

THE TWO BRIDES.

CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

He, meanwhile, bore the countenance of an angel, as he recited the confession of Christian faith, and begged pardon, in presence of God and angels and men, for his having been during so many years false to the Divine Majesty. Both the priest and the physician were deeply touched by the simple and manly piety of the noble stranger. Of the feelings of Rose, her father, and her aunt, we need say nothing.

When the last action and the last blessing had been given, Mr. D'Arcy rose, and taking his daughter by the hand, led her towards Diego's bedside.

"Before you go, Reverend sir," he said to the clergyman, "I must beg you to sanction in the name of the Church the betrothal of those two—of a betrothal which took place while they were yet children, and which both wish now to ratify as fully as they may."

"I will do it," said Diego, "I give you my word as a man, and I give you my word as a priest, and I give you my word as a father, and I give you my word as a friend."

Rose knelt, while the heavy tears were silently falling down her pale cheeks, and Diego placed on her finger his mother's ring, the priest bestowing his benediction on the pair.

"For time and for eternity, my love!" Diego said, looking into the misty eyes raised to his.

"Yes," she answered, firmly: "yours for time and eternity."

"Oh, dear father," said Diego, as he looked up into Mr. D'Arcy's face, "you have made me so happy! And God has been so good to me!"

"What were those sweet lines you used to sing to me, my own?" he said to Rose. "I do not understand them then. But they are so true now!"

"So long Thy power hath blest me,"

"Yes," said Rose, choking down the tears, "here they are!"

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on, O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone, And with the moon that angel faces smile, Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

"Thanks!" said Diego, as his eyes closed as if on a sweet vision he could not bear to lose.

"I think it will be prudent to let him rest for the present," said Dr. Northrup. "I shall remain with him till my reverend friend is ready to depart."

And so patient and physician were left alone. Before the latter had been many minutes by Diego's bedside, he plainly saw that the energy which had sustained the sick man so far was fast giving way to the terrible disease. Diego was delirious before the other left the room.

"I dare not bid you hope too much," Dr. Northrup said to Mr. D'Arcy, as he was about to leave. The Count's system has been thoroughly impregnated with the malarial poison during his long travels and continuous exposure. His powerful constitution has the purity of his blood may save him. But I doubt if they avail much in so violent a case as this."

"Must I tell my sister and daughter of this?" Mr. D'Arcy asked.

"Not Miss D'Arcy, certainly," the doctor replied. "I see no harm in telling Mrs. De Beaumont. You, my dear sir," he continued, "must spare yourself. You are not yet strong. I shall be back in good time this evening, and shall telegraph to Charleston for two Sisters of Mercy to help the ladies in the sickroom."

"I do not think we shall need any aid from outsiders," replied the other. "much as I value the help of the devoted Sisters in such an emergency. But as they must have more than enough to do in Charleston and vicinity during this dreadful war, I must not call on them."

The fever, however, assumed almost immediately so violent an aspect, and the delirium became so wild, that Ellen had to call to his assistance some three or four of the most devoted men on the plantation. Rose and her aunt could only see the patient in his rare moments of comparative calm.

Mrs. De Beaumont showed herself a true mother in her devotion to Rose during this period of her deplorable suspense. She lavished on her every possible mark of the tenderness and love and solicitude. Nothing, however, seemed to soothe Rose's pain so much as the short intervals she was allowed to spend by Diego's bedside. It had, indeed, been a boon to her if the malady had been of so mild a form as to permit her to nurse him assiduously. Of its malignity she had no fear.

Her father was also a great subject of anxious care to her. He had, indeed, seemed to derive extraordinary vigor and life from Diego's coming to his charming companionship. But the shock of this sudden illness, and the imminent danger in which almost his only son was placed, greatly distressed the dear invalid. So, with her father, Rose made a great effort to appear calm and hopeful, though hope had been a stranger to her soul from the very beginning.

The strange feeling of dread which had filled her so unaccountably at Malaga, on her first meeting with her betrothed, she now recalled to her mind frequently. Was it a warning not to bestow her affections on one whose outward presence brought with it so much fascination? Or was it merely to warn her against plunging her troth or giving her heart to one who did not then share her own deep religious convictions? This latter pleased her most, and consoled her immensely. The pure love which she felt for Diego and that which she inspired had been—so he had again and again assured her—almost the same nobleness of life, and she was almost sure to be satisfied with this? Was her earthly companionship to end thus? He had been planning with her, during their sweet rambles over the grounds at Mortlake, how they were to labor together in Andalusia for the improvement of their joint estates, and especially for the improvement of their numerous dependents. How could Rose help being carried away by the prospect of so much good to be done amid that land of enchantment, Andalusia? How could she help contemplating these visions of a whole population to be raised by the joint labors of her noble husband and herself, to the lofty standard of moral and intellectual excellence, commanded by their baptismal faith? Ah, if she by a lifetime of devotion and self-sacrifice could repay the disastrous effects of political revolutions, and the social degeneracy! And must she see it all up a what was so soon to become a practical scheme, as a day-dream, the fruit of an over-fancy?

On the ninth day after the events above narrated, there seemed to be a sudden pause in the violent fits of delirium which wasted the patient's strength.

Mr. D'Arcy and the two ladies were allowed by the doctor to remain for nearly two hours in the sick-room. It was an unspeakable comfort to Rose to sit by her dear sufferer's side, and hold the hard burning hand with her own, while she renewed the applications to his head, or refreshed the parched mouth with cool drinks. The

pale, emaciated features seemed to be those of one in deep sleep, except for the bright hectic spot on each cheek, and the spasmodic motion that every now and then ran like an electric commotion through the sufferer's frame.

Occasionally, through the mutterings of the fever, could be heard words of denunciation of Napoleon, or of remembrance of the Mexicans; then came English phrases thanking invisible friends for kindness; and anon sweet words of encouragement in his own native Spanish, in which his mother's name was mentioned. Once, as he seemed to sigh, "I will contend with some powerful emotion, were heard the words, "Rosita! Rosita!"—almost the last words he said to her in their last evening walk along the borders of the lake.

It was too much for poor Rose. Falling on her knees, "Oh, Diego, my love!" she said, "why will not God take me and leave you, who can do so much good to others?" And she burst into an unceasing fit of weeping. They had to take her from the room. Dr. Northrup prescribed a mild opiate for her, and she was made to retire early, with the hope—a right one, but sadly faulty—erely—that the subsidence of the delirium would be the precursor of a favorable change. A change there was, indeed. A little after midnight they came to wake Rose. Diego had recovered consciousness, and was calling for her. Mrs. De Beaumont and her own maid helped her to dress as soon as might be, and leaning on her aunt, the poor girl, like one in a half-jivious, half-feeble dream, hastened to the sick-room.

Diego was conscious, and with straining eyes watching the door for her appearance. As she entered, the dying man's countenance was lighted up with a joy so sudden that he seemed transformed. He opened his arms, and would have risen, but strength there was none. As his eyes met hers she flew to him, and was folded in his embrace for the first and for the last time.

"Oh, Diego," she said, looking into the wondrous eyes, "are you better?"

"Yes, my own Rose," he gasped, "better—oh, yes, my better!"

"You are not dying?" she asked, frightened by the cold face and the marble brow all wet with the dew of death.

"Yes, dying happy," he said, brightly. "Thank God! thank God!" he added, with extraordinary fervor, as he looked upward toward the new light that dawned upon him,—the light of the sun that knows no setting!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CROWD OF SUFFERING.

During the winter which ensued, the fierce passions of war burned beneath snow and ice, like the slumbering fire of a volcano,—breaking out here and there fitfully and feebly, as if to warn the unwary that they still lived; but, in reality, only concentrating their fury for a more fearful outbreak. So the dreary autumn had passed slowly for the Count's household, as the dead leaves of the year, the bravest, the most energetic, the most noble, the most devoted, the most self-sacrificing, the most generous, the most devoted of sisters, she replied, "But I was not thinking of them."

"Of whom, then, were you speaking?" he asked, while a vivid blush overpread the scarred features.

"Of one who loves you—better than her own life," Rose answered. "Oh, dear papa, forgive my indiscretion," she added. "These are the things I should not have mentioned."

"You do not mean Miss Hutchinson?" Gaston said, in a husky voice.

"What wonder if I did, brother mine?" she replied.

"Because—even were your words true—such love is one that I never could accept. Ah, Rose, how could I burden the woman I loved with the life-long care of a crippled man? Let this end our conversation on the subject," he said, rising suddenly.

"I do not want my son to be a burden to any one," Mr. D'Arcy now said, as he took Gaston's hand. "Your father shall be your guide, your companion, your friend," he added, "so long as God spares him to you."

"Have you not ever been that, my own dear father?" said Gaston, overcome with the recollection of the past. "And has not this fortune come to me because I persisted in leaving you to your side and following my own way? And do I now am as helpless as a babe, and far more hopeless!"

"You must not say these things, my boy," said his father. "You must not even think of them. Miss Hutchinson's girl's admiration for you was well known to all of us. It remains to be seen whether this sentiment still exists. She is as yet but a school-girl, and it is premature to speak of what may be her feelings two or three years hence. Meanwhile, you have your father, your brother, and your sisters, and you can never be a burden for them."

"I have pained you, dear Gaston," Rose said, penitently. "Indeed I did not mean to do so."

"My little sister could never pain me knowingly," he answered, as he drew her to him and kissed her forehead. "I," he added, "you must not speak now of leaving me."

"I was quite wrong, dear, she replied. "I did not come so far with dear papa, to find you out that I should be in such a hurry to leave you."

Gaston never exchanged another word either with his father or with his sister on this delicate subject, till circumstances had themselves solved the difficulty. Rose was encouraged by both Gaston and her father to spend several hours daily in the military hospitals in and near Washington. She was thus, she thought, making herself familiar with the proper work of her future vocation. The Sisters of Charity, with whom she chose to labor in preference, were delighted to have so intelligent and zealous a helper, as the closing act of the great military drama deepened in horror and in interest, sending over from Virginia an unceasing stream of the sick and wounded.

At length the end came in April, and Hope, with its rain—by whose roses, and spanned the whole country from ocean to ocean. Lucy petitioned hard to be taken from school and allowed to share Rose's labors. But her parents were inexorable. Rose herself was soon forced to give herself rest. Her health—into which repeated afflictions, had made serious inroads—broke down with the first weeks of summer. A low nervous fever declared itself, and it was decided by Mrs. Hutchinson that she should take a large and comfortable mansion in the neighborhood of the capital. So whether they moved toward the end of June.

The end of June also brought Lucy home from school, and Frank from the army, now happily useless in the field. It was a most pleasant family gathering. To Frank all eyes were turned, and he behaved with admirable delicacy towards Rose, avoiding to thrust his company or attention upon her, and to her great delight, hastening on his mother and sister every possible mark of affection and devotion. It was evident that he wished to atone for the past, and, surely, Mrs. Hutchinson was the happiest and proudest of mothers with her

even the kindly nursing of the devoted Sisters of Charity.

Lucy, we may well believe, was happy beyond measure to embrace her Rose, nor was her happiness lessened by the frequent visits which she now allowed herself to make to her mother, to Rose, and to Gaston. There was one other person whose pulse beat quicker and whose hopes rose higher when he heard of Miss D'Arcy's arrival in Washington. And this was Colonel Hutchinson, who was doing heroic service under Sheridan, in Virginia.

Gaston, conscious of the great shock which the sight of his own helpless condition must give to his father, strove to be most cheerful, and never to speak of the future, but with the utmost hopefulness. His efforts in this respect did not succeed in weakening the sad impression made on his father by the terrible wounds Gaston had received. It was their duty to gladden him with words of cheer and high hope. And nobly did they perform it.

"You are but a boy yet," Mr. D'Arcy said; "you have youth in your favor. In a few years—in a few months even you will feel little or no inconvenience from your wounds, your sight excepted. But then, my dear Gaston, you will not have to earn your bread like so many others, thousands upon thousands of laborers and mechanics who have gone to their homes disabled for life."

"I am most grateful, dear father," he replied, "for my miraculous preservation. I should be most guilty were I to repine at my loss. And I mean to make the best use I can of my life, with the faculties spared to me."

"Oh, Gaston," said Rose, "they will only think the more of you at home for all you have suffered. We shall be all very happy," she added. "At last you and dear papa, and Charley and the girls, will enjoy your reunion after this long and painful separation."

"You said nothing of yourself, little sister," Gaston answered, as he passed his hand over the bent head, with its wealth of dark brown hair. "What mystery is this?"

"She is not to be long with us," his father said. "She has chosen the better part."

"Rose, darling, is this so? Are you going to leave us,—to leave papa, I mean, in the desolation which has fallen on us? That is not like our generous, self-sacrificing Rose."

"Spare her, my dear boy," said Mr. D'Arcy. "You will not condemn her when you have heard all."

"I fear, my dear sir, that I am too selfish to be reconciled with the thought of losing her. Oh, Rose," he continued, drawing the weeping girl close to his side, "you know, during all these long months of suffering and darkness, I have dreamed of your being my guide, my staff, my angel guardian, through Fairy Dell and its neighborhood, when it should have pleased God to restore us all to his quiet."

"God will not leave you without a better and more faithful guide than your sister Rose," she replied, looking up into the anxious face.

"You mean Viva?" he inquired.

"Viva, and Maud, and Mary; and every one of them, the most devoted of sisters," she replied. "But I was not thinking of them."

"Of whom, then, were you speaking?" he asked, while a vivid blush overpread the scarred features.

"Of one who loves you—better than her own life," Rose answered. "Oh, dear papa, forgive my indiscretion," she added. "These are the things I should not have mentioned."

"You do not mean Miss Hutchinson?" Gaston said, in a husky voice.

"What wonder if I did, brother mine?" she replied.

"Because—even were your words true—such love is one that I never could accept. Ah, Rose, how could I burden the woman I loved with the life-long care of a crippled man? Let this end our conversation on the subject," he said, rising suddenly.

"I do not want my son to be a burden to any one," Mr. D'Arcy now said, as he took Gaston's hand. "Your father shall be your guide, your companion, your friend," he added, "so long as God spares him to you."

"Have you not ever been that, my own dear father?" said Gaston, overcome with the recollection of the past. "And has not this fortune come to me because I persisted in leaving you to your side and following my own way? And do I now am as helpless as a babe, and far more hopeless!"

"You must not say these things, my boy," said his father. "You must not even think of them. Miss Hutchinson's girl's admiration for you was well known to all of us. It remains to be seen whether this sentiment still exists. She is as yet but a school-girl, and it is premature to speak of what may be her feelings two or three years hence. Meanwhile, you have your father, your brother, and your sisters, and you can never be a burden for them."

"I have pained you, dear Gaston," Rose said, penitently. "Indeed I did not mean to do so."

"My little sister could never pain me knowingly," he answered, as he drew her to him and kissed her forehead. "I," he added, "you must not speak now of leaving me."

"I was quite wrong, dear, she replied. "I did not come so far with dear papa, to find you out that I should be in such a hurry to leave you."

Gaston never exchanged another word either with his father or with his sister on this delicate subject, till circumstances had themselves solved the difficulty. Rose was encouraged by both Gaston and her father to spend several hours daily in the military hospitals in and near Washington. She was thus, she thought, making herself familiar with the proper work of her future vocation. The Sisters of Charity, with whom she chose to labor in preference, were delighted to have so intelligent and zealous a helper, as the closing act of the great military drama deepened in horror and in interest, sending over from Virginia an unceasing stream of the sick and wounded.

At length the end came in April, and Hope, with its rain—by whose roses, and spanned the whole country from ocean to ocean. Lucy petitioned hard to be taken from school and allowed to share Rose's labors. But her parents were inexorable. Rose herself was soon forced to give herself rest. Her health—into which repeated afflictions, had made serious inroads—broke down with the first weeks of summer. A low nervous fever declared itself, and it was decided by Mrs. Hutchinson that she should take a large and comfortable mansion in the neighborhood of the capital. So whether they moved toward the end of June.

The end of June also brought Lucy home from school, and Frank from the army, now happily useless in the field. It was a most pleasant family gathering. To Frank all eyes were turned, and he behaved with admirable delicacy towards Rose, avoiding to thrust his company or attention upon her, and to her great delight, hastening on his mother and sister every possible mark of affection and devotion. It was evident that he wished to atone for the past, and, surely, Mrs. Hutchinson was the happiest and proudest of mothers with her

noble soldier-boy by her side, and her lovely daughter, in whom every day seemed to reveal some new grace, some more lovable quality. To Gaston, Frank devoted every hour he could spare. He read the news to him, drove him out regularly morning and evening, and walked with him in the grounds, chatting over incidents of the war,—giving him a detailed account of what he had seen himself of the great battles of the war, and listening with delight to Gaston's narratives of his own brief military experience.

It was evident that the two families, once restored to Fairy Dell and Fairview, were destined to be more united even than they had been before the war. Rose's fever passed away with the pure atmosphere of the country, and the perfect repose enjoyed there. Her heart, too, began to feel a satisfaction she had little hoped for in seeing the two families drawn so closely together, and in learning, as she soon did, that the elements, at Mortlake, had been unimpaired by Sherman's victorious advance through South Carolina; while at Fairy Dell, Charles was once more reorganizing the large industries created by his grandfather, and thus reopening to the impoverished population their former sources of thrift and prosperity.

She felt instinctively that the place she had once held at Fairy Dell could now be filled by Lucy and her own sisters, while she might devote her own project of carrying out the last wishes and cherished plans of Diego de Lebriz. The appointment of Mr. Hutchinson to a foreign mission came in the middle of July, to sadden the hearts of his son and daughter. Frank found too much of sweet-ness near to Rose, not to be dismayed by the prospect of seeing their happy household broken up. And he had not yet dared to say to her word of the loss which she alone had sustained in his long career of heroic conquest! Nor was Lucy less disturbed by the thought of parting with Gaston.

It so happened that the news of Mr. Hutchinson's appointment was brought to Lucy at a moment when she was alone in the house with Gaston and Rose. It was a short note from her father, and was handed to her while she and her two friends were seated, at sunset, in a pretty arbor overlooking the Potomac.

On opening and reading the note, an exclamation of pain broke from her as she dropped the paper, and grew very pale.

"What is it, Lucy darling?" said Rose, springing to her side. "I hope it is no bad news."

"Oh, no, no!" the other answered. "Only we must be going away." And a sudden faintness made her lean back in her seat. But, as it had no back, she would have fallen to the ground, had not Rose caught her in her arms.

"Courage, darling!" said the latter. "Here, take my smelling-bottle. It will revive you. There, now, you are better. But what is it, dear? Who is going away, and where?"

"Papa is going as ambassador to Europe," Lucy wept, as if the words choked her. "Will, dear, and what is there so dreadful in that?"

"Why, that I shall have to leave you, Rosette, and Gaston—and—"

"Do not fret about that, my pet!" said Rose, as she strove to soothe her friend, but dividing the cause of her tears. "We have to go ourselves to Paris very soon, and thence to Madrid and Seville, so that our separation may not be so long as you think."

"Oh, Rose, we can never again be as we have been here," Lucy replied, with a great effort at composing herself. "I felt so happy, so happy, I knew it could not last!"

"But, my dear, you will be with your parents and with Frank, and you will have the precious advantage of seeing foreign countries and the best society."

"Do not talk to me of good society and foreign countries," Lucy said, with something of the old petulance in her tone. "Oh, I wish we were back in Fairy Dell, and that I was a little girl again, looking up to you, Rosette, as a Fairy Queen sent to charm away my pain and to teach me everything, and to Gaston as to some great Fairy Prince, made to be able to look and worship!"

"I fear that people have sadly mangled and spoiled your Fairy Prince," said Gaston, relieved by this turn in the conversation. "They would surely admire or worship me now in Fairy Dell any more than here in Washington."

"Do not say that!" Lucy again said, impatiently. "You were then only as handsome as a fairy prince; but now you are a heroic soldier, with the marks of battle on you."

"Alas! yes. I feel them but too well, and am not likely to be rid of them."

"Oh, Gaston!" exclaimed Lucy, how often have I seen both papa and mamma said that you were ten times more handsome in their eyes, with these little scars on your face and your hands, than when I used to compare you to the angels that appeared to Abraham!"

"You were but a child then," he answered. "and you judged things with a child's simplicity, and spoke of them with a child's simplicity. But you are a young lady now, Miss Lucy, and you shall have to break more than one of your idols."

"Last one I never shall, never can break; it is dearer to me and more glorious a thousand times than before," she said, carried by her self. "Oh, do not go away!" she cried to Gaston, who had risen in dismay, and who in his helpless blindness had stumbled over a bench and fallen heavily to the ground. "Gaston, dear Gaston, what have I done?" she cried, running with Rose to his assistance, and helping him to rise. "I have offended you," she continued, as she kissed his maimed left hand. "And you must think me still the same silly, wayward, ungrateful little Lucy Hutchinson who used to tease and torment you so long ago."

"The Lucy Hutchinson whom I have known in my dire need," Gaston replied, reweaving himself, and speaking with great emotion, "is neither ungrateful, nor wayward, nor silly. She must ever be in my eyes the noblest, the sweetest, the dearest of women,—to whom I can never pay in gratitude and respect the smallest portion of the debt I owe her. Oh, Rose, she went on in great distress, "have not we—have not I—been very wrong in all this?"

"Lucy does not think so, dear brother," Rose answered.

"No! I do not think so," said Lucy. "I have loved you with all my heart since you first carried me in your arms, a little, sickly, helpless thing; and I oh, Gaston," she went on, kneeling by him and taking his hand, "how often, when you were lying unconscious at death's door, and during your long hours of delirium, have I not knelt this and repeated to myself and to you that I loved, and would willingly give my life for you?"

"Lucy," he said, putting his arms round her neck and drawing her to him, while he pressed his lips to her forehead; "Lucy, my angel, my preserver, I know all you say, have long known it, and have long loved you in return. But how can I accept this priceless offering of your love? And what will your father and mother think of this?"

"Mamma knows all, and has known it from the beginning," she answered, through her tears, too happy to move from her kneeling position, too wrapped in her gratitude and

her worship to take her eyes off his face. "And papa knows it too," she continued, "and they both love you too well not to rejoice at this. Oh, Rose, have you nothing to say to me,—not one word of congratulation to offer your sister Lucy?" she said, rising, and throwing herself into the outstretched arms.

"I ought to bless God, my own darling," Rose answered, "for giving me the dearest and best of sisters in my own cherished Lucy, and for giving to my dear Gaston the woman I should have chosen among all women to be his life companion."

At that very moment the noise of carriage wheels was heard on the gravel road leading away from the house, and as the carriage drew up to the door, Lucy saw that it was the carriage of the noble soldier-boy by her side, and her lovely daughter, in whom every day seemed to reveal some new grace, some more lovable quality. To Gaston, Frank devoted every hour he could spare. He read the news to him, drove him out regularly morning and evening, and walked with him in the grounds, chatting over incidents of the war,—giving him a detailed account of what he had seen himself of the great battles of the war, and listening with delight to Gaston's narratives of his own brief military experience.

It was evident that the two families, once restored to Fairy Dell and Fairview, were destined to be more united even than they had been before the war. Rose's fever passed away with the pure atmosphere of the country, and the perfect repose enjoyed there. Her heart, too, began to feel a satisfaction she had little hoped for in seeing the two families drawn so closely together, and in learning, as she soon did, that the elements, at Mortlake, had been unimpaired by Sherman's victorious advance through South Carolina; while at Fairy Dell, Charles was once more reorganizing the large industries created by his grandfather, and thus reopening to the impoverished population their former sources of thrift and prosperity.

She felt instinctively that the place she had once held at Fairy Dell could now be filled by Lucy and her own sisters, while she might devote her own project of carrying out the last wishes and cherished plans of Diego de Lebriz. The appointment of Mr. Hutchinson to a foreign mission came in the middle of July, to sadden the hearts of his son and daughter. Frank found too much of sweet-ness near to Rose, not to be dismayed by the prospect of seeing their happy household broken up. And he had not yet dared to say to her word of the loss which she alone had sustained in his long career of heroic conquest! Nor was Lucy less disturbed by the thought of parting with Gaston.

It so happened that the news of Mr. Hutchinson's appointment was brought to Lucy at a moment when she was alone in the house with Gaston and Rose. It was a short note from her father, and was handed to her while she and her two friends were seated, at sunset, in a pretty arbor overlooking the Potomac.

On opening and reading the note, an exclamation of pain broke from her as she dropped the paper, and grew very pale.

"What is it, Lucy darling?" said Rose, springing to her side. "I hope it is no bad news."

"Oh, no, no!" the other answered. "Only we must be going away." And a sudden faintness made her lean back in her seat. But, as it had no back, she would have fallen to the ground, had not Rose caught her in her arms.

"Courage, darling!" said the latter. "Here, take my smelling-bottle. It will revive you. There, now, you are better. But what is it, dear? Who is going away, and where?"

"Papa is going as ambassador to Europe," Lucy wept, as if the words choked her. "Will, dear, and what is there so dreadful in that?"

"Why, that I shall have to leave you, Rosette, and Gaston—and—"

"Do not fret about that, my pet!" said Rose, as she strove to soothe her friend, but dividing the cause of her tears. "We have to go ourselves to Paris very soon, and thence to Madrid and Seville, so that our separation may not be so long as you think."

"Oh, Rose, we can never again be as we have been here," Lucy replied, with a great effort at composing herself. "I felt so happy, so happy, I knew it could not last!"

"But, my dear, you will be with your parents and with Frank, and you will have the precious advantage of seeing foreign countries and the best society."

"Do not talk to me of good society and foreign countries," Lucy said, with something of the old petulance in her tone. "Oh, I wish we were back in Fairy Dell, and that I was a little girl again, looking up to you, Rosette, as a Fairy Queen sent to charm away my pain and to teach me everything, and to Gaston as to some great Fairy Prince, made to be able to look and worship!"

"I fear that people have sadly mangled and spoiled your Fairy Prince," said Gaston, relieved by this turn in the conversation. "They would surely admire or worship me now in Fairy Dell any more than here in Washington."

"Do not say that!" Lucy again said, impatiently. "You were then only as handsome as a fairy prince; but now you are a heroic soldier, with the marks of battle on you."

"Alas! yes. I feel them but too well, and am not likely to be rid of them."

"Oh, Gaston!" exclaimed Lucy, how often have I seen both papa and mamma said that you were ten times more handsome in their eyes, with these little scars on your face and your hands, than when I used to compare you to the angels that appeared to Abraham!"

"You were but a child then," he answered. "and you judged things with a child's simplicity, and spoke of them with a child's simplicity. But you are a young lady now, Miss Lucy, and you shall have to break more than one of your idols."

"Last one I never shall, never can break; it is dearer to me and more glorious a thousand times than before," she said, carried by her self. "Oh, do not go away!" she cried to Gaston, who had risen in dismay, and who in his helpless blindness had stumbled over a bench and fallen heavily to the ground. "Gaston, dear Gaston, what have I done?" she cried, running with Rose to his assistance, and helping him to rise. "I have offended you," she continued, as she kissed his maimed left hand. "And you must think me still the same silly, wayward, ungrateful little Lucy Hutchinson who used to tease and torment you so long ago."

"The Lucy Hutchinson whom I have known in my dire need," Gaston replied, reweaving himself, and speaking with great emotion, "is neither ungrateful, nor wayward, nor silly. She must ever be in my eyes the noblest, the sweetest, the dearest of women,—to whom I can never pay in gratitude and respect the smallest portion of the debt I owe her. Oh, Rose, she went on in great distress, "have not we—have not I—been very wrong in all this?"

"Lucy does not think so, dear brother," Rose answered.

"No! I do not think so," said Lucy. "I have loved you with all my heart since you first carried me in your arms, a little, sickly, helpless thing; and I oh, Gaston," she went on, kneeling by him and taking his hand, "how often, when you were lying unconscious at death's door, and during your long hours of delirium, have I not knelt this and repeated to myself and to you that I loved, and would willingly give my life for you?"

"Lucy," he said, putting his arms round her neck and drawing her to him, while he pressed his lips to her forehead; "Lucy, my angel, my preserver, I know all you say, have long known it, and have long loved you in return. But how can I accept this priceless offering of your love? And what will your father and mother think of this?"