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Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.—Isaiah xlviii, 10.

CHAPTER I.

"Now came still Evening on, and twilight gray
"Had in her sober livery all things clad;
"Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
"They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
"Were slunk—all but the wakeful nightingale;
"She all night long her amorous descant sung:
"Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament

"With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
"The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
"Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
"Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
"And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."
—*Milton*.

Twilight reigns in the Vale of Chamouni, where the glory, the grandeur, and the beauty of Switzerland seem centred; lying in peace at the very foot of the monarch of the Alps—the magnificent Mont Blanc.

From Chamouni may be heard the pleasant sound of the ever-falling waters of the Cascade des Pelerines; but in the stillness of evening the voice of the mountain torrents which roar at noonday, gladdened by the sunshine from the sparkling glaciers, is lulled to a quiet melody, like Nature's evening hymn. The glow of the setting sun had ceased to crimson the everlasting snow on the summit of the Alpine heights, and the stars were beginning to peep out on earth, when, in a room in one of the many picturesque Swiss cottages abounding in this region, two English ladies were sitting, both gazing on the range of mountains which lay spread before their view—their very tops seeming to pierce the mass of light clouds which hung above them. The elder of the two ladies must have been over fifty, but there was a sweet, settled calm no

her face which would make it ever look young; and yet the lines of suffering and sorrow were deeply marked there, and silvery hairs shone in the soft, light-brown bands smoothed over the broad, high forehead. Her young companion was taller and darker, with brown, wavy hair, dark eyebrows and lashes, and full, deep-blue eyes. She was sitting on a sofa, or settee, and on her knee rested the head of a child of about ten years of age. Edna Clifford—for that is our heroine's name—was gazing out of the latticed window, and yet one could tell by the deep, earnest look in her dark eyes that her thoughts were far away. She was evidently recalled by some motion of the child, forstooping and fondly caressing the long, light locks which fell luxuriantly over her dark dress, she said, softly,

"Are you very tired, Bessie dear?"

"No," said the child, laying her hand on the one which was resting on her head, "but John took me up the mountain, where we met little Klaus who gave me some strawberries; and I was wishing so much I could speak French, and so be able to talk with these Swiss people. I think Klaus' grand-mamma speaks English; will you come with me to-morrow to see them, Edna?"

"Perhaps so, dear, if I am not too tired."

They relapsed into silence, and it was some minutes before either of the three spoke; then Mrs. Maitland, the elder lady, said,

"I think it is time you went to bed, Bessie—I will call Jane."

"Poor child, she has fallen asleep," said Edna, "let her lie here until we go to our rooms; I will throw this shawl over her.