen all sorts of odd stories in newspapers about such things. Or can't we say that Geraldine telegraphed for me to fly at once to her side, because she wanted my advice about a wedding-dress? There are lots of explanations."

"We don't mean to tell lies, Melissa," Captain Marlon said, a little angrily. "Oh, don't say I thought we did. If we don't, I am afraid we can't make much of it."

She was truly an unmanageable little object of sympathy. At last, however, she consented to go to Captain Marlon's house.

"Let's have it all out at once," she said; "let Sydney preach at me to begin with."

"Sydney shan't say a word to you," Marlon declared sharply.

"And Katherine, too, will be glad to see me. We were in the same boat, I rather think, only she had the good-luck not to fall out, and have to be rescued and pulled ashore, and made an object of pity."

"For shame, Melissa, to talk in such a way!" Geraldine remonstrated, with something like anger in her voice. Marlon was silent. With all his kindness of nature and his pity for Melissa, he did at that moment think her a very wicked little girl.

But it made no difference in his treatment of her, in his patient, gentle way with her. Geraldine felt her heart swell with gratefulness and affection for him.

As they drove away from the faded house, Melissa gave one wild, sad look back. Then she shrank into a corner of the carriage and was silent for a few moments. No one spoke. Suddenly she looked up.

"Mind, I am not going home," she said, energetically. "I go with you now, Captain Marlon and Geraldine; but I'll not go back to my father's house; no, never, never! I don't care what is said or what is done; I'll not go home again."

The next morning Mr. Varlowe was buried in a grave-yard two or three miles out of London, clear of the streets and the crush of traffic, and the brick and mortar, and the fogs. The funeral was very quiet. Clement particularly desired that but few persons should be present. Montana was there, and Captain Marlon, and one or two others, and that was all.

Clement did not exchange a word with Montana. They merely shook hands, and Montana's grasp expressed as much sympathy and kindness and encouragement as a mere clasp of the hand could well be made to express. But he said nothing, and Clement seemed to avoid looking directly at him.

To Captain Marlon Clement said a few words, telling him frankly that he wished to be alone for a day or two, and to remain behind in the church-yard when the rest had gone. They appreciated his humor, and went away as soon as the grim ceremonial was over, and Clement was left alone. He stayed for some time in the cemetery, and looked early enough over the fair landscape spread out before him, the soft, sloping hills and pleasant fields and gentle waters steeped in the sunlight of late summer. It was his humor to be alone there, and to walk home alone. The few miles of walk, he thought, would give him strength, and bring refreshment to his soul. He wanted to be alone, and to look the past and future steadily in the face, and to prepare to meet life in his own strength. An absolute change, such as years might not have made, had taken place in him within the last few days. Before Mr. Varlowe grew ill he was still, but a boy, with a boy's vague sentiments and whims and ways, and now he had turned completely into a man. He felt as he walked home that the time had come for emerging straightway out of the cloud of half poetic illusion and dream, and sensuous, intellectual reverie, and that he must make for himself a strong and a useful career. Of his passion for Melissa Aquitaine there was nothing left now. The rude wind of misfortune which had blown across him had swept that emotion away, as a gust of wind may sweep a faded flower from a window. It was too unreal and sickly a little passion to bear the keen atmosphere of genuine pain. He was conscious that the feeling was gone, and he was glad of it. He looked back on that stage of his existence with a sort of shamefaced pity. It seemed strange to him now that any one

could thing seriously of Melissa Aquitaine, or fall to see her weakness, and her faults, and her incapacity for understanding anything serious or great.

He reached his lonely house. He opened the door with his latch-key and let himself in. He stood for a moment at a window that looked out upon the garden, and thought of the evening, which now seemed so long ago and yet was so very recent, when he stood at the same window with Geraldine Rowan. In all his suffering and sorrow, as he re-entered that house, spectral with the memory of the dead, he could not help recalling that evening, and thinking of the new and strange sensations which had come up within him when he saw her there, and looked into her kindly sympathetic eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IMPULSES ON BOTH SIDES.

One effect produced upon Clement by late events was an unaccountable chill in his feelings toward Montana. It was not anything so definite as actual distrust. He had not thought the matter out in any way, or asked himself anything as to the nature of the change in his feelings. But the change was there, present always, and filling him with a certain pain. He was unwilling to see Montana. He shrank from speaking to him. He would, if possible, have avoided thinking of him. Perhaps this may have come merely from the unlucky accident by which he had been prevented from being with Mr. Varlowe to the last, and of which Montana was the innocent cause. But whatever its source, the feeling in Clement's mind was there. He no longer thought with eagerness of Montana's great scheme. He shrank from the idea of taking part in it, or alluding his fortunes in any way with Montana's leadership. Sometimes he felt that this was ungrateful and unworthy on his part, and he tried to put away the thought or to stifle it, but it would come back again.

In the old days, when men believed in ghosts, it sometimes happened that one was dimly, darkly conscious of the presence of some spectral visitant in the room with him. He saw nothing, he heard nothing out of the common, but the air was chill with the mysterious, unseen presence; and as darkness looked with its hundred eyes, so this invisible companionship made its presence palpable by its myriad touches. So now in the same way a phantom had arisen between Clement Hope and Montana. Unseen, its presence was felt. Voiceless, it bade Clement stand apart from Montana.

Clement was very busy for some few days. He threw an unceasing energy now into all he had to do; it relieved him from grief, and, indeed, energy belonged to his nature, long as it had been suppressed. There were many matters of business to arrange in consequence of Mr. Varlowe's death. There were two wills made by Mr. Varlowe, one of several years' standing, with the contents of which Clement was familiar. It left everything to him, in the event of the missing son not re-appearing; if the son should reappear, it divided the property equally between Clement and him. The second will, made shortly before Varlowe's death, left the whole to Clement unconditionally. The property, in houses and in money, was very considerable. Clement would be a comparatively rich man should the son not reappear; even should the son come back, and the division take place, he would still have more money than he wanted or cared for.

He was resolved that he would not lead an idle life any more. The one thing that had led and troubled him during the life of his benefactor was the way in which he had to live—striving for nothing, accomplishing nothing. Until lately he had hoped to devote himself to Montana's scheme and Montana's service; now he no longer felt any inclination that way. But Montana had shown him a path to tread. Why should he not found a new colony for himself, on smaller proportions, indeed, and a much more modest principle than Montana's vast enterprise, but a new colony, where striving, high-hearted men and women, now borne down by the cruel conditions of life in great cities, should breathe the free, fresh air, and earn a happy living by energy and combination? The idea grew more and more fascinating as Clement turned it over day and night. That way, he felt, his inclinations, his capacity and his ambition lay. There was nothing else left in our modern civilization for one who had a real longing to do great work which should satisfy his own energy and serve his fellows. The scheme had an alluring savor of romance and of heroism about it. It was nobler than mere exploring. It was far more poetic than the writing of poor verses. It was more generous in its scope than any effort of beneficence here at home could be; its results, if it succeeded, would be more enduring than any work of art. It would enable him to repay to many men and women all the unrepayable kindness his benefactor had lavished so long upon him. "The money isn't mine in any sense," Clement kept saying to himself; "if I took it for myself, it would be only accepting alms in another form. I'll earn it by making it of use to others; and I'll make the giver's name live forever in the grateful memory of men and women." For he was resolved that the little Eden he proposed to found should perpetuate Mr. Varlowe's name. In the United States, as Clement knew, there were thriving settlements called after all manner of private individuals utterly unknown to the world before. Why should not his new colony be called "Varlowe"?

They shall remember me here, and say I have done well," he thought again and again, with pride and melancholy pleasure.

Who were to remember him? The Marions? Well, he should like them to remember him with kindness; but it was not the thought of their kind remembrance that made his eyes light and his voice tremble. Melissa? Alas, no! He only felt ashamed of himself now when he recalled his foolish, unreal fancy for poor Melissa. He knew only too well that that was not love at all. He knew it now by positive experience. Now, indeed, he felt what genuine love was; and, mingling with every thought, selfish or unselfish, which rose up in his mind, came the planned his new Utopia, was the belief that Geraldine would approve of what he was doing. He longed for the mere pride and delight of telling her what he meant to do, even while it was only yet a thought or a dream. At least, she would believe it a generous thought; her soft, kindly eyes would smile approval of his dream, and encourage him to make it a reality. Was there a faint, distant hope that she might one day come to think well of him—so well that she might even care for him? Even in his own heart he hardly put it so boldly as to think of her loving him.

At least, he would go and see her. No one else should know of his plan and his dreams until she had been made known to her. Full of these thoughts, lifted by them out of himself, he went to see Geraldine. He had not heard anything of what had been happening in Captain Marlon's house since he last was there; he knew

nothing of the inquiries that were going on in the North, or of poor Melissa's flight.

Meanwhile, Melissa's escape was not taken in London exactly as people took it in the town from which she came. In London hardly anybody knew anything about it, and of the small minority who knew anything a still smaller minority took the slightest interest in the matter. But in Melissa's own town it was, as she had predicted, a public talk and scandal. It proved utterly impossible to keep it from the knowledge of everybody. Not more than an hour or two had she been missing when Marlon's reassuring telegram came to Mr. Aquitaine, and yet, in that time, inquiry enough had been made and alarm enough manifested to set the town in a sort of commotion. Soon there came the testimony of the man in the art gallery, and then it turned out that a great number of persons had seen Melissa, and recognized her, and wondered where she was going, although, of course, they had never seen anything about it till the supposed scandal of the story came out. At last there were so many rivals for the honor of having seen, and noticed, and suspected, and guessed all about her and her flight, that it would almost seem as if every man, woman and child in the whole place had followed, watched and studiously recorded every movement of the daughter, and was well aware of what she was doing, where she was going, and why she was leaving her home.

Mrs. Aquitaine took the matter calmly and sweetly. It did not strike her as anything very remarkable. It was silly of the girl to have gone making an afternoon call on a strange gentleman, she thought, and especially foolish to go hurrying up to London on a hot day in that kind of way; but, beyond that, Mrs. Aquitaine was not impressed. She would have received Melissa composedly, and been as sweet and kind and languidly contented as ever. Mr. Aquitaine took the affair differently. Out of his very affection for the girl and his tenderness to her, and his sudden disappointment and anger, there grew for the first time a strange business in him.

He wrote to Captain Marlon a quiet, cold letter, in which he absolutely declined to go for his daughter, or to see her, or to have anything to do with her for the present. "She has made herself the heroine of a scandal," he wrote, "and until that scandal is forgotten, if I ever see, I don't want to see her here. You are so kind, that I can ask you to take charge of her for the present; and in London nobody knows anything or cares anything about the name of Aquitaine. I will take her abroad after a while, when I have thought over what is best to do, but for the present I shall not see her."

This was a relief to Melissa. She had dreaded a scene—her father coming up and upbraiding her, and trying to take her home again. She was now quietly miserable. She avoided as much as possible seeing any one. She did not often come down to dinner with the rest of the family. When she did she was silent, or spoke aggressively by fits and starts.

Geraldine was very attentive to her, and tried as much as possible not to leave her alone. Captain Marlon, of course, was always kind, but there was something in his manner that showed Melissa how completely he had changed his opinion with regard to her. Indeed, Marlon was doing his best to avoid feeling a certain dislike for the poor girl, and he could not accomplish his wish.

"I am greatly afraid of Melissa," Geraldine said to him.

"Why afraid, Geraldine? What can happen to her now?"

"I don't know; but there is something alarming to me in her ways, in her silence, and her looks. I am afraid she will try to get away from us, or to do something."

These vague words, "to do something," generally mean what the speaker dreads to say more plainly, but has distinctly in mind. If Geraldine could have allowed her thoughts a full expression, she would have said that she was afraid Melissa might at some moment be tempted to kill herself.

Marlon was not alarmed. "Oh it is nothing," he said; "she is a silly petulant girl. She will soon come right. I wonder at Aquitaine. It is ridiculous of him to go on in that obstinate way. He had much better come up and take Melissa home and be kind to her. But he will soon give in, you'll find. He is a very kindly-hearted fellow, only obstinate—all these Northern men are obstinate. He will soon come up, and be very glad to have the whole thing forgotten. All will come right. Don't be alarmed, Geraldine. Pray don't, like a dear girl, conjure up any unnecessary phantasms to worry and disturb us. We have had enough of that sort of thing lately."

There were dreary days for Geraldine. How many were they? Not many, surely—three or four at the most of this blank and melancholy seclusion; but they seemed very long. Montana did not come near them all the time; that was a relief. He would not come, Geraldine supposed, while Melissa was there. Marlon went and saw him sometimes; but Geraldine for these few days was relieved from his presence, and that was something of a relief against the discomfort of the life she was leading. She watched over Melissa with an anxious care, as if the girl were her sister; and she received little but petulance in return.

So much gloom had come over the household that even Sydney Marlon, usually very patient, began to complain openly of it, and wondered why anybody could do anything to brighten their life for them.

Katherine spoke bitterly of Melissa. She had an especial spite against her "just now" because her being impure in the house kept Montana from visiting them. Trescoe was still in the North. He had gone there when Captain Marlon returned, and Katherine had been delighting herself with the hope that Montana would come very often, and that she could admire him without the check of Frank's angry looks. Melissa had not only committed the unpardonable impropriety of falling in love with Montana, and telling him so, and going to his house, but she was guilty of the additional offence of keeping Montana away from the place where Mrs. Trescoe was anxiously looking out for him.

Marlon was determined that the moment Trescoe came up from the North, he and Katherine should go off to the Continent at once, and he sincerely hoped that they would not come back until Montana had crossed the Atlantic. "Then," he thought, "things will come right again." To-morrow, or at farthest the day after, everything would come right. With Captain Marlon's buoyancy of temperament things were coming right again to-morrow, or the day after at the farthest. But he looked worn and sad. Geraldine had seen him thus of late, and had been greatly troubled.

She said as much.

"I am so sorry for you, Captain Marlon. You try to make every one happy, and you ought to be so happy yourself; and yet I know you are greatly distressed by all this. It is very hard on you."

"Well, for the matter of that, it is a good deal harder upon you, Geraldine; for you are young, and I brought you over here for a holiday after all. If your mother only knew, she would have a good right to scold me; only I don't believe she ever scolded any one in her life."

"I must return to her very soon," Geraldine said; "I am afraid she must miss me." "There, I know!" Marlon exclaimed. "I know you would want to get back at once. I expected that; I only wanted that. You are the only person who keeps us alive here—I have another rational creature to speak to; a now you are talking about going back to America."

"I don't like to desert you, indeed, Captain Marlon; but I am always thinking of my mother; and I think I ought to go home for many reasons."

"Yes, yes, I know some of them; and I know how dreadfully stupid things are here for a young woman."

"No, no; it isn't that," Geraldine pleaded warmly.

"No, I don't believe it is; but of course it is natural you should want to get back to your home—although it isn't your home after all. America isn't your home. Why can't you make your home here?"

Then Marlon suddenly stopped, remembering what Katherine had said, and what, according to her account, many others were saying. He was afraid Geraldine might misunderstand him, and become embarrassed.

"I don't see why Mrs. Rowan might not come over and live in England," he said. "She has friends enough here, I am sure."

"Her idea was," Geraldine explained, "that there is a better opening for young women in America than here. You see, Captain Marlon, I can't always lead this easy, pleasant kind of life."

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"Her idea was," Geraldine explained, "that there is a better opening for young women in America than here. You see, Captain Marlon, I can't always lead this easy, pleasant kind of life."

"Pleasant!" Marlon interjected. "Mighty pleasant some of us have made it for you!"

"I shall have to do something," she went on, without noticing his interruption. "My mother has only a small income; and it is only for her herself." Geraldine could not bear to say "for her own life." "I shall have to do something. I can do a good many things in a sort of way; and I could get on better out in America than here, where there are ever so many women who can do all I can, and a great deal better. So we thought of fixing ourselves in the States."

"But you'll never have to do anything. You are certain to get married, Geraldine."

Geraldine colored slightly, and shook her head.

"Well, at all events, your mother doesn't expect you just yet. She was quite willing to leave you in our charge for twelve months at least, and there's a long time of that to run. You must not talk of leaving us yet. I could not do without you now."

"I should not like to leave you," Geraldine said, simply—"at least, until you can do without me."

"My dear girl," Marlon asked, impulsively, "I wonder when that would be? I want you very much; you are the only reasonable being I have now to talk to. I am not so very happy in my girls as I expected to be. Perhaps I oughtn't to speak of this even to you, Geraldine, but I have got into the way of telling you everything. You see, we don't get on together so well, my girls and I; we don't hit it off as I hoped we might do. Katherine has changed greatly—one can't help seeing that—and Sydney is so undemonstrative and cold. I dare say she is affectionate enough, but she doesn't show it; and something is troubling her now, I think, and she doesn't tell me, and there is no confidence between us. So I wish you to stay as long as you can, Geraldine. I really can't say you at present. Odd that I should talk in this way, but really I should miss you much more than one of my own daughters."

"I wish I were your daughter," said Geraldine.

"So do I. At least"—then he hesitated for a moment—"at least, I know I am just as fond of you as if you were."

"And I am very fond of you," said Geraldine, frankly, "and I shall be sorry to leave you whenever it is to be. You have always been so kind and good to me, and I feel as if I had known you since I was a child. I suppose your being my father's friend makes me feel so, but I don't feel the same to any one else."

A strange sensation went through Marlon's heart as he looked into the girl's face and saw her so beautiful, so affectionate, and so outspoken. "If she really cares for me no one—no young man," he thought, "why should she ever go away? Could she do any better than stay here?"

At the same moment a thought like that was passing through Geraldine's own mind. "He has been kinder than a brother to me. I am not in love with anybody. I wish I were. Nobody that I care for is likely to be in love with me. If it would make him happy that I should stay with him always, why should I not do so? The world delights my mother, I know. The world begins to be very blank and dreary. I don't care to look far forward. What could I do better than this, if it would please him? What could I do better than devote my life to him?"

Surely some light of the thought that was in both their minds must have passed from the eyes of one to the eyes of the other.

"Do you know what people have been saying of us, Geraldine?" he asked, and he took her hand in his.

She answered No, but she could not keep from blushing.

"They say I am very fond of you, my dear, and that I want to marry you. I don't wonder at their saying it, Geraldine, although it made me angry on your account. Why should a girl like you marry a man like me? You would look for twenty times my merits, and half my years, wouldn't you?"

He had taken both her hands in his now, and he looked appealingly into her eyes. There was a moment of silence. He waited patiently. He knew she understood him. She could hardly speak. The tumult in her "fighting soul" was too much for her as yet; and still she had been expecting this, somehow, for many minutes before Marlon's words were spoken. Spoken as they were, and by him, the words were a proposal of marriage.

"You don't answer," Marlon said; "you are not angry with me, Geraldine?"

"Oh, no—how could I be angry? Yes, if you would really like it—if it would please you—to have me for your wife, I will marry you, Captain Marlon, with—with pleasure."

A strange, keen pang went through Marlon's heart—a mingled joy and pain. Geraldine, then, was willing to marry him, at his age, that beautiful, proud girl! But she did not love him. She would marry him to please him, and also, he was sure, to be free forever from the importunity of one whom she feared. She did not pretend to love him; she had made her meaning clear enough in the fewest words—if he liked her enough to make her his wife, he might have her. Well, it ought to be happiness to him to have her on any terms. She would make his life happy. His daughters could not make him happy any more. His hopes that way had all gone.

"You are sure that you are quite willing, Geraldine? I don't ask you if you love me; I suppose I have passed the age for being loved."

"I am very fond of you," Geraldine truly said.

"And you are really willing?" "I am really willing. I am very grateful."

He pressed her hand to his lips. Somehow, he did not venture to kiss her, although she had promised to be his wife. But Geraldine drew toward him and, her face crimsoning all over, she kissed him. He grew as red as a boy might do.

"My sweet, darling girl!" was all he could say for a moment. Then he told her that he would leave her to herself to think this all over; and he was on the brink of saying that if she found she did not quite like it he would not hold her to her word. But he stopped himself, remembering that this might seem almost an insult to the girl.

"What will your mother say?" he asked. "She will be glad," Geraldine answered, simply.

This was a relief and a joy to Marlon. He kept his word, and left Geraldine for the moment. When their conversation was beginning, Marlon would have held any man or woman mad who suggested the possibility of its ending as it did—Geraldine Rowan consenting to be his wife, or, indeed, of his allowing himself to ask her.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"AN 'TWERE TO GIVE AGAIN—BUT 'TIS NO MATTER."

Geraldine sat for a while listless and thoughtful. The excitement of her sudden impulse had gone from her, and left her in a condition of mental reaction, almost of collapse. She was still for that what the right thing to do. In that as in many other events of her life, she had acted entirely on impulse, and she had no misgivings at all about this impulse. It would please Captain Marlon, she thought, and make him happy; and what better use could she turn her life to than to make him happy? She saw that he was