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THE RIVAL BROTHERS

BY

MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING

AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "THE QUEEN OF THE ISLE," "THE HEIRESS OF CASTLE CLIFF," "MAGDALEN'S VOW," "THE GYPSY QUEEN'S VOW," "THE MIDNIGHT QUEEN," ETC.

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THE RIVAL BROTHERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN IN THE CLOAK.

THE drear and dark December day was ending in a drearier and darker evening. A bitter frost blackened the earth, wrathful clouds blackened the sky, leafless trees rattled their skeleton-arms in long and lamentable blasts, and the river rolling along, turbid and troubled, tossed its black surges and moaned dismally up on the black sands. Everything looked ghastly and dismal, in the gray, spectral twilight; the lonely little river-side village lying lifeless under the gaunt, stripped trees; the long, lonesome country-road, winding in and out among deserted fields and soddy marshes; the bleak hills in the background, and the bleaker sandy level in the foreground, with nothing of life near but the solitary little way-station, on whose platform a red light burned.

Of all lonely way-stations, undisturbed from dawn to dark except when the train came screaming through, there could scarcely be found one lonelier than the little station in the sandy level at the village of Riverside. In the pleasant summer-time, when the sun shone on the white sands, the cows grazed in the grass meadows, and the birds sung in the waving trees, it was a pleasant spot enough; but now, with the December snow falling ghostly around it, you might have searched long before you could find a more solitary or deserted spot. In summer-time, the train from the city never arrived without stopping to set down sporting young Gothamites, armed with fishing-rods and tackle; for Riverside was famous for trout and pretty girls, and young New Yorkers found it a very

enlivening way to pass the dog-days, angling for one and making love to the other. But in December, when the trout-streams were ice-bound, the pretty girls unwilling to redden their dear little noses by exposure to Jack Frost's kisses, and the opera and theater in full blast in the Empire City, young New York stayed at home, and the train passed through, evening after evening, without landing any one at the lonesome station.

On this particular December evening, the clerk sat in his little den, with one or two especial friends, smoking clay pipes, while waiting for the last down-train. A few passengers sat in the waiting-room, reading the *Riverside Mercury*, or talking, to while away the tedious interval, or looking at the snow falling in feathery flakes on the frost-blackened ground. The cylinder-stoves in the clerk's office and waiting-room were heated red-hot, and the lamps were flaring cheerful defiance to the growing gloom without.

"I say, Mr. Station-master, ain't the cars late to-night?" asked a burly passenger, putting his head in at the office-window.

The clerk looked at the little clock fastened to the wall, and took his pipe from between his lips.

"It's only half-past four, sir; they'll be along directly. Oh, here they come now."

Everything was in commotion directly. Everybody was on his feet; overcoats were donned, carpet-bags and valises were seized, and a general stampede made for the platform. With the unearthly yell of a demon, the expected train rushed in and stopped, and the faces of the passengers looked out through the steamed and blurred windows at the Riverside station. The people in the waiting-room bustled in, and the loafers smoking with the clerk watched them go.

"No one for Riverside, I'll be bound," one of them said; "city folks don't think it worth while to stop at our village when the cold weather comes."

The speaker was mistaken. Before he had ceased speaking, a man stepped from the cars on the platform, and entered the waiting-room to light a cigar. With another frightful shriek the train sped on its way, and the clerk and his friends came in out of the cold winter air, to the warm influence of the red-hot cylinders.

The traveler who had stopped was tall and commanding of figure, with the unmistakable air and bearing of a gentleman. He was young, too, and very good-looking; and the long traveling-cloak he wore, with its deep, furred collar, became his fine form well. A fur cap was pulled over his eyes; and as he drew off one of his warm traveling-gloves, the clerk and his friends had their eyes dazzled by the blaze of a diamond ring on a hand white and shapely as a lady's. His sole journeying equipage seemed to consist of his cigar-case, from which he leisurely selected a weed, and lit it at one of the flaring lamps.

"A sharp night, sir," the clerk suggested respectfully, a little awed by the striking figure and flashing diamond, "won't you sit down and take an air of the fire?"

"I'm not cold, thank you," the tall stranger said, pulling out a superb gold hunting-watch, and glancing at the hour. "Twenty minutes to five, and dark already! Good night to you."

Drawing on his glove again, and puffing away energetically, the gentleman walked out of the waiting-room. The clerk and his friends went to the window and looked out after him—in the gloom of the winter night they could see him striding through the falling snow, with tremendous sweep of limb, in the direction of the village.

"An uncommon swell, that," one of them said, going back to the stove. "Did you notice that 'ere ring on his little finger! It cost a few dimes, did that flasher, I've a notion."

"What brings him to Riverside, I wonder?" remarked another. "There's no fishing or partridge-shooting now, and he looks too grand to come on any other business."

"Seems to me I've seen that young chap before," said the clerk, meditating. "It ain't his first visit to Riverside, or he'd never know the road to the village so well. Should like to know where he's going when he gets there."

"To the Golden Swan, most likely," said the first speaker. "Go on with that story you were telling us, Johnson, when the train came in."

The "Golden Swan" was the only hotel in Riverside, and the gentleman's suggestions were correct; it was to that establishment the stranger went. It was nearly a mile from the station to the hotel, over the bleakest of roads, with the ghostly snow falling noiselessly, and the

winter-wind rattling through the bare trees, but the young man walked on, heeding the cold and the darkness very little, straight to where the red light streamed out from the crimson-curtained windows of the bar-room. As he opened the door unceremoniously, the blaze of illumination from lamp and fire dazzled him for a moment, accustomed as he had become to the outer darkness. Some half-dozen men, with the landlord at their head, playing cards round a table, looked up, and stared curiously at the newcomer, who was stamping the snow off his boots in the doorway.

"Good evening, stranger," the landlord said, lying down his cards and standing up. "Walk in and take a chair."

"I'll take something more substantial, Mr. Jarvis," answered the stranger, advancing; "my supper, if you have no objection. Traveling such a night as this is hungry business."

The landlord looked puzzled and curious. "You seem to know me, sir," he said, eying the tall stranger in the cloak. "You have the advantage of me, for I don't know your name."

"You used to, then," said the young man, "and not so long ago, either."

He lifted his fur cap as he spoke, and Mr. Jarvis gave a shout of recognition at sight of his handsome face, and came forward with extended hand.

"Bless my heart, captain, is it you? Who'd ever thought of seeing you here at this time o' year? How uncommon well you are looking, too."

"Thank you, Jarvis; I feel tolerable well, I allow. How is Mrs. Jarvis and pretty Lizzie?"

"First-rate, cap'n, and rare glad they'll be to see you, too. I say, old woman," Mr. Jarvis yelled, putting his head in at an open door from which issued a powerful odor of fried ham and a clatter of cups and saucers, "and you, Liz, come and see who's here."

A dumpy little woman, with a white muslin cap and brass-rimmed spectacles, followed by a dumpy little damsel, with rosy cheeks and bare, plump arms, responded to this call, bearing the odor of ham and tea in every fold of their check aprons and gingham gowns. Mrs. Jarvis gave a little cry, and Lizzie uttered an exclamation at

sight of the visitor, who stood, chapeau in hand, smiling before them.

"Land of hope!" Cap'n Forrest," Mrs. Jarvis shrilly cried, "where on airth did you drop from this time o' night?"

"I knew she'd be flabbergasted on sight o' you," remarked Mr. Jarvis, nodding delightedly. "Lizzie, why don't you come over and shake hands with Cap'n Forrest?"

Lizzie, her rosy cheeks considerably rosier than their wont, came shyly forward, holding out a plump hand, which the good-looking young captain shook with a warmth a trifle greater than he had given to papa and mamma.

"Very glad to see you again, Lizzie, and as blooming as ever, too. I couldn't forget you, you see," lowering his voice, and giving the plump hand a parting squeeze, "and so had to come back to Riverside."

"And how's all the other young gentlemen, cap'n, and where have you been ever since last summer?" inquired Mrs. Jarvis, dusting a chair with her apron for him to sit down.

"They were all well when I left them, Mrs. Jarvis; and as for me, I have been knocking about the world in my old vagabond style, never very long anywhere."

"And you haven't gone back to England yet?"

Captain Forrest laughed, displaying a set of brilliant white teeth.

"I have not gone back to England yet. I like New York too well for that. But, Mrs. Jarvis, I'm hungry, and smell cooking within there, so——"

He made a laughing motion to enter, and all the hostess was aroused in dumpy little Mrs. Jarvis at once.

"To be sure, cap'n; to be sure. Whatever could I be thinking of, not to know you must be hungry. Come right in, and you'll have your supper in five minutes. Lizzie, run and look after those biscuits. I expect the ham's burned to a crisp by this time."

Lizzie and her mother flew back to the inner apartment, and Captain Forrest lingered for a moment to speak to mine host.

"I am going back to New York by the up-train, Jarvis; what time does it pass?"

"Nine o'clock, cap'n; but ain't you going to stay all night?"

"Can't, unfortunately. I came down on business. Can you have the gig in readiness by the time I get through supper? I have a few miles to go, and shall not stop this way again. I can leave it in charge of the clerk at the railway-station."

"Certainly, cap'n, but I should like to have you stay. It's too bad you should leave us in such a hurry."

"The loss is mine, Mr. Jarvis; nothing would give me more pleasure than staying, but business before pleasure, you know."

"I did not think Captain Forrest ever had any weightier business than fooling silly girls," said Mr. Jarvis, with knowing eyes; and the handsome young captain laughed.

"I'm a reformed character, Mr. Jarvis; don't look so dubious; it's the truth, I assure you. And now for something to satisfy the inner man."

Throwing his cloak over the back of a chair, and his cap and gloves thereon, he strolled into the next room, humming an air. The moment his back was turned, Mr. Jarvis was besieged with questions.

"I don't know much about him," that gentleman said, resuming his seat and his cards, "except that he is an uncommon fine young gentleman, ready to spend money like a prince. He came here last summer with a lot of other young gentlemen, to fish and shoot, and stopped with us for three weeks. His name is Captain Forrest, and he is an Englishman, more's the pity; and that's everything I know about him. Dobson, the deal's yours."

While Mr. Dobson shuffled the cards and Mr. Jarvis summoned his only servant to him, who was eating peanuts and overlooking the game, to go out and fetch the gig and mare, the young gentleman, whose biography he had been giving them, was seated before a table, laden with tea and toast, ham and eggs, home-made cake and pies, discussing the viands with the appetite of a hungry traveler, while good-natured little Mrs. Jarvis stood with her fat hands on her fat sides, overlooking the performance with a face beaming with hospitable delight.

"And so Riverside is the same old story," Captain Forrest was saying; "no changes at all, I suppose. Nobody dead or married, or left or settled, eh?"

"Not many, cap'n; folks when they settle down here don't care to leave, and new folks don't much care to come. Try the pie. I made it myself, and I know it's good."

"It must be if you made it. And so there have been no changes at all?"

Lizzie turned round from the cookstove, over which she was bending, with a scarlet face.

"There's some folks moved into one of them old houses on the marsh lately, mother. Ain't you heard of them?"

Mrs. Jarvis turned up her nose.

"Oh, they're of no account. They must be poor as Job's turkey, whoever they are, or they wouldn't live there. Have another cup of tea, cap'n, and try the cake."

"I dare say they're poor enough," said Lizzie, going on with her cooking, "but the young woman that's there looks like a lady, and everybody says so. She's handsomer than anybody I ever saw before in my life."

"What's her name?" asked Captain Forrest, looking interested.

"Nobody knows. They came a few weeks ago, four of them—an old woman, and a young one and two children. It's the young woman that's so handsome, and the two children, and I do say she looks like a lady, if she is poor."

"Has she ever been here?"

"No; she don't go out much, but I've seen her once or twice. The old woman comes to the store sometimes for things, but nobody knows her name, or where they come from, or anything about them."

"And I don't believe they're any better than they ought to be," struck in Mrs. Jarvis, with the usual charity of her sex; "where there's secrecy there's guilt, that's my opinion. Do try the cakes, cap'n, won't you?"

"Couldn't, possibly. I have done ample justice to your good things, I think, Mrs. Jarvis, and now I must bid you good-by and be off."

Mrs. Jarvis protested loudly, and Lizzie looked unspeakable things under her eyelashes, but Captain Forrest was proof against both, and returned to the bar-room, where the card-party was still in full blast.

"The hoss and gig's at the door, cap'n," Mr. Jarvis said, "but I don't see why you can't come back and stop with us a week or so. It seems kinder bad to have you come one moment and fly off the next."

"Can't be helped, unfortunately," said the young man, throwing his cloak over his shoulder, and putting on his cap and gloves; "good-by, Mrs. Jarvis; good-by, Lizzie; don't get married till I come back again. There's no telling but I may take a fancy to have a wife one of these days. Good-by, Mr. Jarvis; a thousand thanks for the use of the gig. You'll find it all safe to-morrow morning at the station."

Shaking hands all round, the young man went out, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis. The gig stood at the door, and he sprung lightly in, seized the reins, touched the horse with the whip, and shouting a last good-by, flew off and was lost in the darkness of the December night.

The snow was falling rapidly now; and the road, running between rows of tall, black trees, looked like a silver line set in ebony. The darkness is never very dense when it snows; and though neither moon nor stars shone to show him the way, he kept the horse at full speed, and rattled rapidly on over the frosty ground. His ride was not long; half an hour brought him to the end of the village, and the end of his journey in that direction. It was a lonely not to say dismal spot in which he chose to alight; on one side, the river rolled turbid and black; on the other, miry marshes spread, sloppy and sodden. Before him, the path lost itself in a frowning cedar-wood, where murders might have been committed in broad daylight, and no one be the wiser. Yet, dismal as the marshes were, a few wretched houses were scattered here and there, from whose crooked chimneys smoke curled, and from whose broken windows lights gleamed. Only the very poor could have remained there, and fever and ague must have been the bosom-friends of their wretched inmates.

The handsome young English captain, with the diamond on his finger, one would think could have little to do with the dwellers in such a place. Yet here he chose to alight, and tying the horse to a tree, took a survey of the four or five miserable dwellings around.

"One of the houses in the marsh, they told me," he said, to himself. "I wonder which of them it is; perhaps I had better take them as they come."

There was a path through these miry, treacherous marshes—he knew it well, and struck into it at once; for in the sunny days gone by he had wandered there often, with

his gun on his shoulder, and his dog at his heels. It led him straight to one of the miserable dwellings—a wretched place, with tumble-down chimney, rattling doors, broken windows and leaky roof. Lights shone from two of the ruined windows—very feebly from one in the gable, and brighter from another in front. There was a white muslin shade over each, but so short and torn that the casements they adorned would have been quite as well without them, either for ornament or use. Standing on the outside, you could see, if you chose, everything going on within; and Captain Forrest evidently found the view interesting, for he stood gazing steadily and long. The exterior of the building was wretched enough, but the interior was wretched in the extreme. Abject poverty reared its ghastly head everywhere; it stared at you in the rickety chairs, in the rough deal table, in the rougher trundle-bed in the corner, its miserable straw pallet covered with coarsest bedding. A tallow candle guttering in a dirty brass candlestick, shed tears of fat on the table, and its dim red light on the two women who were the only inmates of the bare and cheerless room. There was a wood fire, smoldering and smoking viciously on the hearth; and they sat on two low stools, facing each other, one in each corner. From the position in which he stood, one was directly facing Captain Forrest, the other had her back to him. She whom he saw was old, ugly, hideously wrinkled, wretchedly clad, and was emulating the chimney by puffing forth clouds of smoke from a short, blackened clay pipe. The other, with her back to him, appeared youthful of figure; and a great cloud of golden hair, such as we see in pictures of Mary Magdalene, hung loose and disordered over her shoulders and down her back. Her dress was as poor as that of the other; and she cowered over the smoky fire, in a strange, distorted attitude of pain. It was a gloomy picture Captain Forrest saw, whether he looked within or without; the bad, black night; the ghastly white snow, ever falling, falling; the bleak and lonesome marshes, the dismal night sky, and more dismal river roaring sullenly along, the empty and comfortless room, and the two lonely watchers over the smoky fire. No wonder he turned away with something of the surrounding gloom darkening his face.

"It is her own fault," he said, frowning; "why will

she be a fool. But now for the children—there is no time to lose."

He turned to the side-window, from which the feebler light shone, and looked in as he had done at the other.

Here there was neither fire nor furniture, only another trundle-bed in a corner, and another tallow candle, with a long, red wick, flaming and guttering on the floor.

Evidently he had found what he wanted, for he tried the window—it opened easily, and he stepped into the chamber. On the trundle-bed two children lay asleep, their peaceful faces looking up through a tangled profusion of black, curling hair. He scarcely stopped a moment to look at them; but drew from his pocket a bottle and sponge, poured some of the contents of the one on the other; and held it to the nostrils of the sleeping children. His breathing deepened; the sweet slumber of infancy was changed to a heavy, death-like insensibility, and the young man replaced his bottle and sponge.

"What a blessing chloroform is, judiciously administered!" he muttered. "I don't think they will give much trouble for the next two hours. Now then!"

There was no quilt or blanket over the poor little bed, only a heavy plaid shawl, gaudy once, but faded and threadbare now. The young man wrapped the little forms closely in its ample folds, took them easily in his arms, and stepped out through the window, closed it softly, and, without waiting to cast one parting glance behind, made for his gig on the roadside.

Taking his seat, with the children on his knee, sheltered from the cold and storm by his fur-lined cloak, he started off at a break-neck pace for the railway-station.

The last up-train was just dashing in as he reached it, and he had barely time to secure his ticket and leave Mr. Jarvis' property in charge of the clerk, before it tore off again, shrieking like a demon. He had the children, both rolled up together in the shawl, under his cloak. The sleepy passengers scarcely looked at him as he took his seat, and in ten minutes Riverside and the house on the marsh were far behind, and he and his sleeping prizes were flying along to the city.

CHAPTER II.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT.

CHRISTMAS eve, and a cold, clear night. Bright stars shining in a blue wintry sky, a crescent moon treading its silvery way up the blue-black concave, where the constellations were flaming; a clear, bright, bracing night, full of promise of a cloudless coming day. Christmas eve, and Broadway crowded. All gaslight, and glitter, and throbbing life; every shop-window a picture at which you might stand entranced; cars and stages, with their brilliant-colored lights, flashing up and down like overgrown fire flies; the pavement crowded with pedestrians, pushing, elbowing, jostling; for Christmas eve comes but once a year, and the veriest miser must unloose his purse before the tempting stores.

A man, buttoned up to the chin in an overcoat of sealskin, with a scarlet comforter wound about his neck, and a crush hat pulled down over his eyes, strode along through the surging sea of life, pushing and jostling with the best in his hurry, but never stopping as the other folk did to enter the toy-shops and confectionery and jewelry stores. No; this man eyed all such places, as he trotted by them, with a sidelong glance of sour disdain, and pursued the even tenor of his way for a mile or so up the thronged thoroughfare. He stopped at last under a street-lamp, and pulled a card out of his pocket, which he perused with deliberation, by the aid of a pair of old-fashioned, silver-rimmed spectacles. He was a little man, you could see; thin and dark of face; with small, piercing eyes; thin, compressed, cynical lips, and a rapid, energetic way of doing even the smallest thing, that would have made a quiet person nervous to behold.

"Number —, Fifth avenue," the little man read from the card. "I ought to be near the place now."

Turning out of bustling Broadway, he made for the quieter avenue beside it, and walked along that aristocratic place, looking at the numbers on the houses as he went.

A few minutes' rapid walking, and he drew rein before a stately brown-stone front, with two lamps burning in front of its aristocratic portal. On the silver doorplate was inscribed the name "Hazelwood"; and the little man in the seal-skin overcoat and red woolen comforter, nothing awed by its magnificence, ran boldly up the steps and wrung a stirring reveille. A young man in livery answered the summons, and stared superciliously at the crush hat and seal-skin coat.

"Is Mr. Hazelwood at home!" asked the little man, in a sharp, quick, imperative voice, no more awed by the tall young man in livery than he had been by the imposing exterior of the mansion.

"Yes, he is," said the tall young man; "but I rather think he is engaged. Did you want to see him?"

"Give him that," replied the little man, shortly, pulling out a card. "I'll wait here until you come back."

It was no gilt and glittering visiting-card, but a veritable piece of pasteboard, with "Jeremiah Lance" written on it in a stiff, cramped hand. The young man in livery looked at it dubiously, and then at its owner, whose peculiarly brilliant eyes were beginning to flash rather ominously behind his lunettes. Perhaps it was the fiery brightening of his glance that taught the tall young man he had better do as he was ordered: so he turned away with a slow and stately step, leaving the visitor in the doorway.

He could see a grand entrance hall, with cornished ceiling, its walls adorned with rich paintings and pretty statues, lit with blazing clusters of gas; a wide marble staircase, with gilded railing, going up in great sweeps to the regions above; and the warmth coming delightfully up through the register that cold December night. Before the dark, bright eyes behind the spectacles had done noting all this, the tall young man returned, and behind him a tall old man, with a handsome, fresh-colored face, white hair and beard falling over a rich, Turkish dressing-gown of many colors, slippers on feet, smoking-cap on head, a smile of cordial welcome on his lips, and his hand extended in warm greeting.

"My dear old fellow! My dear Lance! what a pleasant surprise for Christmas eve! Come in! come in! who in the world would ever have thought of seeing you?"

The tall young man receded into the background, quite cowed, and the little man suffered his hand to be shaken, and himself, red comforter and all, to be drawn in, with constitutional phlegm.

"How well you are looking, too; not the least changed since we parted ten years ago! Take off your hat and overcoat and come up-stairs."

By the aid of the tall young man, the visitor, who all this time had spoken never a word, was divested of his outer garment, and stood under the gas-jets in a decent suit of black broadcloth, a bald-headed, keen-looking gentleman, of some forty-five or fifty years.

"This way, Lance," Mr. Hazelwood said, leading the way up the grand staircase. "Of all men in the world you are the one I most wanted to see, to-night! What will the boys say at sight of their old tutor?"

"Are all your sons at home, Mr. Hazelwood?" asked the visitor. "I heard some of them had gone abroad."

"Conway has; Conway's inclined to be a rolling-stone, I am afraid, and will never gather much moss. He has made the grand tour—come right in this way, Lance—and goes moving from one end of the country to the other still, never long in one place. Take a seat. Have you dined?"

The little man pulled out an old-fashioned silver watch, and eyed it with an expression of sardonic contempt at such a question.

"I dined five hours ago, at one o'clock, the time I always dine at. I don't pretend to be fashionable, Mr. Hazelwood!"

"You'll have some coffee with me, then," said Mr. Hazelwood, ringing the bell. "I always have coffee one hour before dinner."

But the fastidious little man wouldn't listen to this, either.

"I don't drink coffee so late in the evening; I consider it a pernicious practice. I'll take a cup of weak tea and some dry toast, if convenient. I never take anything heartier after six in the evening."

Mr. Hazelwood laughed, a genial, mellow laugh, pleasant to hear, and folded his gay dressing-gown closer around him.

"What an old anchorite you are, Lance! We used to

call you Diogenes, at school, and I find you are Diogenes yet!"

"And you Alexander, I suppose!" said the small gentleman, looking around him, cynically. "The world seems to have gone well with you in the lapse of years."

If one might judge by Mr. Hazelwood's looks and surroundings, it certainly had. The dining-room in which they sat was adorned with every comfort and luxury money could purchase. Brussels carpet, satin curtains, softly-cushioned lounges and easy-chairs, inlaid tables, exquisite pictures, and a carved sideboard glittering with silver and cut-glass. In a steel grate a bright fire burned; for Mr. Hazelwood, despite his furnace, insisted on a fire the whole winter through. It was pleasant to see as well as feel the heat; pleasant, too, to watch the bright, red cinders, and dream over the pictures therein. The two men sat opposite each other, in two carved and cushioned armchairs, and formed a striking contrast. The one with his fresh, florid complexion; his tall, upright figure wrapped in the gay dressing-gown; his snow-white hair and beard giving him the look of an old-time patriarch; his kindly eye, and smile, and voice; the other with his thin, keen, brown face, his sharp, sardonic eye, his compressed, cynical mouth, his small, wiry figure, and quick, sharp, imperative tones. Yet they were friends, had been friends in boyhood, in youth, in manhood; and now, when falling into the sere and yellow leaf, attached friends still.

Mr. Hazelwood was some ten years the elder, and his three sons had been partially educated under the supervision of Professor Lance; for a professor he was—Professor of Mathematics and Classics at —— College.

A servant came to answer the bell. Mr. Hazelwood ordered tea and toast for his friend, and coffee for himself, and looked thoughtfully in the fire as he replied to the last remark.

"Yes; the world has gone well with me, Doctor Lance. I have been prospered beyond my deserts; I am not a wealthy man, but I have enough for all my wants, and something to leave my boys when I go. I have nothing to trouble me; a light heart and easy conscience, I hope, smooth the downward path to the grave. Thank Heaven for the blessings I enjoy!"

He raised his velvet cap reverently as he spoke.

Doctor Lance slightly glanced up at the picture over the mantel—a portrait of a pretty woman, with soft eyes and a gentle smile.

"Your wife is dead, I have heard."

Mr. Hazelwood's eyes lifted themselves to the portrait, too.

"She died eight years ago. Her loss has been my only sorrow since I saw you last."

"You have a housekeeper now, I suppose."

"My sister is my housekeeper. You remember Emily; don't you, Lance?"

Doctor Lance winced. Twenty years ago, when his phlegmatic blood had been young and hot, Jeremiah Lance had fallen in love with the pretty, insipid face of Emily Hazelwood, and been refused for a handsomer man. That was the first and last folly of Doctor Lance; and now at forty-five he was an old bachelor, ready to sneer with the best at the gentle passion.

"She ran off with that graceless scamp, Frank Wood, you recollect," said Mr. Hazelwood, who had never known of his friend's little romance; "and a pretty time they had together, for thirteen or fourteen years—Wood drinking and gambling, and she following him over the country in a state of semi-starvation, her children dying from her one after another as fast as they came. Two years ago, Wood died himself in a drunken fit, leaving Emily and one child, a little girl, penniless and homeless. Of course I brought them here at once; and here they have been ever since, and are likely to be while I am above ground. Susan," to the servant who came in with the tea and coffee, "tell Mrs. Wood there is an old friend here who would like to see her."

"And so your sons are all at home," remarked Doctor Lance, taking the tea his friend handed him; "gentlemen at large, I suppose—Broadway swells, with no profession; with no higher business in life to attend to than their toilet, and flirting in ball-rooms."

Mr. Hazelwood, sipping his coffee, laughed good-naturedly at the bitter speech.

"You are a little severe, Doctor Lance—boys will be boys, you know, and mine, I trust, are pretty good boys, as goodness goes among the *jeunes gens* of New York. Conway does nothing, I must confess, beyond yachting,

and rambling up and down the world; but Arthur has a studio in Broadway, where he smokes cigars and drinks lager, and daubs in paint all day long, and calls himself an artist; and Eugene has taken out his diploma, and hung up his shingle, with M. D. after his name, on the same thoroughfare, and I dare say is licensed to kill with the best."

Doctor Lance grunted.

"It's exactly like them—the characters of the three lie in a nutshell. Conway had brains and never would use them; Arthur had none to use, and Eugene had them and used them. He has more sense than the other two together."

"We won't quarrel over it, Lance—have another cup of tea? They'll be surprised beyond everything at sight of you. I'll send them word to come in here before they go out. Dressing, I believe, for a Christmas party at old Thornton's—Una's going, too. Oh, by the way, you don't know Una, do you?"

"I haven't that honor."

"To be sure you don't know her! I have only had her about four years. Her name is Una Forrest—an orphan, poor little thing! the daughter of my wife's only brother. We took her when her parents died, to keep her out of the workhouse, and she has been here ever since. Wait till you see her, Lance, and you'll see the best and prettiest little girl in New York."

"Humph!" remarked Doctor Lance, in his usual sarcastic accent. "Yours is a sort of private almshouse, I find; an impoverished sister and two nieces—how many more are there?"

"That's all," said Mr. Hazelwood, with his good-natured laugh, "and nothing would tempt me to part with either of the three. Apropos of Una, I sometimes think she and Eugene will make a match."

"Don't!" said Doctor Lance, raising a warning finger, "don't, I beg! Of all the despicable things on the face of this earth, a habit of match-making is the most despicable."

"My dear fellow, what are you talking about? I am not match-making. I never thought of such a thing; but I can't prevent the course of events. It's the most natural thing in the world that Eugene and Una should marry.

They're cousins, to be sure, which is a drawback, but still I think they could hardly do better."

"And why, pray, should Miss Una select especially your youngest son?"

"Well, for several reasons. He is nearest her own age, more suitable in disposition; and then, Conway, I fancy, has already chosen, and Arthur is too lazy to think of anything but smoking and painting. He ought to be a German student, at once."

"And who has Conway honored by his preference?"

"A very pretty girl, Helen Thornton, one of the greatest heiresses in the city. Come in."

This last invitation was given in response to a tap at the door which opened immediately after, to admit a charming visitor. A youthful angel, of some fifteen years, slender and delicate of figure, as became her age, and robed in floating, misty white. There was something striking and peculiar about the girl—it consisted in the snowy whiteness and purity of her complexion. The whole face was perfectly colorless; yet no one could have pronounced her sickly, but no Albino could have boasted of a more perfect absence of color in the skin. Under the clear surface you could trace every blue vein, and the hair, worn in profusion of braids, was of flaxen lightness. The eyes were rather small, and of the very palest blue; the features small and pretty; the hands and feet tiny, and the manner self-possessed and easy, to an extraordinary degree, for that age of transition. Her dress of white tulle, looped up with bands of pale azure ribbon, was low-necked and short-sleeved; and she wore a wreath of blue flowers in her pale hair. All white and azure, no one could look once without turning to gaze again on that singular face. Every human countenance, it is said, is either a history or a prophecy—hers was a prophecy, and a startling one, too, could either of the twain looking at her have read it. Doctor Lance was evidently struck, for he bent his black brows and fixed his weird eyes on her in piercing scrutiny as Mr. Hazelwood presented her.

"My niece, Una Forrest, doctor. Una, my dear, my old friend. Doctor Lance."

Little Miss Forrest—she was small of stature—dropped him a pretty courtesy, filling the air with perfume as she flirted out her translucent skirts.

"Will I do, uncle?" she asked, in a sweet, childlike voice, turning round, that he might the better survey her. "I dressed myself without any one helping me at all."

"You look as pretty as a picture—doesn't she, doctor?"

But the doctor only gave a contemptuous grunt.

"Don't tire yourself dancing, and don't stay too late. What time will Jenkins go after you?"

"Whatever time you like, uncle. Will two o'clock be too late?"

"Oh, no—two will do nicely. Where's your aunt?"

"Down-stairs, I think. I must find her—she wants to see me, too, before I go."

"Have the boys come down yet?"

"No, sir," laughed little Miss Una. "They take longer to dress than I do! Why, what's that?"

It was a shrill scream from the hall below. Una turned to see the cause, and ran against Susan, the chambermaid, flying in, with eyes and mouth wide open, and consternation in every feature.

"Oh, Miss Una! Oh, Mr. Hazelwood! Come and see what's in the hall! Oh, do come—quick!"

"What's in the hall, Susan?" asked Una; but Susan, in a wild state of excitement, only ran headlong down-stairs, reiterating her entreaty to come quick.

Una ran after her, and the two gentlemen, rather startled, followed, a little less quickly. The sight that greeted them was not very startling, though, after all. Directly under the blaze of the gas-jets, two little children stood, tiny creatures of very little over a year, apparently; their small figures draped in little fur cloaks, and scarlet woolen hoods on their heads. But the faces under the hoods were of exquisite beauty, rose-cheeked, black-eyed, and cherry-mouthed, and an exuberance of black ringlets fell over the fur-tippets.

The babies were twins, and the pretty faces were so much alike that it was impossible to tell the smallest difference between them. There they stood, gazing around them out of their large black eyes, evidently as much astonished as to how they got there as those who stood in amazement looking at them.

Una uttered an exclamation, Mr. Hazelwood uttered another, Dr. Lance took off his spectacles and wiped them, to be sure his eyes were not deceiving him.

No; it was no optical delusion. There the children were; and where they had come from, and who they might be, was now the question.

All turned to Susan, in silent inquiry.

"I don't know the first thing about 'em," protested that handmaiden, with widely-distended eyes. "Ten minutes ago, I came down-stairs, and there was nothing in the hall; and five minutes after, when I was coming up, there they were, as you see 'em. The bell didn't ring; there was no noise; but there they stood. I screamed out, and ran up-stairs; and that's everything I know about it!"

"Here's a letter!" cried Una, seizing a large buff envelope lying on the table. "Read it, uncle. Perhaps it tells."

The letter was addressed in a disguised hand to "Mr. Hugh Hazelwood;" and that gentleman, in a bewildered state of mind, tore it open and read:

"MR. HAZELWOOD—SIR: These children are sent to you because you have the best right to take charge of them. They are your grandchildren! They are twins, and just fifteen months old. I send them to you as a Christmas gift, which I know you will not refuse. You will adopt and educate them as your own. Give them your own name, if you choose; it is rightfully theirs; but, if you prefer it, you may call them by their mother's, Starr. The one dressed in blue is Rosamond—the one in pink, Evangeline. I repeat it, they are your grandchildren, as you will learn to your cost should you attempt to discard them.

"Yours, respectfully,
"SANTA CLAUS."

CHAPTER III.

THE BROTHERS.

THE quartet stood aghast.

Mr. Hazelwood had read the note aloud, and "Bless my soul!" was all the comment he was able to utter in his consternation.

"They are your grandchildren," quoted Doctor Lance, with malicious emphasis. "Remember that."

A crimson flush of anger and incredulity rose to the face of the old gentleman.

"It's a vile slander! I don't believe a word of it! It's the work of some infamous being who has taken this means of securing a home for the offspring she will not rear. Anything like the cool impudence of the whole thing I never heard of! Christmas gift, indeed! I'll send them to the almshouse to-morrow. Santa Claus, whoever he or she may be, will find Mr. Hugh Hazelwood is not quite such a fool as they take him to be!"

Such an outburst on the part of even-tempered, good-natured Mr. Hazelwood was even more extraordinary than the mysterious apparition of the children.

Doctor Lance shrugged his shoulders, and scrutinized the two little faces through his spectacles.

"Black eyes, black hair, fresh complexion, and good features—all characteristics of the Hazelwoods! Upon my word, I begin to think there is some truth in the letter, after all!"

"Lance!"

Mr. Hazelwood was breaking out in a high state of temper; but Doctor Lance only pointed with composure to the two little creatures.

"Look for yourself, then! Take of their mufflers and see if I am not right."

Una obeyed the command at once by undoing the fur cloaks and scarlet hoods; and the twins emerged at once from caterpillars, so to speak, into brightest butterflies.

Their dress was of the richest texture and most fashionable make; everything they wore showing plainly that money had not been spared in their outfit. The one first undressed wore a short frill dress of blue silk; the other, pink; the short sleeves and low corsage trimmed with ermine, necklaces of coral and gold around their plump throats, fancy boots, with shining buttons, on their feet, richly-embroidered underclothes peeping out beneath the silken skirts, and their profuse jetty ringlets falling nearly to their waists.

A prettier tableau than they made it would have been impossible to find, as they stood side by side, looking round them with great shining, wondering eyes.

Una and Susan, woman-like, uttered simultaneous exclamations of delight.

Mr. Hazelwood melted at once; and even the cynical little professor, who believed all beauty to be a fleeting show and delusion, was betrayed into something like a glance of admiration.

"Oh, what pretty little things!" was Una's cry. "Oh, Uncle Hugh! ain't they sweet?"

"I wish they had taken their sweetness somewhere else!" growled Uncle Hugh, in a subdued tone, however. "They're pretty enough; but what am I to do with them. I want to know? I say: can they speak?"

"What's your name, dear?" Una asked, taking the little hand of the blue twin and caressing the pretty curls.

The two children turned their black eyes on Una's pale face, and only stared in reply.

"Tell me your name," persisted the young lady. "Can't you speak? What's your name?"

"Rosie," answered the little one in a sweet, infantile lisp.

"Rosie what?" asked Una, encouraged.

"Rosie," repeated the blue twin, still staring hard at her interlocutor.

"And where do you come from, Rosie?"

Una hesitated, still toying with the long curls.

But Miss Rosie had exhausted her command of the speech of Albion in that one word; and the pink twin, whose eyes had been attracted by the wreath in Una's hair, here made a sudden grab at it and tore it from her head.

Susan screamed, and Una rose up.

"You little monkey! You have hands, if you have no tongue. What do they call you?"

"See, Rosie! See, Rosie!" the pink twin cried, with a gleeful laugh, holding up the flowers in triumph.

"Oh, she can speak, too! You're Evangeline—ain't you, Miss?" inquired Mr. Hazelwood, lifting the pretty culprit up in his arms.

But Miss Evangeline, averse, perhaps, to this summary mode of seizure, set up a prolonged yell, by way of reply, and struggled to get free. Mr. Hazelwood put her precipitately down again.

"I'll answer for the strength of your lungs, anyway, my little virago! What under heaven am I to do about this, Lance?"

"You had better consult your sons on the subject."

"Stuff and nonsense! You don't seriously mean to say you believe the infamous slander contained in this vile anonymous letter?"

"I believe in the evidence of my senses! Look at the faces of these infants, and see if they are not Hazelwoods."

"Una!" exclaimed Mr. Hazelwood, struggling to repress his rising indignation, "go up-stairs and request your cousins to come down at once. Their own lips shall deny or confirm the charge. Susan, you may go."

"Do you really imagine for a moment, Mr. Hazelwood," sneered Doctor Lance, "that either of those young gentlemen will plead guilty to any proprietorship in these two young ladies! Why, the greatest of criminals answers 'not guilty' when the judge goes through the formula."

Mr. Hazelwood, his usually serene face very red, drew himself stiffly up.

"My boys know how to tell the truth, Doctor Lance, poor as your opinion of them is. You may believe them or not, as you please, and I shall do the same."

Doctor Lance smiled contemptuously, and still stared through his spectacles at the little ones, who stood wonderfully quiet, gazing around them.

Una had darted off to obey orders, and the two gentlemen were waiting in silence, when, with a strong rustling of silk, a lady swept down the staircase, her ribbons fluttering stormily in a breeze of her own making. A pretty lady; fair, fat and forty; her ample form robed in stiff back silk, her black-lace cap adorned with a plenitude of black satin streamers; a diamond breastpin the size of a small cheese-plate, on her broad breast, jet eardrops in her ears, and jet bracelets on her plump wrists.

It was Mrs. Wood, with her brother's florid complexion, and the black eyes and hair of the Hazelwoods. Her black eyebrows raised very high, her black eyes exceedingly wide open, her mouth in the same state, her hands uplifted, and her whole face full of utmost consternation, she swept in between them like a whirlwind.

"What is it, Hugh? What on earth it this? Where in the world did these two children come from?"

"That's just what I want some one to tell myself. I'm as much in the dark as you are!"

"Susan said there was a letter. Where is it? What does it say?"

"My dear Emily, don't get in such a gale! The letter is here; but before you read it, look round you and see if you can recognize an old friend!"

Mrs. Wood, for the first time, turned her eyes on Doctor Lance, who made her a grave, stiff, old-fashioned bow.

"Oh, my goodness! Doctor Lance! Why, how do you do?" shaking hands with the utmost effusion. "What a stranger you are! When did you come?"

"Half an hour ago. I trust I see Mrs. Wood well?"

"Very well, thank you! And were on earth"—cried Mrs. Wood, forgetting all about the children immediately —"have you been all these years, I declare?"

Without waiting for an answer:

"You are not the least changed! I should have known you anywhere."

"And I would not have known you at all!" said Doctor Lance, in a tone that conveyed no compliment, "Ten years have changed you sufficiently!"

"Do you hear that, Emily? He means to say you are growing old and fat," laughed Mr. Hazelwood. "Not much trace left of the sylph-like Emily Hazelwood, eh, Lance?"

Doctor Lance gave a snort that might have implied anything, except perhaps dissent; and Mrs. Wood, who inherited her brother's good-nature, shrugged her broad shoulders and heaved a little sigh of resignation.

"Years improve none of us, I am afraid; and it's better to grow stout and substantial than shrink into the 'lean and slippered pantaloon' Shakespeare or somebody else talks about. You have come to make a long visit, of course, Doctor Lance?"

"Business requires my presence in New York for a few weeks. I shall stop no longer than is absolutely necessary, madam!"

"That is too bad of you. At all events, you will be our guest for those few weeks?"

"Of course he will!" exclaimed Mr. Hazelwood. "He will not offend us by stopping anywhere else."

"If such a trifle offends you, you must be offended, then! I remain at the Astor House while here! It's of no use, Mr. Hazelwood," raising a warning finger as that gentleman was about to break out in expostulation. "You

ought to know me well enough to be aware coaxing will be a waste of breath. Show Mrs. Wood the letter and see what her woman's wit makes of it!"

Mrs. Wood took the letter and ran her eye over it, setting up another scream of consternation at its close.

"Your grandchildren! Did you hear that, Hugh? Good gracious me! Can it be true?"

"Emily! how can you ask such a question?" Mr. Hazelwood sternly cried. Of course, it can't be true!"

"But, dear me, brother, it's so odd! and young men are such a set! It's really the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of!"

"Not so very extraordinary in this city. Such things happen every day," said Doctor Lance.

"Come here, my dear," insinuated Mrs. Wood, holding out her motherly arms. "Come here and tell me your name! Can they speak?"

"They can speak enough for that! This blue one calls herself Rosie. The pink one does nothing but yell. I took her up a moment ago, and she screamed blue murder! I'll answer for the strength of her lungs at any rate."

"If there were only one now," said Mrs. Wood, thoughtfully, "but two! Such pretty little pets, too, and so beautifully dressed! I wonder who their mother is?"

"You had better ask your nephew," suggested that spiteful Doctor Lance. "The whole affair is absurd and mysterious enough for a three-volume novel. Oh, here comes some one who may throw some one light on the subject, perhaps."

They all looked round. Una was coming down-stairs with a young gentleman in stylish evening costume—a tall and handsome young gentleman, with dark, bright eyes, black curling hair, and his father's pleasant face. It was Mr. Conway Hazelwood—graceless Conway—whom Dr. Lance remembered as head mischief-maker at school, always getting into unheard-of scrapes, and always getting out again scot free by some mysterious sleight of hand of his own; half his time rusticated for his mad pranks; handsome Conway, whom everybody liked for his laughing black eyes and sunny smile; dashing Conway, with whom young ladies fell in love at first sight; daring Conway, who ran with the firemen, and had risked his neck a dozen times, climbing up burning ladders to save the lives of

unfortunate forgotten wretches; gay, easy, mirth-loving, hot-headed Conway Hazelwood; one of the "curled darlings of nature," the pride of his father's heart, who came running down-stairs now with eager face and outstretched hand:

"Doctor Lance, by all that's glorious! Merry Christmas, doctor! It's ages ago since I've seen you, and how has the world been using you all this time?"

"I have nothing to complain of since I got rid of Mr. Conway Hazelwood," replied the little doctor, jerking away his hand from Conway's enthusiastic grasp; "what pranks have you been up to lately, young man? Look there!"

Conway looked and gave a shrill whistle of surprise.

"Two babies! You never mean to say, Doctor Lance, you have taken to matrimony in your old age! By Jove! they're your very image!"

"Well done, Conway!" cried his father, laughing, while the little doctor turned his fiery eyes wrathfully on the speaker.

"No, sir! don't try to shift the burden of your own evil-doing on other shoulders! They are not like me, but they are like Conway Hazelwood!"

"Thank you for the compliment, sir! The little ones are uncommonly pretty. I say, father, what tale of wonder is this Una tells me about?—these two little items being found in the hall."

"I know nothing more about it than Una does. Where are the rest?"

"Coming, sir," answered Una.

And as she spoke, the two younger sons of Mr. Hazelwood made their appearanee, coming down-stairs.

Except that both were well-dressed and of gentlemantly bearing, there was not the slightest trace of resemblance between the brothers. Arthur was tall like Conway, but much slighter; with fair, delicate features like a girl; large light-blue eyes, something like Una's; light-brown hair, worn long on his neck; an irresolute, undecided mouth, and altogether an effeminate appearance. Languid and listless, slow and lazy, a carpet-knight in every sense of the phrase; very little of the stout old Hazelwood blood had descended to him. He looked like the fair-haired woman whose portrait hung in the dining-room; he in-

herited his nature from her as well as his looks, and had been her pet and favorite all her life. Young ladies who visited his luxurious studio, where he lounged in velvet slippers and cap, and Oriental dressing-gown; smoking cigars and painting charming little landscapes in the Claude Lorraine style, with romantic milkmaids in short red petticoats and pails on their heads, pronounced him the incarnation of the adjective "sweet," and went into raptures over his melancholy blue eyes and delicate, insipid, characterless features. He was looking very well just now, gotten up regardless of expense, and his blue eyes were opened very wide in wonder at sight of the assemblage in the hall.

As much unlike his two elder brothers as it was possible to be was Doctor Lance's favorite, Eugene. No young ladies ever went in ecstasies over him, or pronounced him sweet. "Bear," "Monster," "Orson," were their pet names for him, and no one knew it better than the young gentleman himself. Low of stature and rather inclined to be stout, with a peculiarly short neck that gave him the appearance of being deformed, he resembled neither the tall, handsome Hazelwood nor the effeminate Saxon type of his mother's race. But the dark face was full of character; the thin, firm, compressed mouth; the large, well-shaped nose; the restless, fiery eye; the broad, pale brow projecting above—Intellect was proudly written on all. The complexion was dark to swarthiness; the thick black brows meeting over the nose lent additional piercingness to the deeply-sunken eyes; and the muscles around the thin, bitter lips seldom relaxed into a smile. People said Conway had absorbed all the beauty and Eugene all the brains of the family; and Conway was petted and caressed, and flattered and spoiled wherever he went, while Eugene was praised, and admired, and shunned, as a proof which of the two gifts the world values most. And Eugene, knowing this, had grown up a sort of Ishmael, with a morbidly-exaggerated sense of his own personal defects, his hand against every man's, and most of all, against his tall and stately brothers, whom he envied with an intensity that was very like hatred. Proud, fiery, sullen, passionate, cruel, and vindictive, he had one real admirer—and, perhaps, only one—Doctor Lance, with whom genius was the greatest gift of God, and who despised the

never-do-well Conway and the languid Arthur with an honest heartiness that would have delighted that stern lover of good-nature, Doctor Johnson.

Una, on her way, had made them both aware of the arrival of their former tutor; and given them a hasty sketch of the singular apparition of the twins, so that neither took them unawares. Eugene, who appreciated Doctor Lance quite as much as that gentleman did him, held out his hand with unwonted cordiality.

"Welcome to New York, doctor! I am very glad to see you! What's all this hubbub about?"

"These babes don't belong to you, doctor," lisped Arthur, staring languidly, while he shook hands. "They're very pretty indeed. Look like two of Correggio's smiling angels."

"Angels some one of you three are accused of owning," said his father. "Read that letter aloud, Emily, and let me hear what they have to say for themselves."

Mrs. Wood, nothing loth, read the pithy epistle from beginning to end; and its effect on the three brothers was characteristic. Conway set up an indecorous laugh. Arthur's face was the very picture of helpless bewilderment, and Eugene's dark brows knitted into a swarthy frown.

"Now, then," their father demanded, watching them searchingly, "which of you does the letter mean?"

"I should say it meant we held a joint-partnership in the affair, the three of us," answered laughing Conway. "Upon my word, that's the coolest piece of composition I have heard this many a day."

"By Jove!" said Arthur, still staring in helplessness, "it's the most astounding thing, isn't it? Like a thing in a play or a story—eh?"

"I don't see that there is anything so astounding about it," said Eugene, his black brows still knitted. "There are more things in heaven and earth than you dream of in your simple philosophy, my good father."

"By George! Eugene's going to own up!" cried Conway, while every eye fixed itself on the youngest son of Mr. Hazelwood; "still waters run deep, they say, and after this I shall believe it! Let me be the first to embrace my niece."

He lifted the nearest one, the pink twin, in his arms as

he spoke, and pressed his mustached mouth to its cherry lips, and the little one, who had screamed at a like act from the father, nestled sociably in the arms of the son."

"Young or old, the girls like Conway," laughed his father; "the little vixens wouldn't look at me."

"Nature speaks loudly in the infant mind," sneered Eugene, with a look and tone of indescribable meaning, "it's a wise child knows its own father?"

Conway's face flushed indignant red, and putting down the little one as hastily as he had taken her up, he took a step forward and confronted his brother; with a dangerous light kindling in his dark eye.

"Speak a little plainer, Eugene; innuendoes are cowardly things. Do you mean to say——"

"I mean to say," interrupted Eugene, returning the fiery glance with cool contempt, "that I believe the letter. Mr. Conway Hazelwood may translate this as best suits him."

"Don't come to fisticuffs here, you two," drawled Arthur; "you'll spoil your clothes and dishevel your hair, and make frights of yourselves before Miss Thornton. By the way, Una, don't tell her what Eugene says. Conway's cake will be dough."

"Which my dear brother Arthur would very much regret," said Conway, shrugging his shoulders and turning away with a short laugh: "you always were a prudent fellow, Arthur, and I'll take your advice. Eugene and I won't spoil our clothes about trifles! After eight, Una," pulling out his watch; "are you almost ready?"

"I am quite ready," Una answered, but she lingered, still looking at her uncle. That gentleman was standing looking in perplexity from one to the other of his sons, and half indignantly at the keen smile on Doctor Lance's cynical lips.

"And have you nothing to say to this charge before you go?" he inquired; "none of you have denied it yet."

"That's very easily done," said the smiling Conway; "of course, we all deny it. Does the chirography throw any light on the subject, Eugene?"

Eugene had taken the letter from his aunt's hand and was examinig it closely. He folded it quietly now, and put it in his pocket.

"I think it does—I think I have seen writing like this

before. It is well disguised, but with the permission of the company I will keep the document for a few days, at the end of which time I think I shall have found out all I want to know."

"God speed you in your search! Now be off and don your wrappings—I want to be early to-night."

"Are you going to propose to Miss Thornton?" asked Arthur.

"No," said Conway, smiling; "I shall wait until she has refused you first."

"For shame, Conway!" exclaimed Mrs. Wood; "what will Doctor Lance think of you all, bickering in this manner?"

"Oh, don't mind me, I beg," exclaimed that little gentleman, in his blandest tones; "I beg the young gentlemen will go on as usual, and never mind me."

"And what am I to do with these little waifs, then?" inquired Mr. Hazelwood; "I hate to be imposed on, or to seem to obey the impudent person who left them here; but one hates to send such pretty little things to the almshouse."

"So they do; but if they were pug-nosed, and red-haired, and dressed in tatters, you could send them without the least compunction now, I dare swear," said Doctor Lance, with his customary cynicism.

"Oh, don't think of the almshouse," said Eugene. "It never would do for the future heiresses of the Hazelwoods to go there. Let them stay, by all means. They will make very nice parlor ornaments at a small price."

His hat and overcoat were on his arms. He began putting the former on, and Arthur to follow his example.

Una came running down-stairs, in shawl and rigolette, carrying Conway's; and Jenkins, the coachman, made his appearance to let them know the carriage was waiting.

"All right, Jenkins; so are we," answered Conway. "Come along, Una. Yes, father; keep the little ones. There is no telling, as Eugene says, but they may turn out to be your grandchildren, after all."

His laugh was puzzling, but there was no guilt in his face.

Arthur, buttoning up his greatcoat, turned to follow Conway.

"Are you not coming with us, Eugene?" he inquired,

seeing Eugene standing watching the twins, as if fascinated.

"No; I prefer to walk. I don't doubt but that Conway will enjoy the drive quite as well without me."

Conway, standing in the doorway, turned round with a smile on his face, and the eyes of the brothers met.

Doctor Lance read the glance—defiance in the dark eyes, hatred and triumph in the light ones!

Then Conway, still with that doubtful smile on his handsome face, was gone, and Eugene was standing like a statue gazing at the children.

"Loving brothers!" Doctor Lance was sneering, inwardly. "What a beautiful thing is family affection! Mr. Conway had better take care. I would rather have a sleuth-hound on my track than Eugene Hazelwood!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE APPLE OF DISCORD.

A LONG drawing-room, handsomely furnished, ablaze with lights, resounding with music, and occupied by a crowd of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen. Not too large a crowd. Miss Helen Thornton had too much good taste for that. There were not over thirty persons present, and all bosom-friends of Miss Thornton's. Judging from appearances, it was the most sociable of sociables—a sort of Liberty Hall, where every one did as they pleased, and made themselves altogether at home. One group at the upper end had formed a set, and were bowing and dipping through the Lanciers; the card-tables in the cozy recesses were occupied by a very noisy lot of elderly ladies and gentlemen; further down, a damsel in sky-blue, with very powerful lungs, was seated at a grand piano, hallooing some shrill operatic gem with piercing accuracy, to whoever chose to listen; some stood in little knots here and there, flirting and laughing; some lounged on the sofas, playing wall-flower, and a few were wandering in and out of a conservatory opening out of the drawing-room. Over all, a German band, perched up in a gilded gallery, among the glaring gaslights, were thundering

forth dance-music; and a vast Christmas-tree near the center of the apartment, perfectly dazzling to look at, with Santa Claus, gray, withered and frosty, guarding it, told what the festival was they were celebrating.

Standing beside the Chrismast-tree, a fairer guardian than old Santa Claus, flirting with half a dozen young men, was a bright-eyed, rose-cheeked, piquant little lady, arrayed in flowing amplitude of thick satin under white tulle, blush-roses in her brown braids and corsage, and a fan sparkling with its jeweled setting in her coquettish hand. It was Miss Helen Thornton, beauty, belle and heiress, and a coquette born. You could see it in the diplomatic way she gave a smile to this one, a brilliant glance to that, a speaking droop of the eyes to the other, and a merry word to all; but any one interested in watching her could have seen she was waiting impatiently for some one yet to appear. Her eyes wandered every moment to the door; and by and by her little foot began beating the devil's tattoo on the carpet, and the flush that impatient waiting brings began to grow hot on her cheeks. It grew so palpable at last, that one of the admirers about her spoke:

"Are you watching for the Marble Guest, Miss Thornton, that you look so often at that door? Who can the favored one be, for whose coming that impatient watch is kept?"

Miss Thornton did not reply, but her face suddenly brightened, and a quick smile and flush rose to her pretty face. The waiting look disappeared—the watched-for one had evidently come.

The acute gentleman who had spoken looked round to see a slender little girl, dressed in white, as became her years, with a face more remarkable for its utter absence of color than its beauty, and a gentlemanly but languid-looking young man, sufficiently well-looking, with blonde hair and complexion, like the girl.

Was it for these two Miss Thornton was waiting, then? Hardly; for her eyes wandered with a look of expectation once more to the door, even while she took an eager step forward to greet the young girl.

"You darling Una!" was her cry, kissing her with young lady-like vim. "Why did you not come earlier? I am tired to death waiting for you, and began to give you

up. How do you do, Mr. Hazelwood? Merry Christmas to you!"

"You might treat all alike," said Arthur, as she shook hands with him. "I hope you have been waiting for me, too!"

"Miss Thornton has been waiting for some one—I'll answer for that," said the young man who spoke before. "Come along, Hazelwood, let's have a look at the dancers."

"Are you two alone?" asked Miss Thornton, looking at the door again. "Where's Eugene and—Conway?"

"Conway's down in the cloakroom, talking to your father, and Eugene will be here directly. He did not leave the house with us. What a pretty Christmas-tree that is!"

Miss Thornton's most radiant smile was on her face now; what in this last speech had evoked it, she best knew. Her jeweled fingers began playing with the glittering trifles dangling and scintillating from its branches.

"Yes, isn't it? I had the greatest time choosing gifts and arranging them ever was. What kept you so late?"

"Oh, the most wonderful thing was ever heard of! Do you know some one left two children in our hall, to-night?"

"Two what?" inquired Miss Thornton, opening her eyes. "Two children!"

"Yes, two children, twins, and the prettiest ever were seen! We don't know how they ever came there, or a thing about it. Susan, the chambermaid, found them as she was going up-stairs."

"Well, I declare! Some poor person, who was not able to take care of them, and knew how good your uncle is, did it, I dare say."

"Oh, no; they can't belong to a poor person; they were beautifully dressed, in silks and furs, and their underclothes embroidered lovely! Besides, there came a note with them—that is the oddest part of the affair—and what do you think was in it?"

"How should I know? Perhaps it told who they were?"

"Yes, and that is where the wonder comes in! It told uncle they were his grandchildren!"

"What!" exclaimed Miss Thornton, vividly interested. "You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do, too; and uncle called down the boys, and we all had a council of war over it before we came out. That's what detained us!" said Una, laughing.

"Oh, my goodness, and what did they—what did Conway say?"

"Well, you know Conway. He laughed, as he does at everything, and began nursing them, treating the whole thing as a joke; and Arthur, he stared and said, 'By Jove,' and Eugene turned as black as a thundercloud, and got into one of his tantrums. I do believe he suspects Conway."

"Oh, Una!" cried Miss Thornton, turning crimson, "it can't be true!"

"Of course not; but it is just like Eugene to suspect Conway for everything. He is as jealous as a Turk!"

"What is he jealous about?" asked Miss Thornton, putting on an innocent look.

"You ask!" said Una, significantly. "I should think you know better than I do, a poor simple little schoolgirl!"

They both laughed. Certainly, she did not look very simple just then. Miss Una Forrest was wise enough in her generation.

"But about the children," said Miss Thornton, coming back to that interesting subject. "Was that all the letter said?"

"It told their names—Evangeline and Rosamond—pretty, are they not? Also that their mother's name was Starr, and that they were sent as a Christmas present by yours respectfully, Santa Claus. That was all!"

"Well, it's the strangest thing I ever heard of. Of course, the assertion in the letter is false? Your cousins denied it at once, did they not?"

"It was too absurd to deny. It was just a ruse of the person who left them to make uncle keep them. I heard Conway laughing over it with your father down-stairs."

"It takes them a good while to talk it over, it seems to me," said Miss Thornton, rather pettishly; "here comes Arthur back again—what does he want?"

Arthur wanted a partner—there was going to be a waltz; would Miss Thornton favor him with her hand? Yes, Miss Thornton was always ready for a waltz; but as she was taking the proffered arm she suddenly halted. Mr. Thornton, an old man of the same stamp as Mr. Hazel-

wood—"frosty but kindly"—was just entering with Conway Hazelwood.

"Wait one minute, Mr. Arthur," was Miss Helen's cry; "I want to speak to papa."

Had Mr. Conway Hazelwood not been with papa, it is doubtful whether the young lady would have found it so necessary to stop on the verge of the waltz. The question she had to ask was not very important; but she got for her pains a little thrilling hand-clasp from his companion, and a glance from the dark bright eyes that brought all her roses into play.

"What are you all about here?" inquired Mr. Thornton. "Why are you not dancing, Mr. Arthur?"

"I am going to, sir, as soon as Miss Helen is ready."

"I am quite ready now. Oh, here is the other truant at last!"

Eugene was just entering. Conway glanced at him, and then at Miss Thornton moving away with Arthur.

"Engaged for the next quadrille? No? Glad to hear it! may I have the honor?"

Miss Thornton, who would have been only too happy to have danced through life with the speaker, signified her assent, and was whirled away by Arthur. Half the people in the room were spinning round like teetotums; and they floated in and out among them, until tired, and giddy, and flushed, they subsided on a sofa. It was in a shady corner, and Arthur, with the inspiriting music of the German band in his ears, and a pretty young lady beside him, grew inspired.

"I like a nice flirtation
By the light of a chandelier,
With music to fill up the pauses,
And nobody very near,"

he quoted. "N. P. Willis should be in my place now."

"To flirt with me! You forget it takes two to make a bargain! How do you get on with my portrait?"

"Better than I ever got on with a portrait in my life; but such a sitter would make a Rubens of the veriest dauber that ever smeared canvas."

"Thank you, sir! I was perfectly sure you would say that," said Miss Thornton, settling one of her bracelets with infinite composure. "You have made the same

speech to every young lady whose face you have immortalized, of course."

"No—I always mean what I say!"

Miss Thornton laughed outright—a most musical and most incredulous little peal. Arthur looked at her, thinking how pretty, and graceful, and rich she was, and what a charming thing it would be to carry her off from her host of admirers, with his two brothers at their head.

"You don't believe me?" he said.

"Oh, to be sure I believe you! Who could doubt a gentleman who always means what he says?"

"Miss Thornton, I mean more than that! Will you believe me when I say I love you?"

"Mr. Hazelwood!"

"It is true, Helen—I do love you! May I venture to hope I am not absolutely hateful to you?"

He had gone through the formula with remarkable composure for a man whose heart's best affections, and so on, were at stake, and attempted at the close of his last speech to take her hand. But Miss Thornton drew back and rose up precipitately.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Arthur, that you should have said this! I shall always be happy to be your friend, but —Oh, here is your brother! Pray excuse me."

It was not the brother she wanted; it was Eugene who came to her relief; but she took his arm with an alacrity not very usual with her sex when Eugene Hazelwood was concerned.

Eugene's keen eye glanced from face to face, from the flushed and excited countenance of the girl to the deeply mortified one of his brother, and saw at once what had passed. It was a characteristic and striking trait of the Hazelwood brothers that one of them never wanted anything but the others were sure to cast a covetous eye on the same. A look of determination settled on the dark face of the younger brother.

"It is very hot here—come into the conservatory a moment. You look flushed, Miss Thornton!"

"I have promised to dance with Conway, but I suppose I have a few minutes to spare, and it is rather oppressive here! Is that Una singing 'Love Not'? No, it is Fanny Grant—how well she sings it!"

"Love not! love not! Oh, warning vainly said!"

Eugene repeated after the singer. "Mrs. Norton never wrote anything truer in her life. It is an old fashion the world will adhere to to the last."

Miss Thornton looked at him an instant without speaking, and glanced away again; but those piercing eyes read what her lips had not courage to speak.

"Yes, Miss Thornton, I know how to love, though my dear five hundred friends will hardly give me credit for it. I am not the heartless Orson they take me to be, for, Helen Thornton, I love you!"

Miss Thornton absolutely screamed—it was so unexpected to her, so almost shocking, from such a quarter.

"Is that the way young ladies listen to such things, Helen?" he asked, bitterly, reading his fate at once in her undisguised terror; "or is it only when an ugly hunchback proposes that they shriek? I repeat it, I love you, I wish to make you my wife—I will do my best to make you happy! Am I accepted? Have the goodness to answer me—yes or no."

It was rather a savage and altogether an uncomfortable way of making such a tender proposal. Helen, with a white face and startled eyes, looked around her as if for some means of escape, but Eugene held her tight.

"Speak!" he said, breathing hard, for he was of a most excitable temperament; "speak! yes or no!"

"Oh, Mr. Hazelwood, my—oh, please don't be angry, but—but——"

"You refuse me, then! Is that what you mean?"

"Oh, Mr. Hazelwood, let me go! Oh, Conway, I am glad you have come!"

The cry came from her frightened heart, and so did the eager spring she made toward some one who stepped from behind some tall plants. It was Conway Hazelwood, cool, easy, nonchalant as usual; and Helen, really exceedingly terrified by Eugene's fiery eyes, clung to him, as a woman will to the man she loves. That little act, involuntary as it was, told her secret. Conway smiled a little as he drew her closer to himself.

"I beg you will excuse me, Eugene," he said, looking at his brother, "but I overheard your conversation with Miss Thornton. I could not help it, and I beg you will not make a scene, as I see you are about to do. If you have anything to say to me, wait until we are alone. You

have startled Hiss Thornton sufficiently already. Come, Helen, I have been searching for you!"

There was no mistaking Helen's eager willingness to obey, and they were gone almost before Eugene knew it. He did not follow them directly. He stood by the window Conway had so lately left, looking out on the bright, frosty night and gaslit street. The sounds of music and dancing, laughing and merrymaking, came to his listening ears from the drawing-room; but how these revelers would have started had they seen the black scowl on his brow, the terrible fire in his weird eyes! For nearly half an hour he lingered there, brooding over his own ominous thoughts, and then he turned and walked slowly back to the ball-room. The first he met were Conway and Helen; the girl clinging fondly to his arm, her pretty face all aglow with love, and pride, and happiness; he smiling, graceful, handsomer than ever. It was quite plain he had been following the example of his two brothers, and had met with a very different answer. Helen Thornton had got all she wanted, and was for the time being perfectly happy. But perfect happiness in this world is a plant of very fragile growth, and seldom lives over half an hour at a time. As her eyes fell on the face of Eugene, darkened by a look that was almost devilish in its hatred and envy, she recoiled, as she had done before, with a suppressed shriek. He spoke to neither, only glanced at them for a second, and was gone.

Conway broke into a laugh.

"High tragedy, upon my honor! That look would make Eugene's fortune on the stage of the Bowery Theater."

"Oh, Conway! how can you laugh? I am frightened to death of him. I am afraid you and he will quarrel!"

"We do that every day of our lives, *petite*. Dr. Watts sings of brotherly love—I wish he were in our house for a while to see how we practise it."

"Oh, Conway, don't quarrel with him. Mercy, don't! Promise me you will not."

"I will not if I can help it; don't make me promise anything more. Come and sing for me, dearest; there is nothing to wear that frightened face about."

Is there not? Let your bride sing for you while she may, Conway Hazelwood, for her singing days are nearly over.

CHAPTER V.

THE HAZELWOODS AT HOME.

It was after dinner in Mr. Hazelwood's. In the pretty dining-room, "curtained, and close, and warm," a bright fire burned cheerily; and in his cushioned armchair, in genial after-dinner mood, the head of the Hazelwoods sat. To be genial was Mr. Hugh Hazelwood's mood at all times, but this evening, in slippers and smoking-cap, one leg crossed over the other, and the ruddy brightness of the fire casting its warm reflections on his face, he was looking even more genial than usual. Perhaps the fact of his whole family being assembled around him had something to do with his state of felicity; for his three sons were present. A very uncommon sight indeed it was to see Messieurs Conway, Arthur and Eugene Hazelwood dining together at home; and the fact of their being there this particular evening was probably owing to the circumstance of their father having given a dinner-party from which they could not very well stay away. The dinner was over, and the guests all gone now, and Mrs. Wood and Una had just made their appearance to inquire how the dinner had gone off.

"Capitally, Emily," Mr. Hazelwood was saying; "nothing could have been better. The dinner, thanks to you and the cook, was perfection, and thawed out even our crusty friend Lance. By the way, Emily," with a mellow little laugh, "he used to be an old admirer of yours, wasn't he? He's a rich man now, and you a fine woman yet; who knows what may come of this visit, eh?"

Mrs. Wood, seated in state in another armchair opposite her brother, her ample form robed in black silk, stiff, stately, and rustling, filling it as if it were made for her; the firelight and gaslight glistening on her watch-chain, and round, rosy, good-natured face, her plump white hands, cased in black lace mits, folded one over the other in her lap, actually blushed like a girl of eighteen. Conway, leaning against the mantel, his handsome face

flushed with the heat of the fire and his father's crusty old port, looked over at her with a laugh.

"I thought the old fellow had some deeper object in coming here than merely to renew his acquaintanceship with the governor. So he used to be one of your beaux, auntie! By Jove! the idea of old Lance in love is as good as a play!"

"Nonsense, Conway; hold your tongue! Why shouldn't Dr. Lance fall in love if he chooses, as well as anybody else?"

"Conway thinks," said Una, who, robed in pale blue, and looking very pretty, seated on an ottoman, at her uncle's feet, with her profuse light hair all combed back off her face—"Conway thinks no one has a right to fall in love but himself, and it has become a chronic complaint with him."

Conway looked at the childish-looking figure of the girl with an odd look. "What do you know about love, mademoiselle? Little girls should mind their hornbooks instead of talking of the *grande passion*. Perhaps you have been taking private lessons, though, from—Eugene, for instance."

Eugene, who sat at table playing *solitaire*, and saying nothing, looked up at his handsome brother.

"You would make the better teacher of the two, my good brother," he said. "It is your trade, you know. As nature never creates anything utterly good for nothing, the few brains she gifted you with you did well to devote to some purpose, even though it be to the imbecile one of becoming a lady-killer. It's the regular profession of half the kid-gloved idiots of Broadway, and Conway Hazelwood makes as good a simpleton as the best of them."

"Now, you boys, stop quarreling," interposed Mrs. Wood. "Can't you be agreeable for once. We don't enjoy your united society so often that you need fight when we are so blessed. Arthur, what are you doing? Writing love-letters?"

"Drawing Conway's portrait," lisped the artist, who had been sketching busily for the last few minutes. "Eugene, what do you think of it?"

"An admirable likeness," said Eugene, with his bitter smile, and Una jumped up and peeped over his shoulder.

"What a shame, Arthur! You ought to have your

ears boxed! What do you think, Conway? he has drawn you with a donkey's head, kneeling before a set of simpering idiots, who are laughing at you behind their fans! Give it here, Eugene, until I tear it up."

The smile on Conway's face never altered.

"Don't trouble yourself, Una; it's only the old story of the fox and the grapes over again. I can afford to be magnanimous, after the way they both came to grief the other night at Miss Thornton's. How does it feel to be jilted, Eugene? Was it you or Arthur she refused first? Ah! you feel hurt, do you? The old proverb which says: 'They laugh best who laugh last' is a wise one after all."

Eugene's face turned as dark as a thunder-cloud, but Arthur only shrugged his shoulders and went on drawing caricatures of his elder brother. Conway turned his careless, smiling face to his father, who sat looking uneasy and distressed. "I have a piece of news for you that I think you will like, father. You have been wanting me this long time to quit my roving life and settle down into a sensible married man. I am about to take your advice. I am going to be married."

"My dear boy, and to whom?"

Conway ran his fingers through his luxuriant, curling hair, and looked at his brothers with that galling smile of triumph, both in his eyes and on his lips.

"There is only one girl in the city I would marry, father; and I think you will approve my choice. She loves me and I love her. The young lady's name is Helen Thornton."

There was a moment's silence. The eyes of Conway and Eugene met in a long and ominous glance; the one shining with that smile of triumph and defiance, the other terrible with hatred and menace. Arthur, trying to look easy and indifferent, went on with his drawing, but his hand shook and his face flushed.

Una's blue eyes glanced stealthily from one to the other, and she alone saw the deadly menace in the fiery eyes of Eugene. Mrs. Wood, to whom it was all news, opened her eyes in innocent wonder, and Mr. Hazelwood held out his hand to his eldest son in undisguised delight.

"My dear Conway, I congratulate you with all my heart. You could not have chosen a bride more acceptable to me, had you tried until doomsday. Little Helen is the best

and prettiest girl in New York, and old Thornton is worth a mint of money. My dear boy, this is indeed pleasant news. When is the affair to come off?"

"Do you mean my marriage, sir? Very shortly now. The precise day has not been fixed, but it will be within a month, at the furthest."

"Then it is all decided. Have you spoken to Mr. Thornton?"

"I had an interview with him this morning, sir. He is as much pleased as you are."

"No doubt; how could he be otherwise, having such a son-in-law," said Eugene, whose face had turned fearfully white, though his voice was as calm as ever. "Did you tell him, Conway, of our Christmas present? Who knows but the mamma of those interesting babes may drop in to wish you joy on your wedding-day?"

"With all my heart! I shall be very happy to see her, as any one should be to see his—sister-in-law! She ought to be pretty too, judging by her offspring, and I am never so happy as when in the society of pretty women. Tell her to come, Eugene, by all means!"

"Now, you boys!" Mrs. Wood once more shrilly interrupted. "Can't you stop fighting? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, you two, worrying your father to death, and leading us all such a cat-and-dog life! If Miss Thornton knew the quarrelsome set you are, she would jump into the fire, or cut her right hand off before she ever would sign her name Mrs. Hazelwood."

Eugene turned his dark, bitter face to his aunt, with an ominous smile, prophetic of future evil lighting it still.

"Rest easy, my good aunt! Miss Thornton may remain ignorant of the heavenly life of brotherly unity we lead here, and still never sign her name Mrs. Conway Hazelwood. When there are two moons in yonder sky, my dear older brother, she may be your bride—not before!"

Conway laughed carelessly.

"The age of miracles is passed, Eugene. The wedding-day will be in less than a month; and there is a wise old proverb which tells us barking dogs seldom bite!"

"And there is another proverb, equally wise, which says there is many a slip between the cup and lip."

"Quite true! We may all die and be in our graves before that time; but unless something of that kind

occurs, Helen Thornton will as certainly be my wife before another month, as that Eugene Hazelwood was jilted by her on Christmas eve. Spare your threats, Eugene, I am not afraid of you; for whatever wonderful event stops our marriage, it is most assuredly not of your power to do it!"

"That remains to be seen! A great deal may happen in a month! Helen Thornton did refuse me, did refuse Arthur, and did accept you on Christmas eve; but it is all labor lost. She may not be my wife. I would not marry her now if I could; but," and he rose from his seat, with a wolfish glare in his fiery eyes, "but, Conway Hazelwood, she never will be yours! Do you hear—never!"

The rest stared aghast, but careless Conway, leaning negligently against the mantel, still retained his provoking smile.

"Quite tragic that, upon my word! What are you going to do, Eugene—murder us both?"

There is many a true word spoken in jest! Not one there but remembered that question so lightly spoken, in the terrible after-days. Eugene did not answer, only glared at his brother in silence, and in either eye sat a devil. Even languid Arthur, despite the flimsy state of all his emotions, looked rather pale and startled; and Mr. Hazelwood rose from his chair, white and stern.

"Boys," he said, in a tone seldom heard from those kindly lips, "no more of this! I command you by the authority of a father to never repeat this scene in my presence. Shame on you, Conway! It is well your mother is in her grave before she ever lived to hear her first-born, her favorite son, talk to his younger brother like this! Shame on you, Eugene, to allow your jealousy to carry you so far! Where is your boasted wisdom now? The best thing you both can do is to go to your rooms, take your Bibles, and read the story of Cain and Abel. Go! I am ashamed of you both!"

He sunk down in his seat, with one trembling hand over his face. Dark, moody, sullen, Eugene stood, but Conway was bending over him directly, with a remorseful face.

"Father, forgive me. I should have remembered before whom I was speaking. Come, Eugene, forget and forgive.

We both of us say more than we mean, I am sure!" He held out his hand, but Eugene turned gloomily away.

"So be it, then," said Conway; "war or peace, it is all the same to me, but I shall obey you, father. In your presence such a scene shall never take place again."

There was a tap at the door, and a rosy little nursery-maid presented herself with a courtesy to Mrs. Wood.

"If you please, ma'am, I wish you would come up to the nursery. I can't get Miss Hazel to bed, and she keeps them twins awake with her noise, and I can't do nothing with none of them."

"There's English for you, Una," said Conway, chucking that young lady under the chin as he passed. "Come along, auntie, I'll go with you to the nursery. I haven't seem 'them twins' since the night of their arrival, and I want another look at them."

"Perfectly natural," said Eugene, in a low, mocking voice; "who would wish to see them if their father would not?"

Conway glanced at him coolly, no way daunted by his fiery stare.

"At it again, my good brother. I don't think you will stop until you tempt me to thrash you within an inch of your life—a feat you know I could easily accomplish! Come along, auntie—accept my arm to the nursery! Lead the way, Jane, we follow! Good-night all, and pleasant dreams!"

"Good-night, Conway," Mr. Hazelwood said, kindly.

"Good-night, cousin," Una repeated, nestling close to her uncle's side, and looking fearfully at Eugene.

Even Arthur wished good-night, but the younger brother never spoke; no effigy in marble could have stood more dark and motionless than he. But handsome Conway only smiled at him, and went out humming the refrain of an old French song:

"To-day for me,
To-morrow for thee!
But will that to-morrow ever be?"

"And if ever I saw the old demon in any human face," said Mrs. Wood, going up-stairs, and speaking in an awe-struck undertone, "it was in Eugene's to-night. Be careful, Conway; he is savage anyway, and there's no

telling what jealousy may prompt him to do. Here we are at the nursery. Do hear the roars of those young ones! and it's all my Hazel's fault, for the twins are as good as gold. Come in."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEDDING-NIGHT.

In that same pleasant room where the Hazelwood family had been assembled the night before, Mr. Hazelwood, his sister, and niece sat at breakfast. A pretty little bronze clock on the mantel was just chiming eight—for the head of the Hazelwoods liked early hours—and the yellow wintry sunshine streaming warmly through the curtained windows, fell brightly on the glittering silver and china service; brightly on the ruddy, kindly face of Mr. Hazelwood; brightly on Mrs. Wood's satin ribbons and golden trinkets—for Mrs. Wood made a point of being always resplendent to look at; and no less brightly on the pale-gold hair, delicate, white face, and pretty morning-dress of blue merino, trimmed with white, worn by the half Albino, Una Forest.

The junior Messrs. Hazelwood were not there; it would have been most astonishing if they had been, and altogether out of the usual order of things. Eugene, though invariably, winter and summer, up at five, rarely left his room before eleven, and had his breakfast sent up to him at ten. Arthur never rose before nine, and then lounged down-town to his studio, and took his matinal meal there. Conway, like Eugene, was an early bird; but he was off, according to custom, for a breezy morning-ride through the park, and might possibly drop in to Mr. Thornton's for breakfast, or patronize a restaurant, or come home any hour before midday, as the humor took him.

The trio, then, at the breakfast-table, had no need to wait for the three truants, and went on drinking their toast and eating their muffins without them, quite as a matter of course.

Mrs. Wood, at the head of the table, was holding forth to her three auditors with an energy and volubility that made her round, good-natured face, red enough at all times, ten degrees redder than ever.

"And what ever I'm to do with her I can't tell," she was saying. "I've talked to her, and I've whipped her, and sent her to bed with a spanking and no supper, and it's all no use. It's worse she's getting, instead of better, and she'll be the torment of my life—I know she will! Why don't you try the beefsteak, Hugh? It's not too rare."

"The beefsteak's well enough," said her brother, helping himself; "and so is little Hazel. I like her all the better for having a little life. I never did like Solomons in pinafores, and never will. Let the child be lively and have her fling; the world will sober her soon enough."

"Have her fling!" cried Mrs. Wood, in tones of piercing indignation. "That's all very well for you to say, brother, that has none of the bother; but if you had to change her clothes five times a day, and then have her always looking as dirty as a little pig, and if she matted her hair all in a bunch, after you curled it, with molasses-candy, and smeared her face with soot and mustard till she looked like a—like a—" (Mrs. Wood hesitated for a simile forcible enough) "like a live kangaroo, after you'd washed it, and if she screeched and kicked till she turned black in the face, because you wouldn't let her soak her shoes in her soup, perhaps you'd sing another song than 'let her have her fling'! Fling, indeed! It's nothing but fling she does from morning till night, and from night till morning. Una, pass me your cup, and I'll give you some more coffee."

Una, looking quietly around, obeyed; and Mr. Hazelwood, quite quenched for the time being by this eloquent outburst, ate his steak and toast in pensive silence. Mrs. Wood, having replenished the empty cup, let her feelings get the better of her, and burst out again:

"And there's them twins! The life they lead with that little limb is too horrid to think of! She wouldn't leave a spear of hair in their heads, or an eye in their faces, she wouldn't claw out, if she had her way; and if she does not starve them yet, it will be a mercy, for they never get a thing she doesn't grab from them. Her fling, indeed!

And it's all Conway's fault; he will fetch her cartloads of candy, in spite of every thing I can say, and teach her to dance jigs and double-shuffles, and sing negro songs, and all sorts of wickedness; and she minds him, and pays no more attention to me or Jane than if we were two old shoes! Let him wait till he gets children of his own, as I tell him, and see how he likes it! But, then, it's of no more use talking to Conway than it is to Hazel—he only laughs in your face, and behaves worse the next minute than ever! Come in!"

The last invitation was in answer to a rap at the door, and Susan made her appearance with a little three-cornered note.

"It is for you, Miss Una," she said, delivering it; "the postman has just gone."

Una tore the perfumed note open, and ran over its contents.

"Who is that cocked-hat from, Snowbird?" inquired Mr. Hazelwood; "not a love-letter, I hope?"

Una laughed.

"It sounds like one, uncle. Listen, and I'll read it to you."

MY OWN DEAR, DARLING UNA:—I suppose Conway—dear, dear Conway—has told you all before this. Oh, I am just the happiest girl in the world, and I want you to come and see me right away. You are to be bridemaid, you know. Won't that be charming? When you come, my dearest, bring those darling twins with you, if possible. I should like to see them, of all things. Adieu, love. Be sure to come to-day to see

"Your loving friend, HELEN."

"From Miss Thornton, eh? Well, go, of course, and take Jane and the little ones along. It's quite natural little Nelly should want to see them. I say, Emily," leaning over the table, his face all aglow, "isn't it fortunate Conway is going to make such a match? Do you know, now, I always was afraid of that boy's going and throwing himself away on an opera-dancer, or an actress, or something of that sort. Thank Heaven! his choice has fallen on Helen Thornton!"

"And it never would have fallen on her," said Mrs. Wood, shortly, "you may depend, only his two brothers

wanted her. Oh, they're a precious lot of 'em, fighting for everything, like so many curs over a bone!"

Mrs. Wood, despite her good-nature, was inclined to use very forcible language sometimes, and had, when roused, a decided temper of her own. Keep on the right side of her, and she was sweet as summer-cherries; cross her, and—well, you must take the consequences. Mr. Hazelwood, being a sensible man, never presumed to contradict her at such times, and now finished his coffee and arose.

"I believe I have some letters to write to-day, and it is time I was at them. What a nuisance letter-writing is! Una, give my love to little Nelly, and tell her I'll be down in the course of the day to give it to her in person."

Mr. Hazelwood sauntered to the library, Mrs. Wood bustled off to attend to her housekeeping duties, and Una went up to the nursery to tell Jane to dress the twins and hold herself in readiness to accompany her to Miss Thornton's. Then she tripped up to her own pretty chamber to array herself in street costume, and half an hour after reappeared, looking very fair and charming, in a most becoming hat with blue ribbons and white plumes, a dark-blue velvet cloak trimmed with white furs, that set off her satin-smooth skin and redundant light hair to perfection.

"Are you ready, Jane?" she inquired, opening the nursery door.

Yes, Jane was quite ready, and so were Misses Rosamond and Evangeline. Very lovely the two latter young creatures looked, in short frocks and capes of rose-colored merino, elaborately braided, their long black ringlets, freshly curled, falling from beneath crimson hoods, their eyes like black stars, their cheeks rosy flame. How to tell one from the other seemed a mystery at first, but Una's keen blue eyes were never at a loss. She had discovered that Evangeline was a little bit taller, a little longer every way, and had much more of a temper of her own than her sister, but the strong likeness puzzled every one else. They followed Jane now down-stairs after Una, and got into a little carriage that Conway had sent home for their use. The distance to Mr. Thornton's was short, the day mild and sunshiny, and Una was a good walker. As they went down the avenue, every one they met turned to look after the pretty girl in blue, and the two beautiful children

in rose and crimson. Una returned every look with an American girl's cool stare, until she reached her friend's house. A servant in livery admitted them. Miss Thornton was at home, and as Una was sending up her card, came flying down-stairs, in a white morning-wrapper, and in a state of delighted excitement, and, catching Miss Forrest in her arms, kissed her rapturously a dozen times.

"You darling girl! how good of you to come right away after receiving my note! Oh, Una! isn't it all delightful, and ain't you glad?"

"Very glad, Helen, and so are all at home. Uncle sends his love, and says he will come to see you sometime to-day."

"What a kind soul he is! isn't he, Una? Oh, are these the twins? Why, what a pair of beauties they are! Oh, Una! they are perfectly lovely!"

"Yes, they are very pretty. Do you think they look like any one you have ever seen?"

Miss Thornton looked up with a sly little laugh.

"They look like the Hazelwoods, Una! I begin to believe that note after all."

"Oh, nonsense! Jane, you can wait here. Let us go up-stairs, Helen; you can inspect the little ones there at your leisure."

Miss Thornton, holding one of the twins in her arms, led the way to her boudoir, while Una led the other by the hand. Here, propitiated by slices of plumcake, Miss Evangeline and Rosamond allowed themselves to be inspected without protest.

"Oh, they are perfect loves!" Miss Thornton, who was a little of the gushing order, cried rapturously. "Such splendid eyes, such beautiful curls, such a lovely complexion! Do you know I admire brunettes ever so much more than blondes; don't get angry, Belle Blonde, at my saying so."

"Not I; Conway is dark!"

"Dear, dear Conway! Oh, Una, isn't he divinely handsome, and won't Fanny May, and Rose White, and all the girls go mad with envy when they hear of it; half of them were dying for him, I declare!"

Una knew very well that half of the young ladies in her set would have given a year of their lives to stand in Helen Thornton's shoes, and she laughed her soft, low laugh.

"More fools they; he isn't such a prize. There; don't trouble yourself to get angry, Helen; I know him better than you do. When is it to come off?"

"The wedding! Oh, the day has not been named yet; but it will be soon, I suppose. Conway is so impatient, you know; and you, you dear, darling Una are to be bridemaid, first bridemaid, too! Won't that be nice? One wedding makes many, they say; who knows but it may be your turn next?"

"Bah! I am only a schoolgirl! What would uncle and auntie say if they heard you talk like that?"

"Your uncle talks like that himself. Papa says he intends you for Eugene."

The milk-white skin of Miss Forest could by no possibility redden, but there came a strange glitter into her pale blue eyes at this allusion.

"Does he? Perhaps Eugene himself will have a word to say about that. Is it true you refused him the night of the party?"

"Oh, my goodness!" Miss Thornton cried, lowering her voice and glancing at the door, as if she expected to see the dark, gloomy face of Eugene Hazelwood there. "I shall never forget his look that night, as long as I live! Oh, Una, I can't tell you how frightened I am of him! Don't you marry him for any one. I would as soon marry a wild Indian."

"I won't marry him," Una said, quietly, "and I am pretty sure I will never be asked. Rosie, you are soiling all your dress with that cake—throw it away."

Miss Thornton was instantly off on another track, and in raptures again.

"What a love of a name! Rose of the World and Evangeline? Eve-star you ought to call her. Oh, what pets they both are! Do you know, Una, when Conway and I come back from our bridal tour, I mean to make him adopt them both. I should love to have two such beauties to dress and pet!"

"Perhaps, too, you think, like Eugene, that Conway has the best right to them."

Helen laughed good-naturedly.

"*N'importe, ma chère.* They look like the Hazelwoods, I tell you; anybody with eyes can see it! Come, try and

speak. What's your name, love?" taking one of them in her arms. "Which is which, Una?"

"That one is Evangeline; she speaks the plainest of the two."

"I don't see how you can tell them apart! Where is your mamma, pet?"

"More!" was the little one's answer, like a female Oliver Twist, as she pointed to the cake-plate; "more cake!"

"No; she must not have any more," said Una; "she will be sick! There, send her home with Jane—she can't tell you anything about her mamma. I wish she could! Shall I ring for Jane to take them home?"

"You may ring if you like! I want you to go shopping with me; I have got such lots and lots of things to buy. Oh, my gracious! I shall wear white of course, Una, and you had better wear pink; you are so very fair it will become you better than anything else. Good-by, darlings; kiss me before you go!"

The twins, grateful, perhaps, for the devoured cake, kissed the bride-elect, and allowed themselves to be led off by their nurse.

The shopping that day was a weighty affair. Miss Thornton came back with the carriage full of parcels and her purse several hundred dollars lighter than when she started. Una stayed till late in the afternoon, and then put on her hat to go home.

Conway is coming this evening, and the time is to be fixed," was Helen's parting address. "I'll make him tell you as soon as he goes back! Good-by, love; come back again to-morrow. I shall be so busy I can't get on without you."

Una did not see Conway that evening. It was the "wee sma' hours ayont the twal," as usual, before his latchkey turned in the lock, and he went whistling up-stairs to bed; but next morning, on her way down to breakfast, she espied his door ajar and peeped in.

"Is it you, Conway? Have you any message for me?"

Conway, busily arranging his cravat at the mirror, turned round.

"Good morning, Mademoiselle. Yes, I believe Helen sent you word to be ready at three this afternoon, to go shopping with her. She will call for you in the carriage."

"And when is the great event to come off?"

"In a fortnight, I believe. Oh, hang this necktie. I shall have to employ a valet, I believe, to dress me decently."

Una opened her light-blue eyes to their widest extent. "Good gracious, Conway! In a fortnight? What a hurry you're in. Helen cannot get ready in that time."

"Yes, she can. She doesn't need to carry all the dry-goods in New York with her. She can get a full supply in Paris."

"But it's so sudden. I had no idea."

"Neither had I; but you see, my dear, 'since it must be done, 'twere well 'twere done quickly;' that's Shakespeare. The reason is, some friends of Helen start for Paris in a fortnight, and we want to go all together, like Brown's cows. There, that tie's fixed to perfection, thanks to patience and perseverance! And now suppose we go down and try Aunt Emily's coffee."

A little after three, the carriage of Miss Thornton drew up before Mr. Hazelwood's door, and Una, all ready and waiting, was handed in, and the two young ladies drove off, intent on that business wherein the heart of every woman delighteth. And that was but the beginning of the end; every day during the week saw the same transaction repeated, as Mr. Thornton's check-book could abundantly prove. Upholsterers, dressmakers, and milliners filled the house. Una became domiciled there altogether. Miss Thornton by no possibility could exist without her in such a trying time. The rumor of the marriage became noised abroad, and Fifth avenue had a copious theme to gossip about at its morning-calls and evening-reunions. The course of true love was flowing as smoothly as a mill-dam, not even the faintest zephyr to ruffle its sunshiny surface, not one faint shadow of the black cloud gathering so swiftly and terribly, darkening its radiance. Eugene Hazelwood's threats seemed to have evaporated into empty air—that young gentleman himself had disappeared suddenly from public view, had gone off on some wild-goose chase or other, and deprived the Empire City of the light of his countenance altogether. Arthur lounged more than ever in his Broadway studio, smoked more cigars and drank more pale sherry than was good for him, but otherwise seemed in no danger of injuring his constitution from being crossed in love. So all went merry as a marriage-bell,

and the fortnight flew by on rosy wings, and the happy day dawned all sunshine and bland breezes. Eleven was the hour the bridal party were to be at church; and the yellow January sunshine streaming through the curtained windows of Miss Thornton's boudoir, saw the dainty little clock of gold and ebony on the mantel pointing its glittering hands to the hour of ten. It saw, too, Helen Thornton, bewildering in bridal white, her bridal veil and wreath on her head, and Una Forest looking like a pale rosebud in pink and white, at the head of a bevy of bright-faced bridemaids, similarly attired. They were all laughing and chatting together when a servant came to the door with a note.

"For me," said Helen, in surprise; "who brought it, May?"

The postman had brought it, the girl said; and the bride tore it open, and uttered an exclamation as she read it.

"What a strange note! Read it, Una."

Una took it and read:

"Let Miss Thornton be in the conservatory a quarter after ten on her wedding-morning, and wait there for a visitor, who will tell her a secret of the utmost importance. She must be alone, as the secret is for no ears but hers. Let nothing prevent her complying, or something will prevent her marriage. She need have no fears. This note comes from A FRIEND."

"Anonymous!" said Una. "What will you do?"

"I should like to go," said Helen, looking intensely curious. "Is it not mysterious? Who can it be from, and what can the secret be?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. It contains a threat, too, if you do not comply. Perhaps you had better show it to your father."

"Oh, no! Papa never would let me go, and my curiosity is excited. I'll tell you—don't say anything to the rest about it, and I will go, and make Lisette keep watch at a safe distance. I would give the world to know what the secret is."

"Well, if you think there is no danger?"

Helen laughed.

"Danger! You little goose! in broad daylight, and in my father's house! You run and find Lisette, and tell her to wait in the music-room, it overlooks the conservatory, and I will go and see what comes of it."

"You won't wait long?"

"No. If my mysterious visitor does not make her or his appearance by half-past ten, I will wait no longer. Be off now, while I go to the conservatory; it is a quarter past ten now."

Una and Helen went out together, telling the flock of bridemaids they would soon return.

Ten minutes, and May, the chambermaid, reappeared.

"Miss Helen, there is a gentleman—why, she is not here!"

"No," said one of the young ladies; "she has gone with Miss Forest to the conservatory. Has Mr. Hazelwood come?"

"Yes, Miss, but it's Mr. Eugene, not Mr. Conway! In the conservatory. I'll bring him up; he says he wants to see her on important matters."

May hastened off, and Una entered a few minutes after alone.

"Where's Helen?" the girls asked. "It's half-past ten! Isn't Mr. Hazelwood come yet?"

"Not that I know of. It is time enough!"

"Perhaps something has happened, and his brother has come here to tell her!"

"His brother! Is Arthur here?"

"No. Eugene. He told the servant his business was important, and she has shown him into the conservatory. I thought you were there with Helen."

Una looked at the speaker.

"Eugene! Impossible! Eugene is not in the city!"

"Perhaps he has returned. May said it was Eugene; and she knows him very well. Oh, my goodness! if any thing should have happened!"

Una's heart suddenly stood still.

All his threats came back to her memory. What if the note came from him?

Some one tapped at the door. It was May, for the third time.

"Old Mr. Hazelwood and Mr. Conway are down-stairs; and Mr. Thornton sends his compliments, and says it is a quarter of eleven, and time the young ladies were down-stairs."

"May," Una asked, hurriedly, "are you sure it is my cousin Eugene who is with Miss Helen in the conservatory?"

"Yes, Miss; but he's not there now. He is just gone; he only staid a few minutes."

Una turned hastily, and without a word, in the direction of the conservatory. Its glass doors lay wide open, and as she entered she saw Helen Thornton at the further end, half-lying, half-sitting on a lounge, her face drooped on the pillows, her white bridal-dress falling around her like a cloud. Her strange position and stillness struck an ominous chill to the girl's heart.

"Helen!" she called.

But Helen did not stir.

"Helen!" she repeated, drawing nearer.

"But the bride never moved.

There was a peculiar odor through the apartment that could be perceived even above the perfume of the flowers, the odor of bitter almonds. Una noticed it distinctly, as she bent over the still, white form.

"Helen! Helen!" she cried, catching her by the arm. "Oh, Helen! what is the matter?"

She dropped the arm and recoiled in horror, even while she spoke.

No need to ask what was the matter. On her bridal morning, in her bridal robes, Helen Thornton lay before her—dead!

Quite dead! Growing cold already, with foam-crusted lips and ghastly, distorted face—stark and dead!

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAGEDY BLACKENS.

CONWAY HAZELWOOD, like a true lover, never so happy as when in the presence of his idol, had spent his wedding-eve at the house of his bride-elect. It had been a very pleasant evening, and Conway had stayed late. Una was there, and so were the three other pretty bridemaids, and three or four young gentlemen, cousins of Helen's; and there had been music, and dancing, and singing, and champagne, and a little flirting; and altogether, Conway had a very agreeable time. The clocks of the city were striking the hour of midnight—that most solemn of all hours, the mysterious link, between night and day—as he walked down Fifth avenue with a happy glow at his heart.

The night was mild and moonlit, and, late as it was, Conway sauntered past his own home, without going in. He looked up at it as he went by; but one light burned in the whole front, and that to his surprise, came from the room of Eugene.

"Can that tender younger brother of mine have returned from his pilgrimage?" was his thought; "but no;" suppose it is my worthy aunt, or one of our satellites, the housemaids. I think I know what wild-goose chase the dear boy has been on—God speed him in his search!"

He laughed to himself and taking his cigar-case from his pocket, lit a weed, and sauntered on his way.

There were few abroad at that hour on the aristocratic avenue; he met no one save a solitary "guardian of the night," wandering up and down his beat like an uneasy ghost, in blue coat and brass buttons. He did not see the dark shadow creeping behind him, a man light and soft of step; wearing a long overcoat, a muffler wrapped round his throat and hiding half his face, a soft hat with a broad brim pulled over his eyes; a man who had dogged him since he left the house of his betrothed, skulking in the shadow always—treading with cat-like softness—slouching under the shade of houses, stopping when he slackened his pace, and never losing sight of him for a moment: a man who followed him into Broadway when he entered that thoroughfare, keeping him ever in view, and ever lagging behind him.

There was life and light still on busy Broadway, though the theaters had emptied themselves long ago, and pedestrians enough were passing up and down to enable the skulking shadow in the overcoat to follow unnoticed. He seemed to have lost the wish to do so, however; for as Conway loitered for a second on the pavement to produce a fresh cigar, he came up and addressed him:

"Good-night, sir! I have the honor of speaking to Mr. Conway Hazelwood, have I not?"

Conway turned and looked at him, but the muffler, the long coat, and slouched hat baffled recognition.

"You have the advantage of me, my good fellow, whoever you are," he said puffing away coolly at his newly-lit cigar.

"Which I mean to keep—since it is of no consequence to you to know who I am! To-morrow is your wedding-day, Mr. Hazelwood?"

"It is. Have you come to forbid the marriage?"

Could careless Conway have seen the devilish light that leaped into the eyes under the slouched hat at the question he might have recoiled from it in horror, fearless as he was. He did not see it, however; and the strange man's voice was as calm as his own, when he answered:

"No; with Mr. Hazelwood or his marriage I have nothing to do. I am merely the agent and emissary of another—a friend of yours, who for to-night only desires to remain unknown. That friend has a secret for your ear, a most important secret, which may influence your whole future life. That friend will be at the residence of your bride to-morrow morning to meet and tell it to you. The ceremony takes places at eleven; at half-past ten, then, he desires you will meet him in the conservatory; at all events be there a quarter before eleven. It is a matter of life-and-death importance on which he would speak—it is also to be kept a profound secret—you are to tell no one of this matter until you have heard all to-morrow. The reasons for this secrecy will explain themselves, he bids me say, when you have heard what he has to reveal."

They had been walking on side by side all this time—the stranger speaking rapidly, and Conway's face a sight to see in its astonishment and mystification. Now he took the cigar from his lips and stopped resolutely on the sidewalk, staring at the speaker.

"My most mysterious friend, what on earth is all this lecture about? Are you rehearsing a scene from the last melodrama, or are you an escaped lunatic? You have been talking now for the last ten minutes, and I give you my word I was as wise before you began as I am now at the end. Speak out, man, whoever you are, if you have anything to say. Who is this mysterious unknown, and what mighty secret is to be revealed to me?"

"You will learn that when to-morrow comes! I have fufilled my task; yours is a very easy one. Permit me to bid you good night!"

"Not so fast, my friend." said Conway, collaring him suddenly; "you are a great deal too romantic and interesting a personage to be parted with so easily. Come, sir! off with that hat, and let us see what manner of man you are!"

"You need not strangle me, then," said the stranger,

partially lifting his hat and showing Conway a shining black face beneath. "I hope you'll know me when we meet again. Good-night, Mr. Hazelwood; I wish you and your bride all sorts of joy!"

With a sudden effort he jerked himself free, and, turning round a corner, disappeared.

Conway heard an aggravating laugh of triumph, and darted after him, but the man had turned down a lonely street, and was nowhere to be seen. He looked up and down, but the street was lonely and deserted; the man was gone.

Conway Hazelwood drew a long breath as he turned back into Broadway.

"Well here's an adventure! Now, if I were given to romance, I might think my brain was a little turned, and that I was rehearsing a scene from the 'Castle of Otranto' or some such rubbish as that; but this is the nineteenth century and I am in Broadway! It can't be Eugene; it was neither his voice nor figure, but it may be some trick of his. By Jove! I've hit it! I wonder what he means to do when he gets me in the conservatory? Blow my brains out, probably, though Dr. Lance labors under the notion that I have none to blow out. Thank you, my dear brother," he said, half aloud, taking off his hat, "don't you hope I may go there?"

A Fifth avenue stage was passing—he hailed it, and was set down at his own door. He looked up at the window from which the light had been gleaming when he went past before; it burned no longer—the whole house was silent and dark.

Conway let himself in with his latchkey and went noiselessly up to his room.

"I will find out to-morrow whether Eugene has returned or not," was his last thought "now to sleep and to dream of Helen's bright eyes and to-morrow's happiness!"

To-morrow's happiness indeed! Well for Conway Hazelwood he knew not what that momentous to-morrow was to bring, or his slumbers would scarcely have been so peaceful and prolonged.

His watch was pointing to the hour of nine before he opened his eyes on this mortal life, and sprung up in considerable consternation.

"Nine o'clock, by George! I should have been up and

doing two hours ago. It will be after ten now before I am dressed and at Helen's!"

Conway was his own valet, and taking a great deal of pains with his toilet, as people generally do on their wedding-day, it was, as he had predicted, after ten before the ceremony of dressing was completed, and he lounged out very unnecessarily handsome, drawing on his gloves as he went. Mrs. Wood met him in the hall.

"My dear Conway, I thought you were dead, or had been turned into one of the Seven Sleepers! Do you know it is fifteen minutes after ten, and you are to be married at eleven. But perhaps you have forgotten you are to be married at all. You are given to forget trifles, you know."

Conway laughed.

"I came uncommonly near forgetting it, I allow. Has Eugene made his appearance yet?"

"Eugene! Why, has he returned?"

"Just what I intended asking you. I saw a light burning in his room last night, and took it for granted he was here."

"Perhaps he is! Just wait a moment and I'll see!"

Eugene's room was near Conway's. Mrs. Wood rapped at the door, but there was no answer, She turned the handle, but it was fast.

"He must have come. No one ever locks his door but himself! I wonder where he can have been this long time."

Conway laughed again as he ran down-stairs.

"Hunting for last year's snow! I hope he may find it. Good-by, my dear aunt; there will be a Mrs. Hazelwood in the world before you see me again, and your good-for-nothing nephew will be a sober, sensible, steady married man."

"You sober, indeed!" said Mrs. Wood to herself, as his handsome, laughing face vanished. "Married or single you will always be light-hearted, hot-headed Conway. I hope the boy will be happy, anyway, for he is the best of them all!"

It was nearly half-past ten when the bridegroom entered the house of his bride. Her father met him in the hall and held out his hand with a smile.

"We were beginning to think here that the ever-gallant Conway Hazelwood was going to lose his character, and

become like the bridegroom in the song, 'a laggard in love.' Better late than never, though. Come into the library and take a glass of wine. You will need it to keep up your courage in the trying ordeal you are about to pass through."

"An ordeal without which life would not be worth having," laughed Conway.

"Helen, I suppose, is invisible."

"For the next twenty minutes, yes. There is a crowd up-stairs in the drawing-room, and she is in the hands of her bridemaids. By the way, where is Arthur—very odd he is not here!"

Conway shrugged his shoulders.

"Lounging in his *atelier*, as usual. The fellow is the very incarnation of laziness, like the rest of his Bohemian tribe."

"Too bad both he and Eugene should be absent; it looks strange on such an occasion. Where did you say Eugene was?"

"I did not say he was anywhere, my dear sir, for the simple reason that I don't know! One might as well try to account for the erraticness of a comet, as for that of my worthy younger brother."

"Eccentric! always was, always will be, but uncommonly clever, smartest of the lot—begging your pardon, Conway! Ten minutes to eleven—how the minutes are flying! Come up to the drawing-room, my boy; the bride and her attendant nymphs will be there directly."

"My father is here, I suppose?" Conway asked, following him up-stairs.

"Your father came half an— Ah! what is that?"

It was a wild, shrill shriek from the conservatory—a girl's frightened cry. Again it was repeated, and both stood still in wonder in the hall. Once more, wilder, shriller the shriek was heard, and then a figure in rosy gauze came flying along the hall, rending the air with piercing screams.

Conway caught the flying figure by the arm:

"Una! have you gone crazy? What is the matter? Has any one fainted?"

"Oh, Conway! Oh, Conway!" was all Una could cry, her eyes wild with horror, her whole figure quivering and thrilling like an aspen leaf.

"Miss Forest! Good Heavens! what has happened?" Mr. Thornton gasped. "Where is Helen? has anything——"

He stopped; for Una, clinging to her cousin, burst into a wild fit of hysterical sobs. The drawing-room door flew open, and a startled crowd poured out; the bridemaids, in curiosity and consternation, came flocking around her; the servants from below were coming up to learn the cause of the commotion. Every eye was fixed on Una Forrest, whose hysterical sobs alone broke the startling stillness.

Conway, very pale with some nameless dread, caught both her slender wrists in his hands, and looked steadily into her eyes. That concentrated and powerful glance mesmerized the girl into calmness.

"Una, speak out! What is the matter?"

"Helen is not here," Helen's father said. "Where is Helen?"

"Dead!" Una cried, with a last hysterical sob. "Oh, Mr. Thornton, Helen is dead!"

It had been all silent enough a moment before—to describe the shriek and commotion that followed Una's startling announcement, would be utterly impossible.

Mr. Thornton, speechless and paralyzed, and Conway deadly white, were the calmest of all. He was still holding her wrists, unconscious how cruelly hard, and still mesmerizing her with his strong dark eyes.

"Dead! do you know what you are saying, Una?"

"Oh, I do! Oh, Conway! she is in the conservatory, dead! murdered!"

"Murdered!" a wild chorus of voices repeated in horror; and then, by one impulse, a universal rush was made for the conservatory. All but Conway—the word "conservatory" stunned him, and he stood perfectly still, grasping Una, and looking into her frightened blue eyes as if he had forever lost the power of gazing elsewhere.

It was impossible for the girl's Albino face to turn any whiter than Nature had made it, but her very lips were blanched with fear.

"Oh, Conway!" she said, in a terrified whisper, "Eugene has been here!"

"Eugene!"

"He was alone with her in the conservatory. She went

in there well and full of life. Less than half an hour after when I went to look for her, I found her lying there—dead!"

No marble statue could have worn a face whiter or more rigidly set than did the bridegroom; no hands in frozen death could have been more icy than those grasping her tortured wrists. But life, terrible and intensely burning life, shone in those large dark eyes.

"He was alone with Helen in the conservatory," he repeated, his very voice changing so that she scarcely knew it.

"Oh, Conway, yes! Oh, Conway——"

"Has he gone?"

"He left a few minutes before I went in and found her——"

The hysterical sobs commenced again, checked in their commencement, however, by an appalling sight. Five or six gentlemen were approaching, bearing between them the convulsed form of Mr. Thornton, foaming and writhing in a fit of epilepsy—a horrible sight to look at. With a scream, Una broke from Conway and fled, and he, just glancing at the purple and distorted face, turned steadily to the scene of the tragedy.

The large room was full, but every one made way for him. No one but her father had dared to touch her. She lay still as Una had found her; and an eminent physician, who chanced to be among the guests, was bending over her. One glance at the face told the whole story—his bride was no longer his, but the bride of Death. He made no attempt to touch her; and his voice when he spoke, was quite calm, only it did not sound like the voice of Conway Hazelwood; and that terrible light, like dusky red flame, was burning ominously in his eyes.

"She is quite dead?" he asked.

"Quite," said the medical man, looking up; "a terrible crime has been committed here. The young lady has been poisoned!"

"Ah! poisoned."

"Yes, she has evidently swallowed a dose of prussic acid strong enough to kill a horse in a few minutes. Friends, a horrible murder has been committed—it is no time to stand idle—who can the murderer be?"

Conway Hazelwood turned out of the room with the

same steady step he had entered took his hat and left the house. Ten minutes later, he was standing in his own, and encountering his aunt face to face in the lower hall.

"Gracious me, Conway! What brings you here? And what on earth is the matter—you look like a ghost!"

He stopped on his way up-stairs, and looked at her.

"Have you seen Eugene? Has he been here?"

"Yes, and he is here yet. He is up in his room packing something for another journey, I suppose. Has anything hap——"

Through the hall-window Conway saw two policemen passing. Another instant, and he had opened the door and hailed them. One of them knew him, and touched his hat.

"Anything wrong, Mr. Hazelwood, that you want us? What can we do for you, sir?"

"I want you to make an arrest. A great crime has been committed to-day, and the perpetrator is here! Aunt tell one of the servants to call a cab. I shall want it directly. This way, gentlemen."

In a perfect trance of amazement and bewilderment, Mrs. Wood stood looking after her nephew and the two officials going up-stairs, quite incapable of giving the order he had left. A little negro boy, who did the errands of the house, chanced to be within hearing distance, however, and ran off for the cab at once.

"What's the crime that's been committed?" one of the policemen asked, on their way up-stairs.

"Murder!" was the stern response.

"Murder?" repeated the policeman, aghast. "And do you mean to say, Mr. Hazelwood, the murderer's here?"

"I do! He is in this room!" said Conway, knocking loudly at Eugene's door.

It was opened at once, and by Eugene himself. He had been, as Mrs. Wood had said, packing up, for a trunk, half-filled, was open, and the floor was strewn with clothes, dressing-cases, and articles of all kinds. He looked in unfeigned astonishment from his brother to the policemen.

"Conway! you here! What does this mean?"

"It means!" Conway cried, grasping him by the shoulder, "that you are a prisoner. You thought to

escape, did you? Well, you have failed. Take him, men —a cab is waiting below!"

Eugene, strong as a young Hercules, shook him indignantly off.

"Are you mad, sir? Your prisoner! On what charge?"

"That of murder! You have kept your threat well. Helen Thornton is dead; but, by Heaven, you shall hang for it as high as Haman, were you ten brothers of mine!"

Eugene stood looking at him, utter and unfeigned amazement and consternation written in every feature of his face.

"Helen Thornton dead! Have you, indeed, gone mad, or have I? Why, it is not over half an hour since I left her, alive and well!"

"Away with him, men, to the cab. Come, I will help you if he resists."

His eyes were, indeed, those of a madman. Eugene looked at him like one who doubts the evidence of his senses.

"Conway, have you really gone mad? Where are you taking me to?

"To the scene of your guilt—to Helen Thornton's house. Take him, I tell you, men, whether he resists or not!"

Eugene turned calmly to the policemen.

"All this is Greek to me, but I will go, if only to find out what all this mystery means. Go on; I will follow."

The cab was at the door; the four entered, and in silence were driven to the house—an hour ago of merriment, now of death. Conway strode on to the dining-room; Eugene followed, in charge of the two policemen. The spacious room was a scene of the utmost disorder, excitement and confusion—everybody had flocked back there. The physician who had informed Conway that the bride had been poisoned, was talking to a knot of friends.

"She has been poisoned—murdered, I repeat! Our first object now must be to discover the murderer?"

"He is here!" cried Conway, in a voice that rung like a trumpet through the room, as he stepped forward, with his hand on Eugene's shoulder. "I accuse my younger brother, Eugene Hazelwood, of the murder of Helen Thornton!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST DARK SCENE.

A PRISON-CELL, dark and narrow, the slanting rays of the ruddy sunset, tinging with gold the iron bars of the grated window, and falling in bright patches on the cold stone floor; its very brightness and beauty seemed cruelest mockery in such a place, as it lay in shining patches on the rude trundle-bed, on the bare deal table and the solitary chair that completed the dreary cell's appointments; a cruel mockery to whatever poor wretch might be confined there, speaking, as it did, so forcibly of the bright, free world outside.

A man—a young man—no common felon, either, for he bore the unmistakable impress of a gentleman—walked up and down the cell's narrow limits, his hands crossed behind him, his head sunk on his breast, his black brows contracted in a desperate scowl. The prisoner was Eugene Hazelwood; and as you have seen caged tigers tread ceaselessly and savagely up and down their barred cages, he, with much the air of a sullen, ferocious, human tiger, strode his. It had all passed like a horrible nightmare—the first shock of amazement, horror, incredulity, the post-mortem examination, the coroner's inquest, the trial, the frightful array of circumstantial evidence, that arose as if by magic, and confounded even the most incredulous. Throughout it all the elder brother had labored with appalling zeal to bring home the crime of murder to the younger. Conway Hazelwood was as firmly convinced of Eugene's guilt as he was of his own existence, and that conviction served in one hour to have completely changed his whole nature. The gay, careless, graceless Conway, the pet and darling of the ladies, was gone forever; and in his stead was a relentless, remorseless, unfeeling avenger, whose stern motto was "Justice though the heavens fall!" No bloodhound could have hunted down his prey more cruelly and unflinchingly; through him arose the frightful chain of evidence, his mad love for

Helen, his madder jealousy and threats, his absence, his return the night before, the mysterious note, evidently in a feigned hand, that had led the bride to the conservatory, his short visit, and the awful *dénouement* that followed his departure; his nearest relatives had been the principal witnesses against him—his aunt, his cousin Una, his brother Arthur—all horrified and unwilling had to speak the words that condemned and branded him as the murderer; the servant who had admitted him; even his medical knowledge of poison—were conclusive proofs against him; and if a last link were wanting, Conway supplied it, by relating the snare that had been laid to foist the guilt on him. He told the tale of the nocturnal encounter on Broadway; he was positive now the man with the blackened face must have been Eugene. So the examination went on; and the first amazement and incredulity gave place to horrible convictions, and Eugene Hazelwood was held to stand his trial for the wilful murder of Helen Thornton. The excitement was unprecedented; newspapers were full of surmises and particulars; society held up its hands in horror; somebody dramatized the story, and the lucky manager who got the play had his house crowded every night for a month. Sensation-novelists wrought it up into thrilling tales, with embellishments and decorations of their own, and the public devoured the bloodthirsty productions wholesale. Murder became all the fashion, and poisoning the favorite theme of gossip in every circle. People would listen to no opera but Lucretia Borgia, and all the city was on tiptoe, impatient for the coming trial. Frightful woodcuts, said to be exact portraits of the murderer, his victim, and bereaved brother, decorated every print-shop, and, if notoriety could impart comfort, Eugene Hazelwood was an enviable man.

Throughout it all, he had been like a man stunned—like one who cannot realize what is passing around him. He had pleaded Not Guilty—of course, the most guilty, as the coroner remarked, do that—but it had been in a bewildered sort of way, and that bewilderment had lasted all through his trial. Some people might think it proceeded from the stunning shock of amazement at finding himself thus suddenly convicted of a crime he had never dreamed of, but very few were so charitable as to think that. The proof was very clear; the evidence wanted not

a link; his own brother was his accuser; his nearest relatives reluctant, naturally, to give evidence against him, yet were obliged to do it, and believed him guilty.

Weeks had passed since then, and with those passing weeks the prisoner's mood had changed. He saw himself accused, condemned, deserted; Fate, stronger than he, was against him; and he became moody, sullen, and savage, refusing to answer questions—a dark and desperate man of whom the very jailers were afraid. They had been dreary weeks those, in some places; those were in the home of Mr. Thornton, desolate and bereaved, with the broken-hearted father lying ill unto death, in the home of the Hazelwoods, silent and darkened, where old Mr. Hazelwood, shut up in his room, never saw any one, and battled with his grief and shame in proud solitude, where Una went through the dusky room like a little white ghost; and Mrs. Wood declined taking her meals at proper hours, and cried till her eyes were as red as a ferret's, and her eyes and her heart ached alike; Arthur moped down in his gloomy studio and took to smoking harder than ever, some said to drinking also; and Conway took lodgings within view of his brother's prison, and changed into a relentless, gloomy, and stern man, saw no one, and was almost as much a prisoner, with his own will for his jailer, as his unhappy brother. Dreary weeks to all, but dreariest in the lonesome prison-cell, where the young physician paced up and down, up and down, brooding over his own dark thoughts, night and day, and fading into the very shadow of himself. White and wan was the face on which the sun's rays fell this evening—the eve of his trial—for to-morrow he was to face the crowded court-house, and be tried for his life.

Shuffling footsteps came along the stone corridor without, a key turned gratingly in the lock of his door, it swung back, some one entered, and it was slammed to again. The prisoner turned round, and saw the white hair and bowed head of his kind old father. It was not that father's first visit, but Eugene gave no token of pleasure or welcome as he pointed to the solitary chair, and resumed his march up and down.

Mr. Hazelwood sunk into the seat with a sort of groan.

"My poor boy! To-morrow is the terrible day I have looked forward to in horror so long."

Eugene looked at him, moodily.

"If I felt like thanking Heaven for anything, I should be thankful that it is so near. Let them do their worst, the whole of them; that worst can be but hanging, and hanging is a thousand times preferable to the horrible existence I have been dragging out here."

"Oh, my boy! my boy! I am an old man, and why did I not die before I saw this day?"

He dropped his white head on the table, with another groan, but Eugene looked on with a strong eye.

"I suppose you are all preparing your evidence against me for to-morrow. It is a consoling thought, that when I am condemned I shall have no one to thank for it but my nearest relatives."

"Heaven help us! what can we do? Oh, Eugene! is there no way of saving you? Is there nothing that will tell in your favor?"

"Nothing! It has been clearly proven that I was the last one who saw Helen Thornton alive; of course, then, I must be the assassin."

"How can you speak in that mocking tone, Eugene? Oh, why did you insist on seeing her that fatal morning?"

"I have already informed you, and my all-wise judges, to tell her a secret connected with her adored bridegroom. To tell her I could prove he had one wife already in the land of the living, and two interesting babes. That would have stopped the ceremony, I think, if the laws of this narrow-minded country will not recognize a man's right to two wives at the same time. Of course, my story was looked upon as a fabrication; and, of course, it will be. Let them do their worst, curse them!" he cried, savagely, clenching his fist; "I defy them all!"

It was a dismal interview, but a short one; and Mr. Hazelwood returned to his home with a heart heavier, if possible, than when he had left it. He could not believe Eugene guilty, strong as the proofs were against him; but he had little hope that either judge, jury, or public would join in his opinion. It was a miserable, a sleepless night to him, to them all; but the sun rose at last on the day he dreaded to see. The most horrible thing about the whole horrible affair was that, as Eugene had said, his nearest relatives were his deadliest accusers. All-abhorrent as the task was, yet go they must, speak they

were obliged to. And closely veiled, and wearing deepest mourning, Mrs. Wood and Una set out for the crowded court-house.

Long before its doors were thrown open, street and sidewalk were filled with a sea of people, and when at last way was made for them, they poured into the building and filled it to suffocation. Busy reporters leaned over the desks, stylishly-dressed ladies whispered together and waited impatiently for the prisoner to be brought in; artists came ready to take correct pencil-sketches of the faces of all the principal personages in the tragedy, and all, from the highest to the lowest, had but one opinion of the issue—that Eugene Hazelwood was guilty, and would meet a fate he richly deserved.

At ten o'clock the prisoner was led in, pale, sullen, defiant; the trial began, and pens and pencils went to work. The case was ably opened by the counsel for the prosecution; the witnesses against him were plentiful; and neither the prisoner nor his lawyer could say much that weighed against the crushing amount of circumstantial evidence. With a face that might have been cut out of white stone, relentless as death, pitiless as doom, Conway was there as his chief accuser; and when the case was adjourned for that day, the mob poured out, more and more assured that their predictions as to the result were correct.

The trial lasted three days, and with every passing hour the prisoner's case grew darker and darker. It ended at last, as all had said—the jury brought in a verdict of guilty, but with a recommendation to mercy, on account of his youth and respectability. The closing speech of the judge was a touching one; the stylishly-dressed ladies wept copiously as they listened, and felt very sorry for the prisoner, with the stern, moody face, when they heard his sentence—imprisonment for life, with hard labor. It might have been death; but the plea for mercy had been accepted, and it was only imprisonment for life. The prisoner smiled as he heard it, such a strange smile, and turned his eyes intently on his elder brother's cold, white face, but he bowed to the kind old judge, and was led from the court without a word.

Everybody went home to talk about it. The Hazelwoods, never speaking at all, but shrinking from each

other, were driven to theirs. Conway went to his desolate lodgings; but now that his revenge was satiated, a strange restlessness took possession of him—a wish to see and speak to Eugene once more before he left New York, as on the morrow he intended doing, forever. He battled with the desire for awhile, but it was stronger than he; and as dusk was falling over the city, he put on his hat and wandered slowly to the prison. There was a crowd collected round the principal entrance, talking in hushed tones, and with solemn faces.

"What is the matter?" Conway asked, of one of the men near him.

The man looked at him queerly, but without recognizing him.

"A very shocking thing, sir! The young man, Hazelwood, whose trial for murder ended to-day, has just been found dead in his cell. He hung himself, sir, with his pocket-handkerchief to one of the bars of his window. It has been a horrid affair all through, but the end is the most horrid of all."

CHAPTER IX.

A REVELATION.

AMONG the crowd collected round the prison-gate there stood a woman dressed in shabby-genteel mourning. Tall and slight, and youthful of form, as far as might be judged through the large black shawl she wore. A thick black crape veil hid her face, and was gathered close in one small gloved hand, as if she feared the wind might flutter it even for an instant aside.

Conway Hazelwood, moody and self-abstracted, had not seen her, but she had followed him from the house, walked after him stealthily to the prison, and stopping and mingling with the crowd when he stopped, had heard his inquiry and his answer. She could see his face, though he could not discern hers, and she saw his stony and rigid whiteness turn to the livid and ghastly hue of death.

There was a lamp-post near, and he grasped it, as if the earth was reeling under his feet.

"Are you sure?" he asked; and the man stared at him as he heard his hoarse voice, and saw the frightful change in his face.

"The jailer's a cousin of mine, and it was him that found him as dead as a herring, not fifteen minutes ago. Was he any relation of yours, sir?"

The young man did not answer. He turned with long strides and sought the main entrance to the prison, sure of admission and bent on learning the certainty of the ghastly news he had just heard.

The woman in mourning watched him out of sight, and then flitted away in the gathering gloom of the evening—a darker shadow among the shadows. She entered a stationer's shop and purchased pen, ink and paper.

"I have a letter to write before I go home," she said to the clerk, in a soft, sweet voice and the tone of a lady, "will you be kind enough to let me write it here?"

"Certainly, madam," the young man said, looking admiringly at the beautiful white hand on the counter, and from it curiously to the hidden face. "Step this way, if you please."

There was a desk in a distant corner, under the jets of gas. The lady seated herself at it and began to write, but, to the deep disappointment of the polite shopkeeper, without ever raising the odious screen.

"Oh, hang the veil!" cried the clerk, inwardly. "Why don't she put the confounded thing up? It's all very well for old and ugly, and pockmarked females to wear 'em, but no woman with such a hand as she's got can be anything else than stunning. Last *Mercury* ma'am—five cents, if you please."

The winding up of his soliloquy was addressed to a customer; and as he turned round after serving her, he saw the veiled lady descend from the desk with a note, folded and sealed, in her hand.

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said the sweet voice; "good evening."

The gas was lit in the streets as the woman in black rapidly retraced her steps. She stopped a moment to look at the gloomy prison as she went by. There was a throng about the gate still, discussing the frightful end of the

tragedy; but she spoke to no one, and hurried on again, till she came to the lodgings of Conway Hazelwood. Her ring at the door-bell was answered by a tidy maid-servant.

"Mr. Hazelwood boards here?" she asked.

"Yes'm."

"Is he at home?"

"No'm."

"Will you please give him this letter as soon as he comes?"

"Yes'm; but hadn't you better step in and wait. He'll be in directly, and you mayn't see him again, because he's going to England in the steamer to-morrow."

"No," replied the soft voice behind the veil; "I do not wish to see him. Give him the letter as soon as he arrives. Good night."

She was gone as she spoke—not a second too soon, if, as she said, she did not wish to meet Mr. Hazelwood; for scarcely had she turned the next corner, when his tall form and pale face confronted the girl like a ghost!

"A letter for you, sir," she said, presenting the document; "a lady in black, which she has just gone this minute, left it, and said it was to be given as soon as you come in. Will you come down to tea, sir, or will I fetch it up?"

"I do not wish any," he said, taking the letter, and passing up-stairs to his room without looking at it.

A lighted lamp stood on a littered table; but the whole room was in a litter, for that matter, with evident preparations for a journey. Opened trunks, half-packed valises, clothes, books, and all sorts of miscellany strewn over the carpet in a heap. Indifferently enough he glanced at the superscription of the letter as he paused before the lamp, but in that one glance all indifference vanished. It was dainty enough chirography, delicate but decided—writing that had character in it—but nothing one would think to make him start as if a ball had struck him. In an instant he had torn it open, and was literally devouring its contents. His face altered so as he read that you would scarce have known it; it had been harder than marble, as cold, as rigid, as expressionless ever since that fatal morning on which he had found his bride dead and his brother guilty of that death. Through the trial, the sentence, it had retained its terrible calm; even the change that had

come over it when he heard of that brother's horrible end, and later, when he had looked on the purple and distorted face of the suicide in his prison cell, was nothing to the ghastly change that came now. It dropped from his hand as he finished; and convulsed, like one in an epileptic fit, he sunk into the nearest chair, great beads of dark, cold sweat standing on his brow. It did not last long; these moments of mortal agony mercifully never do. A decanter of brandy stood on the table; he poured out a large glassful of the raw strong liquor, and drained it, as if it had been water. The crumpled letter lay at his feet; he picked it up, and with the same ghastly face read it over again. It was brief, but horrible enough to produce even a more awful result than it had done, and ran thus:

"My Dear Husband:—As I have a strong inward conviction I am the only woman alive who now, or at any future time, will ever have any right to call you by that endearing name, I so address you, notwithstanding your conduct of late has been rather unhusbandlike—even unkind. I do not mean to reproach you, my dear Conway, but reflect on the feelings of a tender mother, whose offspring are torn from her maternal bosom, as mine have been, in the dead of night, by a man in a cloak, named Captain Forrest, who stole in, like any low-bred burglar, through the window of my miserable house, and carried them off. I understand that twin-infants found their way to your father's aristocratic city abode shortly after, which satisfies me that Captain Forrest meant well by the children, whatever he might do by the bereaved mother. Then, my dear Conway, was it not still more unkind of you to desert me to starvation in the city streets? I will do you the justice that you left me free to choose—and resolved to take unto yourself a younger and richer, I was about to say fairer bride—but that would not be true—and 'truth ever lovely,' etc., has been my motto through life. Even my saintly endurance was not proof against this 'last unkindest cut of all.' I resolved, at all hazards, to save you from the shocking sin of bigamy, and forsaking my beloved mother in her old age, came to New York, and—prevented it! How? you ask. No matter. Your wife is a clever woman, as you long ago learned, my Conway, as she hopes to give you still more convincing proofs

yet before she quits this dying world. Learn, though, oh, wise young judge, oh, second Cain! that Eugene Hazelwood was innocent of the crime for which he was tried and condemned. It was I who followed you that memorable night down Broadway; it was I who administered the poisoned draught to the pretty bride; it was I who laid a snare into which, had you fallen, you might have stood in the criminal dock in your brother's place. It was I who did it all, and I glory in what I have done. More. Conway Hazelwood, I will hunt you down to your dying day. I will be your evil genius through life; and if the tales of preachers be true, at the judgment-seat, on the last great day, I will be your deadliest accuser for the wrong you have done me. Your brother is dead by his own hand, but his blood cries aloud for vengeance on you. You depart to-morrow for foreign lands. Heaven speed you on your journey! Perhaps, after reading this, you may take it into your head to look for me. Well, my dear Conway, look for last winter's snow, for last summer's partridges, and when you have found them, then you may stand a chance of discovering your affectionate wife,

"ROSE HAZELWOOD."

It dropped from his paralyzed hand the second time, this terrible letter; and he sat staring straight before him, seeing nothing, but with every word he had read burning into his brain like fire. He never for a moment doubted its truth—he knew the writer of that letter too well—and his dead brother's blood was on his head.

There was a knock at his door. How long he had sat, his eyes fixed in that unearthly glare, he could not tell—ages, it seemed to him; but at the knock, loudly repeated, he started up to a vivid consciousness of the outer world, and opened his door. It was his landlady, and the good woman recoiled with a scream at sight of him.

"Good gracious me, Mr. Hazelwood, what ever's the matter with you? You look as if you'd been dead and dug up again!"

He did not speak; he only stood looking down at her, waiting for what she had to say.

"It's a message, sir, from your father; a servant brought it, and has gone away again. He wants to see you before

you leave; and if you like, sir, I'll pack up these here things against you come back—shall I?"

"Yes—what is the hour? I have let my watch run down."

"Just gone ten, sir, by the city hall. Will you be back to-night?"

"Yes."

His landlady looked at him curiously, his face and voice were so different from the face and voice of her lodger. The letter lay on the ground; he picked it up, folded it, put it in his pocket, put on his hat, and went out.

"Won't you take your overcoat, Mr. Hazelwood?" his landlady cried, after him; but he never heard her question, and was out in the dark, chill night, walking, seeing, feeling like a man in a dreadful dream.

"I do believe his trouble, and the disgrace that has fallen on his family, have turned his brain, poor young gentleman!" the good woman thought, "and no wonder, I'm sure! Here's everything higgledy-piggledy over the floor; it will take me a good two hours to fix them; but no odds, he pays like a prince."

The shutters were closed, the blinds lowered, and there was crape on the door of the Hazelwood mansion. The stillness of death reigned within, and the servant who opened the door and led him up to his father's room stepped on tiptoe, and spoke below his breath.

"He has never lifted his head, or left his bedroom, or spoke a word, since he heard this evening about Mr. Eugene," the man whispered, "except to tell me to send for you. I'll go in ahead, sir, and let him know you've come."

Conway stood in the hall without, but the man was back directly.

"You're to go in, sir, he says; he is all alone."

The young man entered his father's chamber. Dimly lighted by a shaded lamp and a dying coal fire, that stricken father sat in a large easy-chair, his dressing-gown hanging loosely about him, his hands lying listless on his knees, his eyes fixed in a dull, dreamy stare on the red embers.

A few weeks ago he had been a strong, hale, upright old man, "frosty but kindly," now he sat bowed to the dust with sorrow and shame, looking twenty years older,

at the least. He looked up piteously at his elder son now.

"Oh, Conway," he cried, "is it true?"

"It is quite true."

He put one trembling hand up over his face, his whole form quivering. The young man stood leaning against the mantel and looking gloomily in the fire.

"You sent for me," he said, at last, looking at his father.

Mr. Hazelwood dropped the hand covering his face, and looked up.

"Yes, Conway—you are going away, and I will never see you again! Oh, Conway, my boy! my heart is broken!"

"And it is I who have done it!"

"You! No, Conway—you could scarcely have acted otherwise than you did, believing him guilty——"

Conway lifted his hand to interpose:

"I believe it no longer! Eugene never murdered Helen Thornton!"

"Conway!"

"I am speaking the truth—don't look as if you thought me mad. Eugene Hazelwood died an innocent man!"

"My God! and you—you were his accuser!"

"I know it! his blood is on my head, and—on that of one other—a devil in human form. Yes, recoil from me, father, look on me with horror, for through me he perished. I have but one excuse to offer in palliation—I believed him guilty when I did it."

His father sat looking at him, his lips apart, his eyes distended, perfectly speechless.

"It is hardly two hours ago since I discovered the horrible mistake that has been made; how I discovered it, or who the real criminal is, I cannot tell. Suffice it to say, Eugene died guiltless of the crime of murder—more than I shall ever be able to say, for his death lies at my door."

Still Mr. Hazelwood did not speak, could not speak—he only sat, his face rigid in that white horror.

"I have come here to-night to tell you this, father," the deep, stern tones of Conway went on, "and to make still another revelation before I leave my native land forever. It concerns these children, infants left here so mysteriously on Christmas eve. Father, these children are mine."

There was a gasping cry from the old man in the chair, but Conway never took his gloomy eyes off the fire.

"The letter found with them spoke the truth; that letter was written by me. They are your grandchildren; I have been married for nearly three years. I stole them from their mother, no matter for what reason, and brought them here. I leave them in your care. I know you will provide for their future, for it is not probable they will ever know a father's care. And now, sir, farewell. I cannot ask your forgiveness for what I have done; the only atonement I can make is, to quit the home I have desolated forever. I go to-night—farewell, father; if you cannot bless, try not to curse, your first-born son!"

He was gone even while spoke. The nursery was on his way to the staircase, and the door standing ajar as he passed; he went in. All was quiet there; on a low French bed with snowy draperies the twins lay asleep; their long black curls tossed over the pillows, their cheeks flushed, their fat, white arms interlaced in their slumbers. In a crib, at a short distance, Mrs. Wood's little daughter, Hazel, was sleeping, too; and the nursery-maid, Jane, had fallen into the same state, at a table, over her work. A more perfect picture of innocence and peace could hardly be imagined; and Conway Hazelwood, on his way to voluntary exile, stood long bending over the bed, gazing at the two pretty rosy faces therein. His thoughts could hardly have been pleasant ones; for his face was dark as the grave, as he looked down with knitted brows and compressed lips at his sleeping children.

He turned away at last as Jane, with a loud yawn, gave symptoms of waking up; and going slowly down-stairs, went out of the front door without encountering any one, and Conway Hazelwood had left his father's house forever!

Half an hour after, Mrs. Wood, entering her brother's room, found him lying on his face on the floor, as cold and lifeless as a dead man.

CHAPTER X.

STOLEN.

THE golden glory of a June afternoon streaming through the wide-open doors and windows of a pleasant old farmhouse, half buried in a tangled wilderness of grape-vines and sweetbrier, fell in brilliant squares of luster on the pretty medallion carpet, rosewood furniture, and inlaid tables of a charming little sitting-room. The lace-covered front windows, through which the June breezes blew the odors of the sweetbrier and rose-bushes around it, overlooked the one long, dusty, straggling street of a quiet country village; and the windows opposite, filled with flower-pots and canary cages, looked out on a flowing river, flashing and glittering in the summer sunlight. So still was the room in the sultry noon stillness that the rustling of the vines and the shrill singing of the canaries sounded preternaturally loud, and joined in a drowsy chorus with the buzzing of the flies and the chirping of the grasshoppers without. The quiet room had but one occupant: near an open piano, in a low rocking-chair —that great American institution—swinging backward and forward, a young lady sat, with a book in her hand. A very young lady, looking fifteen or thereabouts, with pretty, delicate features, a skin of snowy fairness, a profusion of flaxen hair, worn in a net; small, restless, light-blue eyes, shifting but keen, under eyebrows so light as to be scarcely worth mentioning. The young lady was dressed in deep mourning, its sable hues setting off her blonde beauty like a pearl incased in jet. Her book was "Corinne"; and so absorbed was she in its pages that she did not hear the garden gate open, nor the tread of a man's foot coming up the graveled path. A sharp double-knock, like a postman's, at the open front door, startled her at last, and rising, she went out to the hall. A little dark thin man, wearing spectacles and a suit of dingy black, stood there, and the young lady opened her small blue eyes in astonishment at sight of him.

"Doctor Lance?"

The little man nodded grimly.

"You're Una, eh? I remember your face very well! How d'ye do? Anybody besides you in the house?"

"Aunt Emily has gone out somewhere, but she will be here in a moment. Please to walk in and sit down."

Doctor Lance promptly accepting Miss Forest's polite invitation, followed her into the pretty sitting-room, and ensconced himself in an armchair beside the window.

"So you've all been in trouble since I left New York, eh? How long is it since your uncle died?"

Una produced a handkerchief, bordered an inch deep with black, and applied it to her eyes.

"He died a fortnight after—after Eugene. He was found on the floor of his room that night in a fit, and never rose from his bed afterward." Una's voice was lost in a sob. Doctor Lance sat and eyed her like a stoic.

"He made a will, eh? Did he make a will?"

"Yes, sir—the day before he died."

"He died sure, then! Who'd have thought it?" said Dr. Lance, parenthetically, no way discomposed by Una's tears. "How did he leave his property?"

Una looked at him, rather at a loss how to answer. Dr. Lance put it more directly.

"Did he leave you anything, Miss Una?"

"Yes, sir—the sum of five thousand dollars when I come of age."

"He did, eh? Not bad, considering he was not a rich man. What did he leave Mrs. Wood?"

"An annuity for her lifetime, and this farm; both, with the addition of three thousand dollars, to become Hazel's at her mother's death."

"Very liberal, very! But Hazelwood always had his hand in his pocket for his poor relations; and a thankless set they were! All the rest goes to his two sons, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, sir. There were two other legacies, besides what was left to the old servants."

"Two other legacies, eh? For whom?"

Una dropped her pocket-handkerchief, and fixed her shifting blue eyes on the keen, dark face.

"Do you remember last Christmas eve, sir? You were

at our house, you know, and saw the two children left in the hall."

"Of course. You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, sir. Uncle left them five thousand dollars each, to be paid them on attaining their majority, and strict directions about their education; and you, sir, are appointed their guardian."

Doctor Lance never swore; he was an instructor of youth; but he looked at this last announcement as if he would like to. His dark brows knit portentously, and his thin lips puckered up.

"What did you say? Appointed me their guardian! I guardian over two little girls?"

"Over three, sir, for Hazel is included. Uncle wished to see you very much before he died, but you had gone to Cuba; and as we came here immediately after, Aunt Emily could not find out whether you had returned or not, and that is the reason you did not hear all this sooner."

Anything grimmer than Doctor Lance's face the sun never shone on. Una thought of pictures she had seen of South Sea idols, and made up her mind the austere little professor might have sat as a model for these works of art. He jumped up from his chair, thrust his hands behind him, and began an excited promenade up and down the carpet.

"It's the most preposterous thing I ever heard of, making me guardian to a parcel of flighty, silly, female fools—for I never knew a young girl yet who wasn't a fool—and the Hazelwoods the greatest fools of all! If I had been with Hugh Hazelwood, I should have positively refused it. The man must have been mad! Where were his own sons, young lady, that I had to be lugged into the matter?" demanded the professor, turning suddenly, not to say fiercely, on Miss Forest.

"Conway was away, sir, to Europe, and none knew his address. Arthur, you know, was out of the question——"

"I should think so. No more brains than a baboon; but then brains never were a characteristic of the family. I thought Eugene, by some accident, had got a few, until he proved himself as great a ninny as the rest. Where are these confounded— I mean where are these children? If I am to be tormented by them for the rest of my life, it strikes me it is time I saw them!"

Una rose and looked out.

"They were in the garden, with their nurse, a short time ago, sir. Shall I go in search of them?"

Doctor Lance nodded shortly, and took a pinch of snuff. As Una crossed the hall, she met her aunt coming in.

"Doctor Lance is in the sitting-room, auntie, and in such a fume! You had better go in and talk to him; he has sent me after the children; and there they are, rolling about like little pigs, in the dust of the road! Jane deserves to get her ears boxed!"

Rolling about the three little ones certainly were, in a cloud of dust in the middle of the road; their frocks, that had been of spotless white that morning, anything but white now; laughing, screaming, in the glee of childhood, and tumbling over each other, as Una said, like three little pigs.

"Pretty objects they'll be for this amiable guardian to contemplate! Where can Jane be? Why——"

Una, leaning over the wooden gate, stopped suddenly at the sight that met her eyes. A tall willow, whose long branches trailed on the grass, was near the gate, and, under its agreeable shade, Miss Janet sat, very much at her ease, and totally indifferent to the very existence of her obstreperous charges. Not alone, either: a queer figure sat beside her, holding her hand, and peering intently in her palm—the figure of an old woman, miserably clad, and ugly enough to be one of the witches in "Macbeth."

"Fortune-telling, eh?" said Una, catching Doctor Lance's sharp interrogative; "I have seen that hideous old woman lurking about here often within the last week, and she came begging to the kitchen door yesterday. Here, Jane!"

Jane started up with a very red and guilty face at sight of the young lady.

"Look at those children!" said Una. "Are they not nice objects, with mud and dust, by this time? You're a pretty nurse, and a fine hand to be trusted out of sight! I suppose this is the way they are always taken care of when they are sent out with you."

"I can't help it," said Jane, rather sulkily. "I can't do nothing with that little limb, Miss Hazel. She'll roll in the dirt, in spite of all the nurses from here to Jericho."

"Very well, we will see what her mother will say when

I tell her you spend your time gadding with old witches, instead of minding your work. Take them into the room, and think yourself lucky if you are not discharged at the end of the month."

Jane, with a very sulky face, went over and dragged Mrs. Wood's offspring, with no gentle jerk, out of the dirt, while the old spaewife hobbled up to the gate and stood peering up in Miss Forest's face.

"Let me tell your fortune, my pretty lady," she said, holding out her withered hand; "there must be something very good in the future for the owner of so handsome a face."

Una laughed a mocking little laugh.

"You can flatter better than you can speer fortunes, old lady, I fancy. Are your hands clean? No; then I guess I won't mind having my fortune told. Jane! I told you to take those children into the house."

As Jane went through the gate with her charges, one of whom—Miss Hazel—was kicking, and screaming, and plunging manfully to get free, Una saw her exchange a meaning glance with the old woman. The young lady read the glance aright; it said: "We have been interrupted, but I will come again; wait!" and the fortune-teller understood, and nodded assent.

"You had better not be loitering around here, old woman," said Una, sharply, turning after Jane into the house. "We don't want our servants' heads turned with your nonsense. Take my advice, and go somewhere else!"

Without waiting to see whether she were obeyed or not, Miss Forest went back to the house, and the old woman stood looking after the slight girlish figure, with the flaxen hair and the mourning dress.

"Like the rest! like the rest!" she muttered. "Cold-blooded, cruel, and crafty! Ah! they're a bad lot—a bad lot, every one of these Hazelwoods, young and old!"

In the hall, Una met Jane, still fighting with Hazel, whose kicks and plunging were more violent than ever.

"Wash their faces and comb their hair, and put on clean dresses, and then fetch them into the sitting-room," were her orders. "There's a gentleman there wants to see them. Hazel, be good and you shall have some cake and jam, by and by!"

Little Miss Wood, who was a great gourmand, loving

cake and jam better than anything earthly, except mischief, looked up at this, vividly interested:

"Cake and jam! a whole lot, Cousin Una?"

"Yes, a whole lot, if you are a good girl, and let Jane wash and dress you, and behave pretty in the sitting-room. Now, go away."

Miss Hazel at once wilted down and consented to be led off, while Una went toward the sitting-room. The sound of her own name caught her ear through the partly open door, and she stopped to—well, to listen. Mrs. Wood was speaking, with little tearful sniffs for punctuation-marks.

"Yes, Doctor Lance, as you say, it is a very queer will, leaving so much to these two foundlings as to his own flesh and blood; but then poor dear Hugh always was odd and romantic, and fond of reading novels, and I dare say he took his sentimental notions from them. Five thousand apiece he left them, and if either one dies before the other, the survivor gets her portion, too!"

"Melodramatic, very!" said the displeased tones of the little professor. "No man in his senses should have made such a will."

"And, if both die before attaining their majority, the ten thousand is to be divided equally between my Hazel and Una Forest. He left, besides, a letter, with half a dozen seals on it, for these twins, to be given them the day they are twenty-one, or should either one get married before that age, to be given her the day before the wedding."

"Melodramatic again! You have found out nothing more about those twins, I suppose?"

"Nothing at all; and do you know, Doctor Lance, ever since I heard the will, I have been thinking that perhaps the note we found with them told the truth, and that they really and truly were poor Hugh's grandchildren."

"I don't doubt it in the least," said Doctor Lance, with a sardonic snort; "never did, from the first. Any one with eyes in their head could see the Hazelwood paternity in those small faces! Well, my girl, where are the children?"

This last question was addressed to Una, who entered at the moment.

"Coming, sir; their nurse will fetch them in directly. Oh, there's the postman!"

There was a loud knock at the front door. Una ran out and returned with a single letter.

"It's for you, auntie, and in Arthur's writing! Something wonderful must have happened to make that lazy fellow write."

Something wonderful evidently had happened; for, as Mrs. Wood tore it open, and read it without ceremony, on the spot, she uttered a shrill scream of astonishment.

"Good gracious, auntie! what is it?" cried the startled Una; "has anything befallen Arthur or——"

"Hold your tongue, Una, will you"—exclaimed Mrs. Wood, in a high state of excitement—"until I read it again! It seems a great deal too good to be true!"

"Oh, it's not bad news, then!" said Una, looking relieved, while Mrs. Wood read it eagerly again, with a face all aglow with surprise and delight.

"Well, I do declare; such a piece of good fortune never was heard of!" was her cry at the end of the second perusal. "Here, Doctor Lance, read it and see what he says."

Doctor Lance took the letter, adjusted his spectacles, and read it aloud.

"DEAR AUNT:—There has just been a letter from England, addressed to my father, announcing, the death of his cousin, Mark Hazelwood, of Hazelwood, County Essex. The letter comes from the family solicitor, inviting my father, as next of kin, to come and take possession of the estate, or, in case of his decease, his eldest son, or next heir. Conway being absent, and no news of his whereabouts, I start immediately for England to attend to matters, and try and discover Conway. I shall write to you from there. Yours, A. HAZELWOOD."

"And in case he does not find Conway, he is heir himself to one of the finest estates in the country," said Dr. Lance, folding the letter. "I don't think Mr. Arthur will die broken-hearted if his crack-skulled elder brother never turns up."

"I never heard of such a piece of luck in all my days," said Mrs. Wood. "I wish he would send for me to keep house for him. They say it's a beautiful place, and I always did want to visit old England."

"Conway is the heir, and after him his children," said

Doctor Lance; "so, if these twins should actually happen to be— Oh, here they are!"

Jane entered with Miss Hazel Wood (happily-chosen name) and the Misses Rosamond and Evangeline Starr; all three with faces rosy and shining from the combined effects of good health and a recent severe application of soap and water.

Doctor Lance took very little notice of Hazel, but he bent his black brows and puckered up his lips in his peculiar way, as he looked keenly at the twins.

"The black eyes and curls, the fresh complexion, sanguine temperament and well-cut features of Conway," he said, reflectively. "Madam, these little girls will one day be the heiresses of the Hazelwoods. There, nurse, you may take them away again!"

"I want the cake, Una! I sha'n't go without the cake!" cried out Hazel, as she was being led away; and Una followed to keep her promise.

Doctor Lance took his hat to go, when they left the room, declining Mrs. Wood's pressing invitation to stay for tea.

"I am going to New York by the five o'clock train, and must start for the depot at once. If I have time I will run down in the course of a few weeks to see how you and my wards—confound them!—are getting on. Good day!"

Mrs. Wood escorted him out of doors, watched him out of sight, and then went back to find Una and talk over the last wonderful event.

"What a romantic thing it would be, Una, if these twins should indeed turn out to be Conway's children, and after awhile come to inherit all his great estate! It would be like a story in a novel—wouldn't it now?"

Una shrugged her shoulders and smiled contemptuously.

"And such things only happen in novels, auntie! I dare say they belong to some washerwoman, who stole the fine clothes she sent them here in. There they are now, and Hazel's tearing their hair out in handfuls, while Jane's looking for——"

"For what?" said Mrs. Wood, looking out into the garden, where the nurse and her charges were disporting themselves in the sunshine.

"For what she won't find," said Una, turning to leave the room; "for an old woman I sent about her business!

I must go and practice now, or my music-teacher will read me a lecture the next time she comes."

Una went down to the piano and commenced her practicing, dreaming not that Jane and the old woman were at that very moment in close and confidential confab; while Hazel Wood, all unheeded, was making the life of the twins a misery to them by her tormenting pranks. Three quarters of an hour after, while she was deep in the "Wedding March," a piercing shriek, and then another and another, from the garden made her spring from the music-stool, aghast. A flying figure, with wild eyes and terror-stricken face, holding a child in each arm, tore up the gravel walk and into the hall, still screaming in wildest terror. It was Jane with Hazel and one of the twins, and both were echoing her frantic shrieks.

"For Heaven's sake, what is the matter?" Una cried. "Where's the other child?"

"Oh, Miss Una! she's gone! she's gone!" shrieked Jane; she's lost forever!"

"Lost! What do you mean? Have you gone mad?"

"Oh, Miss Una! it was that old woman! Oh, what shall I do? Oh, Miss Una! the child's stole!"

"Stolen! Whatever do you mean? Has that wretched old hag kidnapped——"

"Yes, Miss Una! she's kidnapped one of the twins, while I came up the back way to the house for some money to pay her! Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do!"

"It's Rosie, Rosie," piped the small voice of Hazel, "it's Rosie she took; and she wanted to take Evey, too, only she couldn't carry both."

Una stood still, a strange light in her eyes, a strange compression about her lips. Jane's cry still rung out while she twisted her hair as in utter terror.

"Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do! Oh, Miss Una, whatever shall I do!"

Her cries had brought the rest of the household to the spot by this time, and Una spoke at last.

"Search must be made for the old wretch, at once, in every direction; crying and twisting your fingers won't mend matters now! And I hope," was the thought in her heart, "that it never will be mended! It's the very best thing that could have happened."

CHAPTER XI.

EVE.

FIFTEEN years! Don't start, dear, patient reader; you have waded with me through the last ten chapters, and in my deep gratitude for that, I will not afflict you with any moralizing on the joys and sorrows, the deaths and births, the ups and downs that are sure to checker this changeful and feverish life of ours in fifteen long years. Long! yes, a long time to look forward to—very, very short to look back upon; and now, coming with me, you will look upon a new scene, a little less dark and tragic than those we have gazed on heretofore.

It is a June evening; and fifteen years lie between it and that other June evening, on which Una Forest's blue eyes glittered triumphantly, looking out on the dusty highroad, in search of the stolen child. The sky is as blue and cloudless, but the sinking sun is shining on another village, many a mile away. No thrifty Quaker village this, with its corner-groceries, its busy railway-station, its freshly-painted meeting-houses, and mechanics' institutes, with its streets all life and bustle, and the sign of the almighty dollar everywhere. No; this voiceless village lies under the shadow of giant pines and towering tamaracs, hushed in stagnant stillness; it has quaint little cottages with gardens in front, where purple lilacs and golden laburnums bloom; and the women who gossip at garden-gates, with long gold earrings dangling under the silk handkerchiefs knotted under their chins, speak a glibber and more vivacious language than you ever hear "down East." A queer-looking old stone church, and a queer-looking old stone convent, both surmounted by tall crosses, bespeak the faith of the inhabitants. It is the Church and the Convent of the Holy Cross; the village itself is called St. Croix; the river sparkling in the distance is the beautiful St. Lawrence; and you and I are in Lower Canada.

The Convent of the Holy Cross, whose bell is now ring-

ing the Evening Angelus, stands on a hillside at some distance from the village. There is only one other dwelling near it—a building as large as itself, much more modern in structure, with extensive and beautiful grounds around it, and inclosed by a high wall. The wall and the massive iron gates have rather the look of a prison, and a prison it is to some of its inmates; but on the silver door-plate you will find a different story: "*Madame Moreau, Pensionnat des Desmoiselles.*" The most stylish and exclusive of country schools, fifty pupils only admitted, as its rules tell you—thirty boarders, and twenty *externes* as day-scholars. There are some wealthy Canadian and English families in St. Croix, and these day-scholars are their children. The boarders come from all parts—England, the United States, the Provinces, but chiefly from Montreal. There are half a dozen female teachers who live in the *pensionnat*, besides four or five professors, of the sterner sex, who come and go to give lessons. These gentlemen come from Montreal—it is near enough to the city for that—the cars take them in less than two hours; and nothing masculine, with the exception of an overgrown tomcat, resides within its sanctified walls, consecrated by the presence of *jeunes filles*, innocence, and all that sort of thing. Jean Baptiste, the surly old gardener, sleeps in his lodge, near the entrance-gates, with his son Amadee, who acts as porter; and Loup, the large Canadian wolf-hound, has his kennel under the tamaracs. Madame is a widow, a Parisienne, and drags out a dreary existence in Canada, because she is making her fortune, and intends to go back by and by to belle Paris to spend it and her old age in luxury.

The playground of the school is behind the house; a large place, with a gymnasium, lots of swings, and with benches under the trees for the weary ones to rest. Madame calls it the "*cour de derrière.*" She never speaks English, and French is the language of the school—the only language, in fact, the majority of its pupils can speak. They try English now and then; but they mince and munch the speech of Albion fearfully through their Canadian teeth, and fall back on their own oily and glib French, with a "*Dieu merci!*" of ineffable relief.

There is life enough in the *cour de derrière* now, for the externes have gone home, and the *pensionnaires* are en-

joying their evening *congé* before the supper-bell rings. Thirty girls, of all sorts and sizes, of all ages from eight to twenty, all dressed alike in the week-day school uniform; gray alpaca dress, high-necked and long-sleeved, with neat linen collars and cuffs, and black-silk aprons with cunning pockets. All sorts of girls, tall and short, pretty and ugly; girls with curls, girls with braids, girls with nets; and girls with their hair cropped short, otherwise "shingled." You may know the Canadians by their dark skin, their black eyes, and tarry tresses; the English and Americans by their fairer complexions and lighter hair and eyes; but among the tints the "brune" decidedly predominates over the blonde. Some are developing their muscle at the gymnasium; some are swinging; some have skipping ropes; some are playing "Prisoner's Base;" some are dancing; some are singing; some are in groups, talking; all are united in one thing, making as much noise as they can, and deafening the tympanums of teachers who are overseeing the uproarious mass.

All but one. Apart from all the rest of the tumultuous herd, under the feathery branches of a tall tamarac, a girl is standing alone, leaning against the tree, and watching the sunset with her heart in her eyes. She is not a Canadienne, though no Canadienne ever had eyes more gloriously dark and luminous, nor more shining raven ringlets than those falling loose half way to her waist. A beautiful face, so young, so fresh, so blooming, the oval cheeks aglow with health, the pretty mouth of scarlet bloom, the black, arching eyebrows, nearly meeting above the aquiline nose, the broad, thoughtful brow, and the rounded chin, fair and full of character. A beautiful face, proud and spirited—you could see that by the lofty way it was carried; a beautiful form, light, slender, and girlish, as became its owner's sixteen years; tall for that age, too; and the hand playing with the green branches dainty enough to be Hebe's own. She wore the sober uniform of the school, but it became her, as anything must have become such a figure and face. She had a nickname in school, "La Princesse," and she looked a princess to her finger-tips. A portfolio lay at her feet; with pencils and brushes she had been sketching the sunset, but was only thinking now.

"Eve! Eve Hazelwood! I say, Eve, where are you?" a shrill falsetto voice cried, in English.

It aroused the girl from her reverie, and she looked around.

A plump little damsel, with rosy cheeks, bright, brown eyes, like a bird's, and two long braided pigtails streaming down her back, had doubled up a fat little fist like a trumpet, and was shouting through it.

"*Me voici!*" said the young lady with the black ringlets, in a clear, sweet voice. "Here, Hazel; under the tamaracs."

"And what are you doing under the tamaracs? At your everlasting drawing, I suppose?" said the plump young lady, who, though three years the senior of her companion, looked three years the junior, and certainly was that many years her junior in sense.

"No, *ma chère;* only thinking."

Hazel Wood, no longer a child of three, but a young lady of eighteen, flung herself on the grass, and looked up in her companion's face.

"Thinking's something I despise, and wouldn't be guilty of it at any price. You had better look out, Eve, or all the blood will go to your head, and you'll die of apoplexy, or a rush of ideas to the brain. What were you ruminating on now, pray?—Greek verbs or Hebrew declensions, or to-morrow's proposition in Algebra, or the end of the world, or what we are going to have for supper, or——"

"There! that's enough! Nothing of the sort. I was just thinking how swiftly time flies."

"You solemn old ninny! I knew it was something dismal! You and What's-his-name, Diogenes, ought to have hung out in the same tub. Swiftly time flies, indeed! Every day's like a month in this stupid old barrack!"

"Do you know what day this is, Hazel?"

"Let's see! To-morrow's half holiday, and we got clean clothes this morning, so it must be Wednesday."

"I didn't mean that—the day of the month?"

"Oh? then I haven't the first idea. My worst enemy never can accuse me of knowing whether it's the first or the last."

"Shall I tell you? It's the twenty-ninth of June, and the anniversary of our coming here. Just six years to-day since you and I came here first."

"And we are likely to stay here six more, for all I can

see to the contrary. I declare, I am growing an old maid in this place, and no prospect of leaving it! That old savage, Doctor Lance, ought to be ashamed of himself, keeping us here just to be out of the way! A pretty guardian he is! and a pretty relation Mr. Arthur Hazelwood is, rolling in splendor in England, and leaving us here to go melancholy mad if we choose! I tell you what it is, Eve, I'm getting desperate, and shall do something shortly that will shake society to its utmost foundations, if somebody doesn't take me out of this!"

Eve was silent. The luminous dark eyes were gazing at the sunset, misty and dreamy.

"Six years! How short it seems! It is like yesterday, Hazel, since we stood at your mother's dying bed, and I received from her hand that strange packet, left for me by the uncle whom I never saw."

Hazel's rosy, chubby face sobered suddenly.

"Oh, poor mamma! How we both cried that day! By the way, Eve," jumping with a jerk to another topic, "I wonder how Una Forest gets on in England? I think it was a very shabby trick in cousin Arthur to send for her when mamma died, and leave us poor Babes in the Wood to the mercy of that cross-grained little monster, Doctor Lance, and that tiresome, snuff-taking old Frenchwoman, Madame Moreau. There!"

"Hazel, hush! We have no reason to complain of Doctor Lance. He is rather crabbed, I allow; but he means well, and is as good to us as it is in his nature to be to any one. No one could be kinder than he during my illness this spring."

"I don't believe you were half so ill as you pretended," said Hazel, testily. "It was all a ruse to get back to New York and enjoy yourself. Dear, delightful New York! I would sham sick myself to get back there; but where's the use? Nobody will believe me while my cheeks keep so horrid red, and my appetite continues so powerful? What blessed times we used to have promenading Broadway every afternoon, and will have again, when vacation comes, please the pigs! Well, Kate Schaffer! What do you want?"

"I know what you want, Miss Hazel Wood," replied Kate Schaffer, a tall, stylish-looking girl, with a dark,

Canadian face, though speaking excellent English, "and that is, a little manners!"

"Oh," said Eve, laughing, "manners and cousin Hazel might be married, for they are no relation."

Miss Hazel, no way discomposed by these left-handed compliments, sat lazily up on the grass.

"Is it near tea-time, Kate? I smelt hot biscuit awhile ago, when I applied my nose to the kitchen donkey-hole, but my prophetic soul is inclined to the notion that Madame has company, and they're not for us."

"Your prophetic soul has hit the right nail on the head, then," said Miss Schaffer. "Madame has company, and you are doomed to the stale bread of everyday existence as usual."

Hazel sighed, and gave a dejected roll over on the grass.

"I have just come from the parlor, though," said Kate, looking at her, "and I've got something for you better than hot biscuit."

"I don't believe it! There's nobody to send me plum-cake, and that's the only thing in this world I do like better."

"Except," said Kate, still eyeing her, "my cousin Paul."

Hazel suddenly sprung up from the grass, as if she had been galvanized. Her eyes dilated, her whole face aglow.

"Oh, Kate! Has Paul come?"

"Ah! I thought that would do it," said Miss Schaffer, coolly. "Paul's better than plum-cake, is he? Oh, yes; he's come, and so has mamma and Monsieur D'Arville; and they're all going to stay and take tea with Madame, and it's for them the hot biscuit are, and you'll never taste them."

But the hot biscuit had lost their attraction. Hazel stood with parted lips, her color coming and going, looking at Kate.

And Kate burst into a laugh.

"Do look at her, Eve! and all about that foppish noodle, Paul Schaffer. The gods forefend that I should fall in love, if it is going to make me act like that. I must go."

She drew out of her pocket a little triangular note, threw it to Hazel, and sauntered off.

In a second, Hazel had torn it open and devoured its contents, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling.

As she looked up in a rapture at its conclusion, she found the dark bright eyes of Eve fixed full upon her.

"Oh, Eve! he wants me to——"

"Well," said Eve, gravely, "he wants you to do what?"

Hazel pouted.

"You're nothing but a stiff old prude! I shan't tell you! Oh, there's the bell! Come to supper."

She flew off as she spoke, like a lapwing, thrusting the note into Love's own post-office—her bosom.

Eve Hazelwood followed more slowly, fell into the rank with the rest, and marched into the *salle à manger*, where a long table was laid for the thirty hungry *pensionnaires* and the six teachers.

After supper, came study; after that, evening reading and prayers; and then the girls went off to their rooms. Every two shared a chamber, and Eve and Hazel had not been separated from the first. Very plainly these *chambres à coucher* were furnished: a painted floor, two small French beds, with hardly room to turn in—but Madame Moreau was of the same opinion as the Iron Duke, that when one begins to turn in bed, it is time to turn out of it—a washstand, table, two chairs, and two trunks.

The room the cousins occupied was on the second floor, and overlooked the playground.

Eve set the lamp she carried on the table, and drew forth slate and pencil to write to-morrow's composition, the subject, "Political Economy."

Hazel did the same; but her pencil only drew fox and geese, and her mind was running on a far sweeter subject than dry "Political Economy."

So they sat opposite each other for an hour, neither speaking a word, until, at the loud ringing of the nine o'clock bell—the signal to extinguish all lights and go to bed—Eve looked up.

"Have you finished?" she asked.

"Yes—no—I don't know," stammered Hazel, waking from her day-dreaming.

"Why, you haven't written a word! Why, Hazel! what have you been about?"

"Oh, it's no odds!" said Hazel, with sublime indifference. "I'll copy somebody else's to-morrow! Let's go to bed!"

"We will have to," said Eve, "for here comes Miss Green for the light."

An under-teacher entered, took the lamp and went out. Eve knelt down, said her prayers, undressed rapidly, and went to bed; but Hazel sat by the window, looking out at the moonlight, and doing something very unusual with her, thinking.

"Do you mean to sit there all night?" demanded Eve, drowsily. "You have got very sentimental all of a sudden, watching the moon."

"I'm studying astronomy—that's all. Never you mind me. I have got very fond of it lately!"

"I should think so! You won't have an eye in your head to-morrow! Go to sleep!"

"Go yourself!" said Hazel, testily, "and don't bother!"

Eve did as directed, and dropped asleep ten minutes after. The convent bell pealing eleven awoke her from a vivid dream of seeing Hazel drowning, and she started up in bed, her heart throbbing.

"Oh, Hazel! I have had such a dream! Are you asleep?"

No, Hazel was not asleep—was not in the room at all! The full midnight moon shining in showed an empty bed, a vacant chair, and an open window.

It all flashed on Eve at once; she rose up and went to the window. Yes, there was a rope-ladder, and there were two figures walking in the moonlight, under the shadows of the trees—one, the tall form of a man: the other, shawled and hooded, Hazel Wood.

Eve went back to her bed, her cheeks burning, her heart throbbing. Ten minutes passed, twenty, half an hour, and then she heard Hazel enter softly, and pause to listen for an instant.

"Good night," Eve heard her breathe softly to some one below, as she shut the window. "She is asleep. Farewell until to-morrow!"

After which Miss Wood retired to rest, but not to sleep. Long after Eve had dropped once more into the innocent and untroubled slumber that rarely comes after sixteen, seldom with boarding-school damsels lasts so long, Hazel was tossing back and forth on her pillow, her heart in a tumult of delicious unrest, and one name ever on her lips:

"Dear, dear, dear Paul!"

"Love not! love not! oh, warning vainly said!"

Very true, Mrs. Norton, and one moth will not take warning by its singed brother, but will flutter round the fiery fascination until its own wings are singed, and it has nothing left to do but drop down and die. And so, Hazel Wood, poor little fool! dream on while you may! You will pass through the fiery ordeal, and your darling Paul will care just as much as the candle does for the moth!

CHAPTER XII.

THE PENSIONNAIRES' FETE.

"EVE!"

"Well?"

"How long have you been up, I should like to know?"

"Half an hour."

Hazel Wood rose upon her elbow in bed with a loud yawn. The morning sunlight, streaming in through the open window, with the matin songs of the birds, and the sweet scents of lilacs and laburnums, fell on Eve Hazelwood, putting the finishing touches to her toilet before the glass. It was a lovely face that glass reflected; the cheeks yet flushed from sleep, her bright dark eyes so starry and lustrous, and the profusion of glittering, jetty ringlets falling, freshly combed, in a shining shower over her shoulders. Hazel showed her appreciation of the picture by another prodigious yawn, and a lazy roll over in bed.

"How doth the little busy bee improve each shining—I say, Eve, what set you up at such an unchristian hour?"

"It is not an unchristian hour. It is half-past five o'clock."

"And what do you call that, I should admire to know? Oh, yaw-w-w! I feel as if I could sleep a week!"

"If people go to bed at proper hours," said the pretty wiseacre before the glass, "they will be able to rise at proper hours, and not want to lie stewing in a hot bed such a lovely morning as this!"

This hint was pretty broad, but Miss Wood never took hints. She tumbled lazily off her couch, and began slowly and with many yawns to dress.

"What noise the birds are making!" she said, with a dissatisfied air. "Is the day fine, Eve?"

Eve opened her black eyes at this question, the little room being fairly flooded with sunlight.

"No, a tempest is raging—don't you see it? Are you sure you are quite awake, Miss Wood?"

"Not so very," said Hazel, rubbing her eyes, "but I'm very glad it's fine. We are going to have the jolliest time to-day, Eve!"

"Jolliest! That's a nice word from a young lady's lips."

"Oh, bother! I'd be sorry to be a young lady! I tell you we are in for heaps of fun before night!"

"Are we?" said Eve, sitting down by the window, where Hazel had sat last night, and taking up her German grammer; "how is that?"

"It's a half-holiday, you know, anyway," said Hazel, vividly interested at once in her subject, "and what's more, it's Kate Schaffer's birthday, and her mamma is going to give a grand *fête champetre* this afternoon, in their grounds, and all the girls Kate likes are to be invited."

"Indeed! Kate said nothing about it yesterday."

"For a very good reason—she knew nothing about it, and does not yet. It was that brought Madame Schaffer here last evening, and Madame Moreau gave permission, of course—catch her refusing the rich Schaffers anything—and Kate is to be told this afternoon!"

Eve fixed her powerful dark eyes on Hazel's radiant face.

"And how did you find it out, may I ask?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Hazel, pettishly, but with the guilty scarlet mounting to her face, "that's my secret! Perhaps I dreamt it, or perhaps a little bird told me, or——"

"Or more likely Mr. Paul Schaffer told you last night."

Hazel suddenly dropped the hair brush she was using, and stood confounded.

"Eve!"

"Oh, I know all about it, my dear! How the note yesterday made the appointment; how you sat up last night at this window watching him until you saw him enter the

grounds; how he supplied you with a rope-ladder; and how you had an interview with him, and got back here about midnight! Don't trouble yourself to tell fibs. I was not asleep, though you thought so!"

"And you stayed awake to play the spy upon me! Eve Hazelwood——"

"You know better than that! I was asleep when you left the room; but I awoke, missed you, found the window open, and made use of my eyes—that is all. What am I to think of such conduct, Cousin Hazel?"

"What you please, Cousin Eve!"

"Are you not ashamed?"

"Not the least!"

One of Eve's feet was beating and excited tattoo on the painted floor, and her cheeks were like rosy flame.

"Hazel, are you engaged to this man?"

"Now, now, Grandmother Grunty, I won't have any of your lecturing. Engaged! fiddlesticks! Can't one enjoy a schoolgirl flirtation without being so dowdyish as to get engaged? You're the greatest goose, Eve Hazelwood, that ever wore crinoline!"

Eve opened her grammar silently; her lips compressed, her cheeks more deeply flushed.

"And now you're cross," broke out Miss Wood, resentfully, who liked her cousin to be in a talking mood, even when she talked to chide. "Now, will you tell me where's the very great crime in what I've done. All schoolgirls flirt, and why shouldn't I?"

"Shoolgirls have no business to flirt, then; least of all, with such men as this Paul Schaffer."

"This Paul Schaffer!" still more resentfully. "Don't you say anything against him, Miss Hazelwood, if you want to be friends with me. You don't know him, and so have no right to speak!"

"It is because I am your friend I do speak. As for knowing, it is true I never saw him; but from what you and his cousin say of him, I judge he is nothing but a vain, conceited coxcomb."

"Nothing of the sort. He may be a little vain, I allow, but then he is as handsome as an angel. If you were good-looking yourself, you would be conceited, too, I dare say!"

Eve smiled a little. She knew perfectly well she was

more than good-looking, but the small sin of vanity was not hers.

"Hazel, take care! You may be sorry some day. If I were you I would have nothing to do with Paul Schaffer."

"Of course you wouldn't," said Hazel, with a sneer, and brushing her brown hair furiously. "Nothing less than a king on his throne, or a hero of a novel, would suit La Princesse. They say the Prince of Wales will visit Canada this summer; perhaps you might condescend to marry him."

Eve smiled again, and lifted her beautiful head with a gesture graceful and proud.

"I am not so sure of that, *ma chère*; certainly I would not if I had no other reason than his being Prince of Wales. Besides," with a laugh, "Paul Shaffer is a German. Would you marry a sourkrout-eating, lager-beer drinking, meerschaum-pipe smoking Dutchman?"

"Queen Victoria married one. I don't pretend to be above my betters."

"Well, please yourself," said Eve, rising at the sound of a bell ringing a rousing reveille to the noisy pupils, "and then you won't die in a pet. Make haste downstairs, or you will be marked 'late,' as usual!"

Hazel had no need to warn Eve not to tell; she knew her too well for that. She did hurry down-stairs, and met the other *pensionnaires* tearing like comets through the corridors, and down stairs to morning prayers, jerking aprons and collars straight as they went. There was no time for further talk; for after prayers came study; after that, breakfast; and the morning play-hour, which followed, was lost to Hazel, who, to her intense annoyance, was called off to practice her last music lesson.

Thursday being a half-holiday, the girls dined at twelve—an hour earlier than usual; and just as the *demi-pensionnaires* were tying on their hats to go home, Madame Moreau, a bland and *débonnaire* Frenchwoman, sailed into the classroom with a mighty rustling of silk flounces, and smiling, announced the delightful fact of the Schaffer *fête*, and that all the young ladies invited by Mademoiselle Schaffer were at liberty to go.

"I want all the girls in our division to go," said Kate, who, used to petting, and all sorts of pleasant surprises from her doting mamma, took the announcement very

coolly, "and, in fact, the whole school, Madame, if you'll let them come."

Madame graciously gave permission, and swept out again; and her departure was the signal for an uproar that would have shamed Babel. Kate Schaffer was seized by dozens of hands, and seemed in imminent danger of being kissed to death.

"There, there, girls! don't smother me!" she impatiently cried, breaking free. "You day-scholars go home, can't you, or you'll never be in time, and the rest of you let me alone! Eve Hazelwood, where are you? I want you."

"What for? to kiss you?" Eve asked, laughing at the din.

Kate made a grimace.

"No, thank you. I have had enough of that. If there is one thing in this world more sickening than another, it is schoolgirl kisses. It is worse than pepperment candy, and that is fit for neither gods nor men. What are you going to wear?"

"White, I suppose. I have nothing else."

"And you know it becomes you. I say, Eve, Professor D'Arville is to be there, and you mustn't cut me out."

"Bah! is he so handsome, then?"

"Like an angel. All the girls are wild about him."

"Oh, I know that. He has been the burden of all their songs ever since my return. Are there to be many gentlemen?"

"Half a dozen only. I know all about it, though mamma thinks I am in a delightful state of ignorance. Monsieur D'Arville," said Kate, reckoning on her fingers, "he's one; Paul Schaffer is two; brother Louis three; and——"

"And there's the dinner bell, that's four. Come along!" cried Hazel Wood, rushing past.

Immediately after dinner, the young ladies flocked up to their rooms to dress, and in half an hour reappeared, *en grande tenue*—which, in English, means in white muslin dresses, streaming blue and rose ribbons, and straw flats. Fairest, where all were more or less fair, Eve Hazelwood stood in their midst; her thin, sunny white dress floating about her, the rosy ribbons less bright than the roses on her cheeks, and all her beautiful curls, veiling

the plump white shoulders, plainly traceable under the gauze.

Two carriages were at the door waiting; and in a high state of bustle, delight and excitement, that we never feel —more's the pity!—after our bread-and-butter days, the *pensionnaires* fluttered in and took their seats. As they drove along the dirty highroad, every cottage gate, door and window were lined with admiring faces, for the pretty schoolgirls were the pride and delight of St. Croix; and there were bowing, and smiling, and throwing of kisses, and waving of handkerchiefs, until they reached the outer gate of the Schaffer mansion. Over the gate there was an arch of evergreens, with the word "Welcome," in letters made of red and white roses; and here the carriages stopped, and their fair inmates alighted. A troop of the village children, with baskets on their arms, went before them, scattering flowers and singing the songs so popular among the *habitans*, "Vive la Canadienne."

"Oh, Kate," Eve Hazelwood cried, as they walked up the broad avenue together, "how charming such a birth-day welcome is, and what it is to have a mother's love! I almost wish I were a Canadienne to-day!"

"I wouldn't be anything else for the world! Look! there's mamma and a whole crowd of ladies and gentlemen over——"

Kate's words were drowned in a storm of music. A band, under a grove of tamaracs, struck up the national anthem of Lower Canada, "*A la Claire Fontaine!*" Monsieur and Madame Schaffer, at the head of a host of guests, came forward to embrace their daughter, and welcome their friends.

"And where is my pet, my beauty, my lovely American rose?" Madame cried, with very French effusion. "Where is my beautiful evening star?"

"Gracious, mamma! don't be so highfalutin! Eve, come here; mamma wants you!"

"You darling child!" Madame exclaimed, kissing her on both cheeks, "I am enraptured at seeing you again. Let me look at you—they told me you were sick, but you are blooming as a June rosebud!"

"I am better, Madame," Eve said, with a little laugh and a vivid blush. "I am quite well again!"

"I don't believe she was sick at all, mamma. It was

only a ruse, as Hazel Wood says, to get back to her dear New York. She likes it ever so much better than Montreal."

"Very bad taste on Mademoiselle's part," said a gentleman on whose arm Madame Schaffer leaned, "noisy, restless place that it is! One stroll down Notre Dame street is worth a dozen Broadway promenades."

"Oh, Monsieur D'Arville, this is the first time you have seen your pupil—your star pupil, also—is it not? How stupid of me! Mademoiselle Hazelwood, your future preceptor, Monsieur D'Arville!"

Eve dropped her eyelashes and bowed. This then was the angel of Miss Kate Schaffer's dreams—strikingly handsome, certainly, with a dark, colorless, creole face; dark, dreamy eyes, half closed, and a little sleepy-looking in repose, but that could open and flash fire, too, when roused, as a second glance would tell you; a low, broad brow; a mouth compressed and a trifle stern; and hands and feet of most lady-like delicacy and smallness. He was not tall, rather under the medium size, and slender and boyish of form. His lack of stature, his half-closed eyes, and regularity of features, gave him a somewhat effeminate appearace at first sight; but Lavater could have read another story in those thin, compressed lips, that arched and quivering nostril, and the flash that now and then leaped out from under his long eyelashes. He spoke with a slight accent, but in excellent English.

"Monsieur is a Canadian, and at liberty to like Notre Dame street; I, an American girl, with leave to adore Broadway. There is no place like it under the sun!"

"Bravo, Eve! you always were a brick, and ready to fight for the land of Washington! How do you find yourself all these ages? Pretty jolly, I hope!"

Eve knew that free and easy voice, and was used to it; but with the dark eyes of Professor D'Arville looking on, it discomfited her for the first time. She turned round good-naturedly, though, to return Louis Schaffer's greeting, and gave the tall, boisterous hobbledehoy to understand she was as jolly as could be expected.

"You look like it! not much like a sick case, eh! Where's Hazel? She's the stunningest girl in the *pension-nat!*"

"There she is with cousin Paul," said Kate; "but

don't you go bothering! She don't want you, I can tell you!"

"All right then!" said easy Louis, strutting off; "there's lots more girls, and I'm going in for a good time among them."

Hazel did not want him. Leaning on the arm of a tall, fashionably-dressed, good-looking young man, she was coming towards them, talking earnestly.

"But she is so pretty, Paul—so very, very pretty, I am afraid you won't care for me after you see Eve."

"My dear little Hazel! don't be a goose! I have heard so much of this fair cousin of yours, that I feel naturally curious to see her—that is all. I shan't like her I know—I never did fancy ice-cream."

"And Eve is a prude—cold, and sensible as a female Solomon! You should have heard her lecture me for meeting you last night!"

"Did she? Give her my compliments the next time she presumes to lecture, and inform her the eleventh commandment is, 'Mind your own business!'"

"Oh, Paul! and you are sure, quite sure you won't like her better than me? She is so pretty, and you admire beauty so much!"

"Bah! 'The girl that all are praising is not the girl for me.' I have seen the Venus Celestis in marble and oil colors, hundreds of times, and I never fell in love with it yet. I tell you I don't like *nonnettes*, and icebergs in white muslin. You, my little wild rose, suit me exactly; and we will leave the cold white lily to—Professor D'Arville."

"And there she is talking to Professor D'Arville, now! Oh, I am so glad, Paul, that you will not like her better than you do me! Come along, and you shall have an introduction."

Paul Schaffer had heard enough of Eve Hazelwood to be prepared to see an extremely pretty girl, but hardly the beautiful face that turned to him as Hazel went through the formula of introduction. Hazel's eyes were upon him, so he betrayed neither surprise nor admiration, but both were in his heart. Hazel's more girlish good looks lost lamentably by contrast with the bright brunette beauty of her queenly cousin.

Louis Schaffer came bustling up, noisy and excited, interrupting his cousin Paul's bland commonplaces.

"I say, Eve! they're getting up the Lanciers; and you're the only girl of the lot that knows how to dance them decently, so you must be my partner. Come along!"

"But Louis——"

"Come along and don't bother!" was Master Louis' polite rejoinder. "You can finish your 'two-handed crack,' as the Scotch call it, with Professor D'Arville when the set's over. Come!"

There was no resisting Louis, who was a whirlwind in his way, and pulled Eve's arm through his without ceremony.

Professor D'Arville, who never was guilty of anything so undignified as dancing, lifted his hat in adieu, and turned away.

"I say, Paul," cried Louis, "we want a *vis-a-vis*. Can't you and Hazel—how d'ye do, Hazel?—can't you two come?"

"Delighted of all things! Are you fond of dancing, Miss Hazelwood!"

Eve, by no means pleased by Louis' rude conduct, replied coldly and briefly, and took her place without speaking to her partner.

Very little her silence troubled Master Louis Schaffer, who went through the quadrille as he did everything else, with all the energy of his body and mind.

Paul Schaffer's languid grace of motion was a striking contrast; but she at whom all his poetry of motion was aimed paid very little attention to him or it, and was heartily glad whenthe set was over and she was rid of Louis.

As she stood leaning against a tree, a few minutes later, listening to the music, Kate Schaffer and Hazel came strutting up, their arms entwined, schoolgirl fashion, round each other's waists.

"Oh, here she is, like Patience on a monument, or anything else that's stupid or dowdyish!" burst forth Hazel; "and Kate and I have been hunting for you all over. Who are you thinking of?—Professor D'Arville?"

"Yes," said Eve, composedly; "of him, and of something else."

"How do you like him, Eve?" asked Kate.

"I have had no time to like or dislike him yet."

"But don't you think him splendid?"

"Perfectly mag, and all that sort of thing?" put in Hazel, "mag" being short for magnificent.

"I think him handsome—yes."

"Oh, do you?" sneered Kate. "It's a wonder *La Princesse* condescends to think even that. You made another acquaintance, didn't you? How do you like Paul?"

"I scarcely saw him. Louis carried me off like a tornado that he is. But I was just thinking, as you two came up, what I always think when I make a new acquaintance, whether or not they will have any influence over my future life."

"*Quien sabe?*" laughed Kate. "What an old philosopher it is."

"Perhaps," said Hazel, with a small sneer, "she thinks they will both fall in love with her or have done so, at first sight!"

"Bah! Can you never talk of anything but falling in love? Come! I have done thinking, and am quite at your service, Mesdemoiselles."

The three went away together; but could they have seen the future, or had Hazel Wood known she had uttered a prophecy, they would hardly have gone with such light hearts to join in the *pensionnaires' fête*.

Be happy to-day, Eve, rejoice while you may, for your happy girlhood is flying from you even at this hour!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF THE FETE.

Professor Claude D'Arville stood leaning against the trunk of a giant pine, whose long arms cast giant shadows on the sunny sward, watching with dreamy, half-closed eyes the picture before him. He looked like an artist, this dark-eyed, thoughtful-browed, classical-featured young Canadian, and he looked what he was—an artist heart and soul. It was a study for an artist, too—the scene on which he gazed—and in after years that very scene, immortalized on canvas, and exhibited at the Academy of Art, in Lon-

don, was one of the first of his paintings to win him fame. The cloudless summer sky over his head, fleeced with billows of downy white, and away in the West, where the sun was sinking, an oriflamme of purple, gold and crimson, the whole western horizon radiant with rosy light. The pines, the tamaracs, and maples reared their tall heads against it; its vivid glory of coloring glittering on their green leaves, as their branches rustled softly in the light breeze, and cast long cool shadows on the grass. The twittering of the not very sweet-voiced but gaudy-colored Canadian birds, the plashing of a fountain near, the crisp chirping of the grasshoppers at his feet, made an undercurrent of melody of their own, audible even above the crashing of the brass-band, and the shouting and vociferous talking and laughing of the emancipated schoolgirls. The pine-tree beside which he stood was an eminence commanding a view of the whole grounds, with its glens and walks, and summer-houses, and cascades, and parterres, and broad lawns, and sloping glades. Up and down these shaded walks the white muslin skirts and blue ribbons of the *pensionnaires* fluttered beside the black dress-coats of Louis Schaffer's fellow-students from one of the Montreal colleges. Kate Schaffer had said there would be half a dozen gentlemen at the *fête;* had she said two dozen, she would have been nearer the mark; but, not being a prophetess, how was she to tell her irrepressible brother intended inviting half his classmates?

On the lawn, some were dancing; among the trees, some were swinging; groups were seated together on the grass having sociable chats; white muslin and black coats turning and twisting everywhere; and the band under the tamaracs still playing "*Vive la Canadienne!*"

Professor D'Arville saw all this, and something else too. Three of those white-muslin angels were coming toward him. One, a plump little damsel, with cheeks like scarlet rose-berries, brown eyes, brown braids, and azure ribbons; one, a gipsy-faced, dashing, young brunette a daughter of the land, and queen of the *fête;* and the third, who walked in the center, swinging her straw hat by its rosy ribbons, her black curls entwined with crimson geranium-blossoms and deep-green leaves.

Ah, Professor D'Arville! artist and beauty-worshiper, is there anything in all you see before you as fair as she?

No Canadian, though her eyes are like black stars, and those ringlets of jetty darkness, that delicate complexion and bright bloom of color belong to another land. Look as long as you please on the beauty of sky and earth, or tree and flowers, it is not half so dangerous as one glance at that noble and lovely head.

"Vive la Canadienne! et ses beaux yeux,
Et ses beaux yeux tous doux,
Et ses beaux yeux,"

hummed a voice behind him; and turning his lazy glance, Monsieur D'Arville saw Paul Schaffer lounging up, looking at the three girls, too.

He touched his hat, with a meaning smile, to the young artist.

"I need not ask if monsieur is enjoying himself. I see that he is."

"Yes, monsieur; solitude is enjoyment sometimes."

"Pardon, that I have broken it; but it was likely to be broken anyway, in a pleasanter manner, perhaps. See! The three belles of the *fête* are coming toward you."

"They are going to the house, I presume; for they have not even seen me yet."

"Monsieur's modesty! He does not need to be told he is a favorite with the ladies!"

Professor D'Arville fixed his eyes in a steady stare on Mr. Schaffer's face, in a way that would have discomposed any other man, but did not in the least disturb the bland equanimity of the young gentleman before him.

"A deuced pretty girl, that Miss Eve Hazelwood! Don't you think so, monsieur? One of your pupils, too, no doubt. What an enviable fate is yours?"

The brow of the young professor contracted slightly; but his only answer was silence, cold and haughty.

"They call her *La Princesse* in the school," went on easy Mr. Schaffer, "and, by Jove, she looks it! Talk about the *beaux yeux* of our Canadian girls! I never saw such a pair of eyes in my life as Mademoiselle has!"

"Is monsieur in love?" Professor D'Arville asked, with a slight smile and French shrug.

"I would be, if I dared; but one might as well fall in love with the moon, if all I have heard of her be true. I

like flesh and blood, not statues. One live woman is worth a thousand marble ones."

Professor D'Arville made a gesture toward Hazel, who was laughing at something until her cheeks were crimson.

"If monsieur likes flesh and blood, he has it there. The future Madame Schaffer—is it not?"

"Will you have a cigar, monsieur?" was Paul Schaffer's answer. "No? Then, with your permission, I will."

"Why, here's Paul!" called out Kate, catching sight of the two gentlemen. "I say, Paul, Louis told me to tell you——"

What Louis had told her to tell, Mr. Paul Schaffer was not destined to hear; for, just then, there was a tremendous shout, and Louis himself came bustling through the trees, his hair flying, his face flushed—altogether, in a state of frenzied excitement.

"This way—this way, all of you! Here's a lot more of the crowd, and we'll all have our fortunes told together."

"*Mon Dieu!* has that madhead gone crazy?" was Kate's cry, while the rest stared.

"Gone crazy? Catch me at it! Here, you old Meg Merrilies, or whatever they call you, come this way! Here's another batch that want you to spae their fortunes."

Half a dozen girls and as many young men, with a vast deal of noise and tumult, and in their midst an outlandish-looking figure. It was an old woman, bent, and leaning on a stick; her brown, shriveled face and small, bright eyes peering from beneath a huge bonnet; a dingy blue cloak wrapped about her, and beneath it a scant red dress hardly reaching to her ankle. A more uncouth or witch-like figure no one there had ever seen; and Louis, catching her by the arm, drew her forward, and presented her with a flourishing bow.

"One of Macbeth's witches, ladies and gentlemen, come from Hades by the last express-train, to tell your fortunes! She has told all of ours, and made fifteen shillings by the performance; and now, if you have any spare change about you, she is willing to lift the veil of the future for you. Eve, hold out your hand, and let us hear what the future has in store for you beside a coffin!"

"No!" said Eve, shrinking back. "Let Kate and Hazel try, if they wish; I had rather not."

The old woman, whose eyes had been darting from one face to another, turned them, at the sound of her voice, on Eve, and, to the surprise of every one, broke out into a shrill and irrepressible cry. It was not a cry of astonishment; it was more like triumph, repressed almost instantly; but her eyes gleamed with a strange fire, and the dirty, skinny hand she held out trembled with eagerness.

"Yes, yes, yes, my pretty lady!" she exclaimed, shrilly; "let me tell your fortune! Don't be afraid, my dearie; the future can have nothing but good in it for one so beautiful as you."

Her first cry had been repressed so quickly that it had passed almost unnoticed, save by one, who bent his brows and watched the beldame keenly.

Eve shrunk further away.

"No; don't trouble yourself about my future. I dare say, I will know it soon enough."

"Oh, botheration!" broke out Louis; "don't be such a guy, Eve! Let the old girl tell your fortune. She does it strong, I tell you!"

"No," said Eve, resolutely turning away. "I shall not tempt the future, even in jest. Besides"—half laughing—"I have no money, and the oracle is a golden glutton, and will not speak unless bribed."

A storm of wordy abuse fell unheeded on Eve's ear as she turned away; and, lifting her eyes, she caught Professor D'Arville's penetrating glance fixed upon her.

"So you have no faith in destiny?"

"I do not believe in fortune-telling, if that is what you mean; and I believe it is wrong to encourage any one to make a living by any such means."

The professor smiled, and the smile lit up his dark, creole face with a rare beauty.

"Wisdom from the lips of sixteen! You see I know your age, mademoiselle. I knew beforehand you had considerable moral courage, but I did not know it was quite so strong."

"Monsieur pays me a compliment," Eve said, her heart fluttering a little. "I assure you, I can be obstinate enough when I please! Are you going up to the house?"

"If mademoiselle will permit me to accompany her."

Eve bowed, and Professor D'Arville offered his arm. A dark and sinister glance followed them; and Louis Schaf-

fer touched Hazel on the arm, with a slight and contemptuous laugh.

"See, Hazel! One would think they had known each other from their cradles. Paul and Virginia, eh?"

"They make a very nice couple, I think. How do you like Eve?"

Mr. Schaffer raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, so-so. A pretty girl with black eyes, but nothing to set the St. Lawrence on fire. She is a sort of second Minerva, is she not? In making her, they forgot to add that trifling item, a heart."

"Nonsense, Paul!" But Hazel's face was radiant *malgré cela.* "I won't have you talk so of my handsome cousin Eve!"

"My dear, I beg your pardon. You asked my opinion, and you have it."

"But every one admires her."

"And so do I, immensely—as I admire sculptured Dianas and Niobes. But as to falling in love with anything so celestially cold—bah!"

"Oh, Paul!"—and Hazel's hands clasped his arm, and Hazel's beaming face was uplifted in ecstasy—"I am glad; I am so glad! Do you know I was awfully afraid you would never think of me after you saw Eve?"

"You're a little simpleton, Hazel. Do you know that? And, to punish you, I have a good mind not to tell you something that I think would please you."

"What is it, Paul?"

"Come up to the house; I don't want all these gaping girls to hear. It is this: the regiment are ordered off somewhere, and, before they go, give a grand ball. Will you come?"

"Oh, Paul, I can't!"

"Oh, Hazel, you can. Dress in your room, descend by the rope-ladder, I will drive you to the depot, the cars will take us to Montreal in an hour and a half, and you can return by the four o'clock express in the morning. You will have a night's pleasure, and Madame Moreau nor any of her dragons be the wiser!"

"But, Paul——"

"Well, *m'amour?*"

"I wouldn't—" laughing and blushing deeply; "it wouldn't be proper!"

"Tut, tut, tut, proper! Are you not my little wife, or as good? Get a companion if you like; ask La Princesse to come with you!"

"Eve?" Hazel cried, aghast; "why, Paul, Eve would as soon take a pistol and blow her own brains out as do anything of the kind! Eve, indeed! it's little you know of her to suggest such a thing!"

"Try, anyway. If she refuses, Kate Schaffer won't, and she can go with Louis. *Mal peste!* How I hate prudes!"

After that, Hazel would as soon have thought of blowing her brains out as refusing, and they had it all settled before they reached the house. Some one was singing as they entered the long drawing-room, half filled with eager listeners; and among these listeners a white figure, with black curls and pink ribbons, in the shadow of the window-curtains, drinking in every word—every note. The singer was Professor Claude D'Arville, who could sing and play as well as he could paint, and the song was "Ellen Adair." Paul Schaffer and Hazel Wood stood in the doorway, and listened with the rest:

"Ellen Adair, she loved me well,
Against her father and mother's will,
To-day I sat for an hour and wept,
By Ellen's grave on the windy hill.

"Shy she was, and I thought her cold—
Thought her proud, and fled o'er the sea;
Filled was I with folly and spite,
When Ellen Adair was dying for me."

"There is the Ellen Adair he is thinking of," whispered Paul; "look at the window; but she never will die for him or any one else."

"Ah! I don't know," said Hazel, with a sentimental look; "'the trail of the serpent is over all,' Moore says, and she is only mortal, like the rest of us."

"Marble, you should say! There, he is at the second verse, and it is not polite to talk, I suppose."

The song was finished amid a buzz of applause, in which the white figure at the window did not join. They saw her shrink away into the shadow of the curtains, and glide through the open window out on the lawn. The sinister eyes that never ceased watching her saw the act,

and saw Professor D'Arville saunter away in another direction.

The sunny afternoon was ending in a cloudless, moonlight night, as Eve Hazelwood, avoiding the numerous groups of gay girls and young men, strolled by herself down a shady pine avenue, toward the gate, and leaning against it, watched the round, red moon rise, with her beauty in her eyes. Far off, one solemn star shone, the precursor of the rising host. The peaceful village lay beneath her, hushed in the holy silence of eventide; the convent-bell was ringing for vespers, and while she stood listening to its slow, sweet music, two of the nuns passed her on their way there. One was a sober-looking, middle-aged woman, the other, a young girl, not much older then Eve herself, and with a face almost as beautiful and fair, more gentle and sweet. Eve watched them out of sight, wondering if the young nun was happy, and very, very doubtful of it. She need not have been. Sister Agnes was perfectly happy; but the world looked a very bright and beautiful place to the inexperienced schoolgirl, and, somehow, this afternoon it had acquired a new charm. Had the sun ever shone so brightly before? Had she ever spent such a pleasant afternoon? And was there ever so charming a song as "Ellen Adair?" Ah! there lay the key-note of all, and half unconsciously she began to sing:

"Love may come and love may go,
And fly like a bird from tree to tree;
But I will love no more, no more,
Till Ellen Adair comes back to me."

"You liked my song, then?" said a quiet voice behind her, and Eve fairly bounded. She had heard no step on the velvety sward, but Professor D'Arville stood at her elbow.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, I did not mean to startle you. Being tired of the heat and noise of the house, I strolled down here to enjoy the beauty of the evening alone. I see mademoiselle is an admirer of the beauties of nature, too. If I intrude, I will depart."

"Oh, no," said Eve, laying her hand on her breast to still her startled heart-beating; "this place is free to all."

He leaned against the gate and looked at her.

"So you like 'Ellen Adair'?"

"Yes, monsieur; I like everything Tennyson writes."

"Yet it is rubbish after all—sentimental trash! Don't you think so?"

"No, monsieur!" rather indignantly; "I should be sorry to think so! Tennyson could not write rubbish if he tried."

"Oh, I see! You are like all the other romantic young ladies in the world! Have you read, Mariana in the Moated Grange'?"

"A hundred times, monsieur! I know it every word off."

What lucky fellows these poets are! Ah, who have we here? A brigand or the hero of a three-volume novel. Perhaps Tennyson himself."

Eve's eyes were asking the same question, though her lips were silent. Up the moonlit road a tall figure was striding—the figure of a man in a long, picturesque and most foreign-looking cloak, a broad-brimmed straw hat pulled over his face, completely concealing it, and a cigar between his lips.

"What a strange-looking figure!" said Eve, wonderingly. "Who can he be, and what can have brought him to St. Croix?"

"Questions I cannot take it upon myself to answer. Why, he is actually coming here!"

The foreign-looking stranger had caught sight of the two figures standing within the gate, and flinging his cigar away, walked up to them. Taking off his hat to Eve, he made a courtly bow; and in the moonlight, clear as day, she saw a bronzed and mustached face, swarthy as that of a Paynim, but eminently handsome, shaded by profuse coal-black locks, and lit up by luminous dark eyes. Dark, handsome, and distinguished, he did indeed look like the hero of a novel, or a brigand in a play. His years might have been forty, and there were threads of silver gleaming amid his elf locks.

"Pardon!" he said in French, though not with a French accent, "for the intrusion, but I am a stranger here. Can you tell me which of those two buildings on the hill yonder is Madame Moreau's *pensionnat?*"

"The one furthest off, monsieur," replied Professor D'Arville; "the other is the Convent of the Holy Cross."

"A thousand thanks, monsieur! Good night."

He bowed again to Eve, threw on his sombrero, and walked leisurely away, humming the fag-end of a Spanish ballad as he went.

"A Spaniard," said Monsieur D'Arville; "he looks like it. Some of madame's Cuban friends, perhaps; she lived there before she came to St. Croix. But the night-air is chill, and your dress is thin, mademoiselle—had I not better lead you in?"

"Eve! Eve! Eve Hazelwood!" a chorus of voices suddenly called before Eve could reply, and a whole troop of demoiselles rushed down upon them. "Eve! Eve! where are you?"

"Here she is!" shouted Kate Schaffer. "I have found her! I thought I would."

And her black Canadian eyes, those laughing, roguish dark eyes, whose praises her countrymen sing, looked wickedly from teacher to pupil.

"Well," said Eve, with infinite composure, "and now that I am found, what do you want with me?"

"Only this, the best of friends must part; and we are ordered home, or rather back to prison. You are the only missing lamb of the fold; and detachments have been sent out in every direction in search of you."

"Oh, yes!" said Hazel, joining in; "we thought somebody had run away with—out you! Hurry now, or you'll get a lecture as long as to-day and to-morrow."

The carriages were at the door, and the *pensionnaires*, cloaked and hooded, being packed into them by the devoted young collegians. Louis Schaffer, his cousin Paul, and Monsieur D'Arville, stood near one as Eve came out the last, and it was Paul Schaffer who advanced with extended hand, while Louis was chatting volubly with the girls already stowed within the vehicle, and the professor stood at a little distance, looking quietly on.

"We thought *La Princesse* was lost ten minutes ago, and were all in a state of distraction. Louis, get out of the way, will you, and let me assist Mademoiselle Hazelwood in."

"Off she goes!" cried Louis, as Eve, scarcely touching his cousin's hand, stepped lightly in; "the last, the brightest, the best! Good night, Eve, and pleasant dreams—dream of me!"

"Adieu, mademoiselle," Paul Schaffer said, lifting her hand to his lips before she was aware; "I shall long remember this evening! Adieu, and *au revoir!*"

With an imperious gesture, the girl snatched her hand away, her cheeks flushing scarlet. Another gentleman stepped up to the carriage door, and shut it.

"Good night, Miss Hazelwood," he said in English; "Good night, young ladies all."

"*Bon soir! bon soir, monsieur!*" a chorus of voices called, and then the carriage rattled away, and the *fête* was ended.

The two young men, left alone in the moonlight, did not speak. Bowing silently, they went their different ways, Professor D'Arville into the house to bid his hostess farewell, and Paul Schaffer walked at a brisk pace toward the gate. Out in the road, he walked rapidly toward the village, and stopped at last before a lonely-looking little hut, at the outskirts of St. Croix. He paused a moment to look at it, and the one full ray of light streaming from its curtained window, and then rapped gently at the door.

"This should be the place," he muttered to himself; "and if the old witch knows anything about the girl, I shall find it out before I leave, or my name's not Paul Schaffer."

CHAPTER XIV.

A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT.

A RAINY afternoon in St. Croix—a dogged, determined, out-and-out rainy day, with a sky of lead above, and a soaking, steaming, sodden earth below. A dreary afternoon in St. Croix, dull at the best in the brightest sunshine, but doubly dull in wet weather, when you might walk in mud from one extremity of the village to the other without meeting a living thing, except, perhaps, some draggled, skulking dog, the outcast and Pariah of his tribe. A dismal afternoon in the *pensionnat des demoiselles;* its playground deserted, its day-scholars gone home in the great covered carryall, kept by madame for such emergencies, and darkness and dullness brooding over its empty *carres* and long corridors. It was the hour of recess, too; but the gloomy evening seemed to have imparted

some of its gloom to Madame Moreau's pupils; for instead of making day hideous with their uproar, according to custom, they had slouched off to their rooms and gone to sleep, or in hidden corners were poring over novels, or, gathered in groups, were gapingly discussing the great Schaffer *fête*, not yet two days old. The babies of the Fourth Division, too young in the blessedness of seven years to know the meaning of the dreadful word *ennui*, were romping and screaming in their own dominions, and their noise, and that of two or three pianos in the music-room, were the only sounds that broke the solitude of the *pensionnat*.

In one of the deserted *carres*, perched up in the deep window-ledge at the furthest extremity, a *pensionnaire* sat looking out at the black and dismal prospect. She was wrapped in a large plaid shawl, for the wet day was bleak and raw; a book, *La Tour de ma Chambre*, lay in her lap; but the dark, dreamy eyes were fixed on the lowering sky, and the rain plashing against the glasses, and the luxuriant black ringlets were pushed impatiently behind her ears, and away from the beautiful face. The girl was thinking, something schoolgirls are not greatly given to do, and her meditations were broken suddenly, in a not very romantic manner. A pair of high-heeled boots came clattering down the staircase near her, and a shrill falsetto voice, singing at the top of a pair of powerful lungs:

"'Oh, poor Robinson Crusoe!
How could you go for to do so!
Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
Oh, poor Robinson Crusoe!
He had a man Friday,
To keep his house tidy.'

Hallo! Is this where you are, perched up like some dismal old owl, or some what's-its-name, a pillow-case in the wilderness?"

This last did not belong to the canticle she was chanting, but was addressed by the singer to the pensive young lady in the window, who turned round leisurely at the interruption.

"Is it you, Hazel? What do you want?"

"'He built him a boat,
Of the skin of a goat,
And he christened it Robinson Crusoe,'"

sung Hazel Wood, skipping up adroitly beside Eve; "you ought to have been Mrs. Robinson Crusoe. You would have made a sweet pair of pokes, you would. What do I want? The pleasure of your charming society, my love. It's a little better than yawning myself to death up-stairs."

"I thought you were asleep."

"Never was wider awake in my life! I was reading!"

"You reading! I like that!"

"'Pon my word! It was a novel, though, and one of Eugene Sue's at that!"

"Oh, Hazel!"

"There! don't faint! It wasn't the 'Mysteries of Paris'—I never could wade through that. What's this? Oh, 'A Journey Round my Chamber!' I might have known it was something stupid and lugubrious! You ought to go and be a nun at once: you are half one now."

"Miss Wood, if you only came here to lecture me, I beg you will take your departure again as quickly as possible. I prefer my own thoughts to your abuse."

"Well, then, don't be cross, and I won't scold. I have come to ask a favor of you."

"Yes, I might have known that! Do your stockings want darning, or your handkerchiefs hemming, or has your pocket-money run short, or what is the trouble now?"

"Nothing of that kind. It's the greatest favor you have ever rendered me in your life."

Eve opened her eyes.

"The greatest! What in the world can it be, then? Let us hear it."

"Promise me first that you will grant it."

"Promise before I know what it is! No, I thank you, Miss Wood!"

"But oh, Eve! I do want it so badly! You won't refuse—there's a darling, will you?" cried Hazel, putting her arms round Eve's neck and bribing her with kisses.

"Hands off!" Eve laughed, disengaging herself. "I am above bribes. Out with this wonderful favor of yours."

"Eve, if you don't grant it I will never speak to you."

"Won't you? I wonder which of us that would punish most? But take heart, coz; if it is nothing very terrible, I dare say I will grant it."

"But it is terrible; at least you will think it so."

"Ah!" said Eve, growing grave. "It is some of Monsieur Paul Schaffer's handiwork, then, I dare say."

Hazel shifted uneasily beneath the truthful and penetrating dark eyes.

"Yes, it is! Eve, I wish you wouldn't be so prejudiced against Paul. What right have you to be?"

Eve sat silent, her lips compressed, her hands folded, her eyes fixed on the sullen rain.

Hazel fidgeted and looked uneasily at her cousin.

"Eve."

"Well?"

"He wants me to—to go to a ball with him. There! the murder's out!"

"To go to a ball? When and where?"

"It is a military ball, in Montreal, and the time is to-morrow night?"

"And do you imagine Madame Moreau will consent to any such thing?"

"I don't intend to ask her. I want to go without her knowledge. I can do it easily."

"Indeed! How?"

"Can't I dress in our room?—my white muslin will do well enough—and get out by the rope-ladder? Paul will be waiting with a carriage. The cars will take us to the city, and fetch us back before five next morning."

Eve faced suddenly round, with kindling eyes.

"Hazel, did Paul Schaffer ask you to do this?"

"Have I not just told you so?" uneasily and impatiently.

"And you consented?"

"Yes!" said Hazel, defiantly. "And what of it?"

"Only that Paul Schaffer is a villain, and you—oh, Hazel! Hazel!—have no respect for yourself at all."

Hazel bounced indignantly down on the floor.

"Eve Hazelwood, I'd thank you to mind what you are saying. Yes; he did ask me, and, what's more, he has sent you an invitation to accompany me. Now, there!"

Eve rose up, her eyes like black stars, her cheeks rosy flame.

"And Paul Schaffer dared to send me such an insult as that?"

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Insult your grandmother! You're somebody great, ain't you, that you're not to be insulted?"

Eve stood silent, looking at her, more in sorrow than in anger; and Hazel still kept shifting and fidgeting under those earnest eyes.

"Now, look here, cousin Eve, what I want to know is this: will you keep my secret? I can't get away without your knowing, or I wouldn't ask you. Kate Schaffer is going, too; so where will be the impropriety? It is only a schoolgirl frolic, that no one would object to but an old granny like yourself?"

"Kate Schaffer may go if she pleases; but you shall not."

"Shall not?" said Hazel, her eyes beginning to flash; "take care, Eve Hazelwood!"

"Shall not!" repeated Eve, resolutely; "not if I have to sit up all night to prevent you. Sooner than let you go, I will go to madame, and tell her all."

"Telltale!" hissed Hazel, red with passion, and Eve's face turned crimson at the word.

"What do I care? You shall not make me angry, Hazel, and you shall not disgrace yourself. No, you shall not go, and some day you will thank me for it."

Hazel essayed to speak, but anger and disappointment were too much for her, and she burst into a hysterical passion of sobs. Eve's own eyes filled, and she put her arms round her cousin, but that indignant young lady shook her violently off.

"Let me alone, will you? you hateful, obstinate, selfish thing! I hate you, Eve Hazelwood, and I'll go in spite of you! There!"

The class-bell rung loudly, but Hazel, sobbing and scolding, paid no attention to it. Eve lingered, looking at her.

"Hazel, dear, don't be angry. It is because I love you I can't consent."

"You don't love me! You love nobody but yourself! You're just what Paul says: a cold-hearted, unfeeling thing; but I'll go, if I die for it! Mind that!"

"You had better stop crying, and come down-stairs. The supper-bell has rung."

"Let it ring!" said Hazel, desperately; "I don't want any supper. Go and eat your own, it's all you care for."

Now, really, this was a most unjust reproach; for, to do Eve justice, her palate was the least of her troubles—

which was very far from being Miss Wood's case. Eve smiled involuntarily as she heard it, and leaving the *carre* without another word, descended to the *salle à manger*.

"Hazel will think better of it," she mused; "I don't believe she will go without her tea."

Eve was right. As soon as she was gone, Hazel dried her eyes, and took her lacerated heart down-stairs, to seek consolation in the pale, lukewarm fluid, known in boarding-schools as tea, and its accompanying slices of transparent bread and butter. Fifteen minutes was the time allotted for devouring these dainties. At the end of that period, a signal was given to rise; grace was said by the presiding teacher, and the ceremony was over. Silence being the austere law at meal-time, ten minutes were allowed the girls afterward to relieve their feelings before going up-stairs, and Babel broke loose the instant grace was ended. Just in the midst of a wild uproar and confusion of tongues, the folding doors of the *salle à manger* split open, and in sailed Madame Moreau, followed by a gentleman. At sight of their commander-in-chief, the tumult ceased, and all eyes turned on her companion, a tall, dark, foreign looking gentleman, bearded and mustached like a pard, and most exceedingly handsome.

"Here are my little family, monsieur," laughed madame, introducing him to the *pensionnaires*, who returned his bow by a simultaneous school-girl obeisance. "You perceive they have just concluded their frugal repast."

"Frugal," murmured Kate Schaffer, looking mournfully round the sloppy tea-table. "I should think so. We are safe from dyspepsia and the gout while we are under your charge, madame."

The gentleman's dark eyes, wandering from face to face, rested on that of Eve, standing near a window, from which she had been watching the rainy twilight. He did not approach her, however, but went up to Hazel, who stood all alone, as sulky as a bear.

"One of your family appears to be in distress, madame," he said. And Eve recognized at once the melodious, foreign-accented voice. "The world seems to have gone wrong with this young lady."

Hazel shrugged pettishly, and turned round with a sulky action, that said, as plainly as words:

"I wish you would mind your own business."

"You have been crying, Miss Wood?" questioned madame, looking at her.

"No, I haven't!" said Hazel, as crossly as she dared—for I am sorry to say Miss Wood thought no more of small fibs at times than she did of rudeness—"there's nothing the matter with me."

The stranger smiled, passed on, and came to where Eve stood.

"Ah," he said, stopping, "here is a familiar face. You and I have met before, mademoiselle."

"Met before!" echoed madame, while all the teachers and pupils stared. "Why, where can Monsieur mendez have met Miss Hazelwood?"

"Madame, the other evening, walking along the road out there I saw a fairy, all in white and pink, standing at a gate in the moonlight, and I went up, and asked to be directed to you."

"It was the night of the *fête*," Eve said, a little embarrassed to find all eyes fixed on her. "I directed monsieur to the *pensionnat*."

Here the study-bell rang, and madame and her companion bowing themselves out, left the young ladies to go up-stairs. Hermine, the portress, was just opening the front-door in answer to an imperative ring, as her mistress crossed the vestibule on her way to the parlor. The visitor was a little spare, wiry man, who nodded to madame with easy indifference, but started back at sight of her companion as if he had seen a ghost.

"Eh, what!" he cried, energetically, "it can't be! it can't be!"

And the sentence was finished by a blank stare.

"Monsieur evidently mistakes me for some one," said the gentleman, with a courteous smile and bow.

"No, that never was his voice," said the little man, still staring; "beg your pardon, sir, but you look so much like some one I once knew, that at first I'll be hanged if I didn't think it was he."

"Allow me to make you acquainted, gentlemen," interposed madame, blandly; "Monsieur, this is Doctor Lance, one of my professors, and the guardian of two of my pupils. Professor, my friend from Cuba, Senor Mendez, who has kindly come to visit me in my Canadian home."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, sir," grunted the

professor. "madame, I want to see my wards—I have a piece of news for them, that I think will make them open their eyes."

Madame led the way into the parlor, and rang the bell.

"No bad news, I trust?" she asked.

"That's as may be. The fact is, I'm tired of them, and I think it high time this other guardian, who is also their nearest living blood-relation, should take charge of them. So I wrote to him. He was in England, as you know, and here (producing a document) is his answer, telling me to pack them both off by the next steamer to him."

"*Mon Dieu!* we shall be desolated at losing them. Babette," to the girl who answered the bell, "go tell Mesdemoiselles Wood and Hazelwood that their guardian is here, and desires to see them immediately."

"Monsieur's wards are, then, the two young ladies I was speaking to?" asked Senor Mendez.

"Yes, monsieur, and the tall and handsome one is the star pupil of my school. Ah! how much we shall regret her! But I hear them coming; Monsieur Mendez, come this way, if you please. Monsieur Lance may desire to be alone with his wards."

The preceptress and her Cuban friend passed out just as Eve and Hazel, in a state of astonishment as to what Doctor Lance could possibly want at such a time, went in to hear the unexpected tidings.

CHAPTER XV.

EVE'S FIRST PROPOSAL.

THE *chambres à coucher*, as Madame Moreau's young ladies styled what common people call their bedrooms, were situated on the third floor of the *pensionnat;* and all along that third floor, one moonlight night, about a week after the rainy afternoon on which Eve and Hazel quarreled, a long row of lights twinkled. In these apartments, sacred to youth, beauty, innocence, and all that kind of thing, the whole troupe of *pensionnaires* above the age of ten were gathered; and great was the bustle, and chatting, and confusion reigning within. Bustle and confusion, in fact, had

been the order of the day. The whole school was in a state of unprecedented excitement, thinking and talking of nothing but the two great events about to take place—the departure of Eve and Hazel for England, and Madame Schaffer's grand farewell-party, given the night before their departure, in their honor. The misery of parting, which had cost the young ladies copious showers of tears during the past melancholy week, was lost sight of to-night. They were all sorry, no doubt, but, poor caged darlings! we all know how sweet parties were in our boarding-school days. Oh, the Elysium dreams of the sweet youths we were to dance with; the delicious visions of ice-cream, jellies, boned turkey, and *blanc mange* that floated before our mind's eyes; and how utterly we forgot the existence of Lindley Murray, the rule of three, and the dismal to-morrow, in the whirl of the waltz and the glare of the gas lights. So the *pensionnaires* arrayed themselves in all the purple and fine linen allowed in that bread-and-butter-eating age, and giggled, and gossiped, and lost sight of altogether the heartrending parting so close at hand.

In one of these rooms, all littered over with garments, books, half-packed trunks, and traveling-bags, two *demoiselles* were putting the finishing touches on their toilet. The one who stood before the glass, eying herself complacently from tip to toe, had her small and very round-about figure draped in a swelling amplitude of pink gauze, very low-necked, very short sleeved, white and red roses looping up the full skirt, clasping the corsage, clasping the sleeves, and wreathed in and out the bright brown hair. But the red roses paled before the peony hue of her cheeks, flushed with excitement; and the stars of Cancer, glittering in the June sky outside, were not brighter nor starrier than the shining brown eyes. She had just drenched a pocket-handkerchief in Jockey Club, filling the room with perfume, and flirting out her gauzy skirts, she twirled round like a whirlwind, and settled suddenly down before her companion, in what children call "making a cheese," her pink dress ballooning out all around her.

"*Ma bonne cousine! ma chere Princesse!* my darling Eve! how do you like me?"

The young lady addressed stood at some distance, drawing on her gloves. At all times, in any dress, Eve Hazel

wood must be beautiful, but she looked unusually lovely to-night. It might have been that her dress was most becoming; amber crape, with trimmings of rich lace and creamy roses; her only ornament a slender gold chain and cross, and the glossy black curls falling in glittering darkness over her shoulders. If Hazel was flushed, Eve was pale—something unusual for her—and that and the pensive look her sweet face wore gave, perhaps, the new charm to her fresh young beauty. She and Hazel had smoked the calumet of peace, though Miss Wood had not gone to the ball, and Mr. Paul Schaffer had heard the whole affair, and formed his own opinion accordingly. She looked up now, and surveyed her cousin with a critical eye.

"You look in good health, for your face is as red as your dress, but you smell rather strong for my taste. Why do you use so much perfume?"

"Because I like to smell nice; and gentlemen are something like hounds—they follow the scent! Doesn't my dress fit splendidly?"

"It's a great deal too tight. You'll burst out of your hooks and eyes before morning."

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" indignantly. "You wouldn't have me go in a bag, I hope! It fits like a worsted stocking on a man's nose!"

"Now, Hazel, you know you broke three corset-laces screwing yourself up before you could get it in! You'll die of a rush of blood to the head, if you are not careful!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Hazel, in a subdued tone; "I feel as if there was an extra quantity of the fluid up there now. But what is one to do? I can't go looking like a hogshead round the waist, and I must lace up to be a decent figure. I don't see why I can't be thin and genteel, like you; it's dreadful to be so fat as I am!"

"It's a harrowing case, certainly," said Eva, laughing; "and what's more, I am afraid there is no help for it. However, Paul Schaffer doesn't mind——"

"Dear, darling Paul," burst out the gushing Miss Wood, her eyes dancing fandangos in her head. "Oh, Eve! isn't it good of him to come to England with us, all on my account? Nobody need say, after that, he doesn't care for me!"

This fact was quite true. Monsieur Paul Schaffer had,

to the surprise of every one, announced his intention of going over the Atlantic in the same steamer with Doctor Lance and his wards. Hazel's first sensation, on being told of her removal to another land, had been one of intensest dismay. What will Paul say? How could I leave Paul? had been her first distracted thought. Paul settled the matter at once.

"I have been waiting to visit Old England this long time, petite," he said coolly, "and now is the time. I will go over with you, my darling, and see what kind of place this ancestral home of you Hazelwoods is."

And from that instant Hazel's earthly happiness was complete.

"I don't see why you can't like him, Eve," she said, petulantly; "you have no right to be so prejudiced. If I lost him," with a little passionate gesture, "I should die!"

There was so much of desperate earnestness in poor Hazel's tones, that Eve was touched. She took the burning cheeks between her cool hands, and bending down, kissed her.

"My darling, I will try to like him for your sake, but he is not half good enough for you!"

"I tell you he is! He is good enough for a princess!"

"Not for me!" laughed Eve. "I would not marry him if he were to make me a queen! But all to their taste. Are you engaged?"

"No—yes—I don't know. He loves me, and I him—that's enough."

"Is it? I know nothing about such things; but it seems to me he should speak to our guardian."

"What! to that old death's-head-and-cross-bones, Doctor Lance? No, think you. Wait till we go to England, and then I know he will ask our other guardian, cousin Arthur. He cannot be such an old snapping-turtle, surely, as this one."

"Hazel, look here. Is he my cousin, too?"

"Why, of course he is! Why shouldn't he be?"

"I don't know, but sometimes I think—Hazel, do you know I scarcely ever heard any thing of my father and mother?"

"Why, they're both dead and buried ages ago," said

Hazel, drawing on her gloves. "What on earth did you want to hear about them?"

"Your mother never would speak of them. She used to put me off. And Doctor Lance, the only time I ever summoned up courage enough to speak to him on the subject, told me to hold my tongue, and be thankful I ever had a father and mother at all, for it was more than I deserved."

"And served you right, too," was Hazel's sympathetic answer, "dragging dead people out of their graves. There, I declare they're calling us! Where's my hood and shawl? Are you ready?"

"Yes," said Eve, hastily donning her wraps; "perhaps Babette and Hermine are to pack up for us, and have our trunks ready when called for. Are they not?"

"Yes, yes, come along, or all the rest will get into the carriages before us, and we will get our dresses awfully mussed up."

Eva cast one last long look behind.

"Good-by, old room," she said; "I have been very happy here—happier, perhaps, than I will ever be in the land where I am going."

Half a dozen carriages, not to speak of the huge carryall belonging to the school, known to the girls as Noah's Ark, were drawn up before the door, and the ecstatic *pensionnaires* crowded in, and in twenty minutes were crowding out again in front of the Schaffer homestead. The building was one sheet of light from cellar to *grenier;* and the regimental band, perched up in the gallery of the ball-room, was in full blast at the eternal "Vive la Canadienne."

"Vive la Yankee-enne!" commenced Hazel Wood, leaping into the extended coatsleeves of her adored Paul.

"We're no Canadians, for which, oh, be joyful!"

"Welcome, *ma petite!*" exclaimed Madame Schaffer, sweeping up, gorgeous to look at, in ruby satin, and emeralds, and kissing Hazel's two red cheeks, "and welcome, my lovely Eve. But, *Mon Dien!* where have your roses gone to, child? You are as white as a spirit."

"Hazel has them." Eve smiled as she ran up stairs to her dressing-room. "Louis, don't pull the dress off my back! What do you want?"

"The first waltz, Eve! We're parting—where is my

pocket-handkerchief? It may be for years, and it may be forever, as Kathleen Mavourneen remarks, and it's the least you can do. Say yes."

"Yes, yes; let me go! Here comes Doctor Lance and Monsieur D'Arville! They will say we are flirting."

"They never made a greater mistake in their lives, then," said Louis, sauntering off, while Eve ran up-stairs after the rest.

All was confusion and most admired disorder in the drawing-room, where every one was talking and laughing at the tiptop of her lungs, and paying no attention to her neighbor.

"Talk about Babel!" exclaimed Hazel, tripping past Eve, "after this tumult. Hurry up, Eve, if you don't want to be deafened for life."

Eve, consigning her wraps to a servant, shook out her floating skirts, glanced at her curls and at the bright face the mirror reflected, and left the noisy scene. At the foot of the grand staircase she encountered Louis Schaffer.

"Here you are at last!" cried that young gentleman, briskly. "What a shocking length of time it does take you girls to settle your furbelows!" (Eve had been gone about six minutes.) "Come along, our waltz will commence in a brace of shakes."

"What length of time is a brace of shakes, Louis?" laughed Eve, as she took his arm and entered the brilliantly-lighted and well-fielld ball-room.

"Never you mind, it's that long. Oh, my, what have we here?"

Quite a large circle were gathered near the center of the room, who, judging from their peals of laughter, were evidently enjoying themselves immensely. Among them, with an amused smile on his face, stood Professor D'Arville, and in the center of the group stood Paul Schaffer, with Hazel and half a dozen of the wild *pensionnaires* around him.

"Eve, Eve, come here!" called Kate Schaffer, "and defend yourself. Hazel Wood is telling tales out of school."

"Relating dreadful legends of your goings on in New York, mademoiselle," said the young professor, turning

his amused face to the young lady he addressed. "Are they all true?"

"Of course they are," shrilly cried Hazel. "I never tell fibs."

"Except where the truth don't answer," put in Louis Schaffer, *sotto voce.*

"Mr. Schaffer, I'll thank you not to be impertinent; you know nothing about it. Oh, we used to have glorious times in the long vacations, and Eve, prim as she looks, can't deny it. We used to promenade Broadway—clean, delightful, delicious Broadway—at all hours of the day and night, staring at the nice young men loafing and picking their teeth on the hotel steps, disporting ourselves Sundays in the Park on two charming ponies we had, and turning the heads of everything masculine we came across! Didn't we Eve?"

"Do come away, said Eve to Louis, her cheeks flushing, and feeling annoyed beyond measures, she scarcely knew why, at Hazel's exaggerated *exposé.* Perhaps because Paul Schaffer was staring at her so offensively as he caressed his mustache; perhaps," because of that amused and queer smile on Monsieur D'Arville handsome creole face; perhaps,—but who can read a girl's reasons when she cannot even do it herself.

"Then there was Barnum's Museum in the afternoon," went on the reckless Hazel, "when we used to go to the theater, and push, and pull, and crowd in with the rest of the female mob who frequent that palace of wonders. And oh, such a fascinating young policeman that used to grab us by the shoulder and land us across, through a delirious maze of stages, cars, carts, coaches, and every other kind of vehicle under heaven, from a wheelbarrow up. He was my first, my last, my only love, that nice young policeman; and I know Eve was in a worse state about him than I!"

"Louis, Louis, come away!" Eve repeated, every vein tingling with the intense mortification; but Louis was enjoying the fun amazingly, and held her fast.

"And what's more," Hazel continued, lowering her voice to a thrilling whisper, "we used to go to the Bowery Theater. Our gentlemen wouldn't take us there, so we paid the waiter-man in the house where we boarded to escort us. Eve only went once, and after hard coaxing

then; but I went lots of times, and there never was such fun. Oh, my heart will certainly break after New York."

"For pity's sake, Louis, let me go!" Eve desperately cried; and Louis, looking at her, saw her whole face flushed, and her eyes full of tears of bitter humiliation. More keenly even than she felt for herself, she felt for Hazel, who, of an excitable nature at all times, seemed half out of herself to-night.

"What, you're never crying, Eve!" exclaimed Louis; and Professor D'Arville glanced at the beautiful, mortified face through his half-closed eyes. "What a goose you are, to be sure! Oh, here's our waltz. Off we go then."

Very little the belle of the ball—for such undeniably Eve was—enjoyed that waltz.

"How he must despise me!" her pained heart kept crying bitterly all the time.

"He!" Ah, that tell-tale little pronoun—even Eve, the iceberg, had come to it at last.

Louis would have carried her off in search of ice when the dance was concluded, but Eve shook him off rather peremptorily, and started in search of her cousin, bent on reading her a lecture. In the cool recess of a deep window she found her seated, flushed after the waltz, fanning herself violently, and fortunately alone. Paul Schaffer had gone in search of a glass of ice water for his hot little partner. Eve broke upon her, with scarlet cheeks and flashing eyes, and began the attack without preface.

"Hazel, have you gone mad? What did you mean by telling all those atrocious fables to that gaping crowd half an hour ago, and making us the laughing-stock of the room? If you have no respect for yourself, you might have a little consideration for me."

"Eh?" said Hazel, looking up in surprise. "What's all this about? What's the matter with you?"

"The matter!" said Eve, in a tone of suppressed passion. "You made a pretty show of yourself and me to-night, did you not?"

"La! I only told the truth!"

"It was not the truth; at least, you exaggerated most shamefully. What must those who heard you think? Professor D'Arville will have a fine opinion of his pupils."

"Bah! Who cares! An old schoolmaster like him!"

"He is not a schoolmaster!"

"Positive, school; comparative, schoolmaster; superlative, professor! It's worse! Besides, we are not his pupils any more; we are going to 'Merrie England.'

'England, my country—great and free!
Heart of the world! I leap to thee!'

Professor D'Arville may go to grass!"

"I have only one thing to say," exclaimed Eve, who, being only mortal—poor thing!—like the rest of us, was intensely angry: "that if I ever hear you telling such abominable tales again, you and I will not be friends for the rest of our lives! Remember that!"

Paul Schaffer was coming up with the ice-water, and Eve swept away, catching Hazel's shrill exclamation as she went:

"Why, Paul, here's Eve raging like a Bengal tiger because I said all that awhile ago, and Professor D'Arville heard it. Did you ever?"

In no mood at that moment for enjoyment, and hot almost as Hazel herself, Eve stepped through one of the large French windows, out on the lawn for the drawing-room was on the ground floor. Something else had annoyed her on the way; Kate Schaffer was singing, like a nightingale, some charming Italian songs, and Professor D'Arville was standing by the piano, turning over her music with an entranced face, drinking in every note, with eyes and ears for her alone. Poor Eve! She had got into a most unhappy state of mind that night, and everything was going wrong. Kate Schaffer was a handsome girl, an heiress, and the daughter of the house, no doubt; but why need Professor D'Arville be blind to all the rest of the world because of that?

The weird, white summer-moon, sailing serenely up in the blue-black concave of heaven, with her myriad of stars keeping court about her, looked down on the flushed cheek and troubled breast of the young girl leaning against the pine-tree, as it has looked on many another young girl in similiar trouble. Eve saw nothing of the solemn beauty of the night. She was thinking that to-morrow she left Canada forever, and perhaps the first news she would hear in far-off England would be the marriage of Monsieur D'Arville and Kate Schaffer. There was no earthly reason why such an event should disturb her, but it did disturb her signally;

and, just as she was brooding drearily over it, two gentlemen came up the path to the house, smoking cigars and talking. Eve recognized them, and drew back into the shadow of the trees. One was her guardian, Doctor Lance; the other, Monsieur Schaffer, senior.

"And so," Monsieur Schaffer was saying, "D'Arville has really accepted this situation?"

"D'Arville has really accepted the situation of secretary to Mr. Arthur Hazelwood, and goes to England in the same steamer with me," Doctor Lance replied. "I had no idea he would when I spoke to him about it—told him Hazelwood had written to me to find and fetch him a competent secretary—the man himself always was abominably lazy from a boy. I spoke to D'Arville to see if he knew any one in Montreal who would suit. His answer was:

"'Yes.'

"'Who is he?' I asked.

"'Myself,' was his reply.

"Of course, I jumped at the offer—saved me trouble, you see. The salary is a good one, the situation easy; but D'Arville is a fool, for all that. The young man has talent, and I never before thought he wanted ambition."

The two passed in, and Eve came out from the shadow with an altered face and an altered heart. As she did so, a step sounded behind her; a tall figure was by her side in the moonlight, and Paul Schaffer's dark eyes were upon her face. Something in that look startled Eve. She turned to go, but he detained her.

"Why do you always fly from me when I come near?" he asked. "Am I so very hateful to you?"

Eve was naturally straightforward and truthful in the extreme. She merely closed her lips by way of answer, and stood looking straight before her. Paul Schaffer lowered his voice, his eyes, and his tall head.

"I have been searching for you the past fifteen minutes. I have something very particular to say."

Eve's heart beat faster, and for one instant she glanced hurriedly around, as if to fly.

"No, no! You must not go! Miss Hazelwood—Eve—you leave Canada to-morrow. I must speak to you to-night!"

"I must go into the house!" Eve said, in a violent tremor. "I shall be missed!"

She turned to go, but he caught her, and the words she dreaded to hear were spoken. With a sharp cry she broke from him, and stood, with parted lips and panting heart, looking at him with dilated eyes.

"I love you, Eve!" he still cried. "May I hope?"

The eyes that looked at him were full of horror, and her hands flew up and covered her face.

"Oh, Hazel! Hazel! Hazel!" was her bitter cry.

"I do not care for her! I never did! I care only for you! Eve, listen to me——"

But Eve was gone. Back into the house she sought refuge in a remote and closely-curtained window, and crouched down, feeling as if her whole life had changed within the hour, as if the earth were reeling under her feet, and youth, and innocence, and happy girlhood gone like a dream.

Yes, Eve, the happy days of careless youth have gone forever; womanhood with its deeper joys and sorrows opens before you, and the Book of Life has turned over a new page.

CHAPTER XVI.

HAZELWOOD HALL.

PIER No.—was crowded. Throngs of people were pouring to it in one steady stream; carts, carriages and vehicles of all sorts rattled over the stony city street, and deposited their inside freight of travelers and their outside freight of baggage on the thronged pier, blazing under a scorching July sun.

"Everybody" was supposed to have left New York, but New York looked tolerably full yet, judging from the number in this particular spot, coming to see their friends off for England, or from idle curiosity. The steamer's deck was thronged, too; in fact, every available portion of the steamer, excepting the smokepipe, was thronged, and great and mighty was the uproar thereof.

Among the many groups, a little knot of four persons stood, two ladies and two gentlemen. *Place aux dames!* The ladies were very young, mere girls in their teens, and one very pretty. It was the tall one with the coquettish turban that sat so jauntily on her black curls, the scarlet

tip of its black plume not brighter than the living scarlet on cheek and lip; her tightly-fitting black basquine showing off to perfection a superb figure, lithe and slender as a young willow, and the morning sunlight floated back from a pair of luminous dark eyes, of unfathomable depth and brightness. She leaned lightly against the railing, the breeze fluttering her gray dress, the black lace veil she held in her gloved hand, waving like a black banner, the jetty curls, and deepening the roses in her cheeks, as she gazed at the crowd before her and talked with her companion.

It was the other young lady, a jolly little damsel, plump and *débonnaire*, whose laughing face was all aglow with excitement, and whose tongue ran in a perpetual flow of title-tattle. For the gentlemen: one was dark, elderly, sharp-looking, and wore spectacles; the other young, eminently handsome, and languidly indifferent to the vulgar uproar about him.

Of course you recognize them—Eve, Hazel, Doctor Lance and Professor D'Arville—professor no longer, but simply Monsieur Claude D'Arville, secretary to the Honorable Arthur Hazelwood, of Hazelwood, County of Essex, England. And they are fairly off on their journey at last.

And Hazel's chattering tongue was running on incessantly.

"Eve, look there! How killingly that gentleman stepping from the hack is got up! Why, my goodness! I declare if it's not Don Signor Monsieur Mustache Whiskerando himself!"

Eve looked, knowing very well who Hazel meant, and saw a foreign-looking and most distinguished gentleman alight from a hack, his cloak over his shoulder, in spite of the heat of that boiling July morning, and his sombrero pulled over his eyes. The memory of a moonlight night, of a Canadian village, and a stranger slipping up to the gate over which she leaned, flashed back on Eve's mind.

"It's Mister Mendez, I vow!" Hazel was crying. "It can't be possible, you know, that he——"

Hazel stopped suddenly. Among the surging sea of human beings, ebbing and flowing on the pier, another form had caught her eyes, that of a young man, who approached Senor Mendez, passed his arm through his and walked with him on board. Eve saw him at the same

time, and her brows contracted in spite of Hazel's joyful little cry:

"Oh, Eve! there is Paul!"

"I see him!" Eve said, in a vexed tone, "and they are coming here!"

She threw the veil she held over her hat to hide her flushed and annoyed face. She had not seen Paul Schaffer since that memorable night at his aunt's, and the scene under the pine-tree came back, and its hateful memory burned like fire in her face. Some one touched her lightly on the shoulder, and D'Arville's dark eyes were piercing through the vail.

"Here are two of your friends, mademoiselle. Ah! I perceive you have seen them!"

His tone and smile annoyed her intensely, but the two new-comers had forced their way along the deck and stood before them, hat in hand.

Very coldly, very slightly, Miss Hazelwood acknowledged Mr. Schaffer's salute, choosing to ignore altogether the hand he extended, but Talleyrand himself never was more completely and utterly nonchalant than he. If the waters of Lethe had been a reality, and he had drunk out the memory of this last interview, Paul Schaffer could not have been one whit more at his ease.

If Eve's greeting lacked warmth, Hazel's made up for it; she pushed her hand through Paul's arm, as one having the right, and bore him off, while the Cuban prince attached himself to Doctor Lance and D'Arville. So Eve stood quite alone, listening to the storm of good-bys on every hand and watching the receding shore as they steamed away on their outward-bound course, to the parting cheer from the land, and then a mist came over the bright, dark eyes.

"Good-by to America! my native land!" her heart cried. "I have been very happy there—how will it be with me in the land to which I go?"

There was no prophetic voice in Eve's soul to answer the question. The merciful veil that shrouds the future no earthly eyes might pierce; and Eve stopped in her musings to listen to a girlish voice near, singing, clear and sweet, Childe Harold's farewell to England:

"Adieu, adieu! my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue,
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild seamew!

"Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight,
Farewell awhile to him and thee—
My native land, good-night!"

"Not good night, the Lord be thanked!" said a broad voice, cutting in, "for it's just breakfast-time!"

There was a general laugh and rush for the cabin. D'Arville smilingly offered his arm to Eve, and sentiment was presently lost sight of in sandwiches; and coffee and beefsteaks took the place of tears and parting regrets.

"Will you be sea-sick, mademoiselle?" Senor Mendez asked Eve.

They were all sitting up on deck again, the land nearly out of sight, and Eve was between the creole and D'Arville.

"I don't know," she said, laughing. "That remains to be seen yet. This, you know, is my first voyage. Shall you?"

"Oh, no! I am an old sailor, and I never was sick in my life."

"You are fortunate," said D'Arville. "As for me, I expect to take my stateroom in an hour, and be obliged to keep it until we reach Southampton."

"My case exactly," growled Doctor Lance. "Among all wise proverbs, 'Praise the sea, but keep on land,' is the wisest. And to think I must endure it all for a couple of wretched girls——"

The crabbed little doctor's voice died away *pianissimo*, in a succession of growls; and Hazel, who sat next him, rose abruptly, with a very white and miserable face.

"I—I think I'll go below! I don't feel——"

"No, I should think you didn't," said Paul, trying to keep grave, but laughing in spite of himself, as Hazel's voice died away. "Allow me to lead you down-stairs."

Eve followed, and for the rest of the day was kept busy enough waiting on Hazel, who was wretchedly sick, and amid her groans, and throes, and tears, protested she must die.

It was late on the second day of the voyage before Eve

"Ah! then we can sympathize. I have spent half the could leave her and go on deck to catch a mouthful of fresh air. Fortunately for her she had escaped the *mal-de-mer* completely; and beyond being fagged out waiting on her sick and cross little cousin felt as well as when she had started.

Wofully thin the deck looked to what it had done at the starting; very few ladies were there, and among the gentlemen only one face was familiar. He was leaning over the side watching the moon rise, red and round, out of the sea, like some fiery Venus, and smoking a cigar, but he threw it over board and startedupat sight of Eve.

"A thousand welcomes, mademoiselle! I am happier than happy to find you able to come up once more."

"Oh, I have not been sick, monsieur," Eve said, laughing, and answering in French, as Senor Mendez had set the example. "I have only been sick-nurse. My poor cousin is half dead!"

"I regret to hear it. Here, sit down and let us see if this fresh breeze will not blow your roses back. They have wilted altogether in that steaming and suffocating cabin."

"Where are all the rest?" Eve asked, taking the profered stool.

"In the same predicament as your cousin—all at death's door, Messieurs Lance, D'Arville, and Schaffer; and Robinson Crusoe, in his desert island, never was lonelier than I! Providence, mademoiselle, must have sent you direct to my relief; for I was falling into despair, and meditating a leap overboard and into the other world, as you came up."

"And out of the frying-pan into the fire!"

"*Quen sabe?*" said the creole, shrugging his shoulders, "we must only hope for the best! Look at that moon-rise, mademoiselle—I have heard you were an artist."

"Who told you so?"

"Monsieur D'Arville—he is a great friend of yours."

Eve's face flushed.

"He was my teacher—at least, he would have been, had we not left Canada. I am no artist—I wish I were."

"I wish you were: you might immortalize yourself to-night. Do you care for the sea?"

"Care, is not the word, monsieur—I love it."

last fifteen years roving over land and sea. One of these rolling stones that gather no moss."

They were both silent, he looking straight before him at the red moonrise, and the girl watching, under her eyelashes, the bronzed, handsome face, and the silver threads gleaming in and out the raven hair.

"Monsieur has been a great traveler, then?" she said, at length, in a subdued tone.

"Over the world, mademoiselle, from Dan to Beersheba. I have ridden camels in Egypt, smoked cigars under the walls of Jerusalem, slept in skins in an Esquimaux hut, and been grilled alive in the jungles of India and the forests of Africa. As for Europe—I think there is not a village on the whole continent I have not done, and found the whole thing an insufferable bore."

"And you have been—but why need I ask—of course, you have been in England?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; I have explored that island—I have even beheld Hazelwood Hall."

"Indeed?" Eve cried, vividly interested. "I should like to hear about that. Is it long ago?"

"Some five years. It is a fine old place, or would be in the hands of any other man than the Honorable Arthur Hazelwood. But pardon—he is your relative?"

"I know nothing about him; I never saw him in my life. Is he a *mauvais sujet*, then?"

"He is—but I shall tell you nothing about him—you must read him for yourself. I fear you will find your new home rather lonely—the owner of Hazelwood Hall receives no visitors, and never goes out."

"A recluse, is he? Did you see Miss Forest?"

"The pale lady with the light hair, who keeps house for him? Oh, yes, I saw her; she never goes out, either—they grow old there, like potatoes in a cellar."

"And the place around—what is it?—a town, a village, a wilderness—or what?"

"A village, very pretty, very picturesque. They call it Monkswood."

"And Hazelwood Hall is the place of the place?"

"By no means! It is eclipsed altogether by another place some seven miles off, far older, far grander, and far more revered. Its name is Blackmonks—Blackmonks Priory—and its owner is Lord Landsdowne."

"Oh! and the village has taken its name from the priory?"

"Exactly. Long ago, when Mary was queen in England, this priory of Blackmonks was founded there, under her patronage. When Elizabeth came into power, the monks were sent adrift, and Baron Landsdowne, a sturdy old warrior, whose portrait still adorns the grand entrance-hall, took this place. It has been in the possession of the Landsdownes ever since, and is likely to be while the race lasts."

"Is the present Lord Landsdowne resident at the priory?"

"Not when I was there—he was on the continent with his lady. He must have been a fine fellow, for he was idolized in the place. I think I would like Blackmonks; it is quite magnificent in its ancient grandeur, I assure you. Hazelwood dwindles into nothing beside it."

"And Mr. Hazelwood is not liked in Monkswood?"

"Why, the fact is, mademoiselle, he is looked upon as a good deal of a stranger, and considerable of an intruder. He is a Yankee, too—I beg your pardon," seeing her flush hotly; "and, in short, there is no love lost between them. Perhaps it may be different now—I will find out when I go there."

"Are you going there?"

"Yes; I have business in Essex. Well, sir, what do you want?"

This last was addressed to one of the cabin-waiters who approached them. The man wanted Miss Hazelwood—the sick young lady in No. 35 had sent him in search of her; and Eve had to go.

That evening's conversation was but the beginning of many. Senor Mendez was cheering—he beguiled the long hours for her with wonderful stories of his adventures in India, Africa, China, and the Holy Land—Eve thought the Thousand and One were nothing to him. Then, too, after the first week, D'Arville was able to come up, a little wan and spectral at first, after his sickness—but Eve blushed frankly at seeing him, and held out her hand with a shy grace, that might have bewitched old Diogenes himself and, very pleasant to Miss Evangeline Hazelwood was the voyage after that; at least, the hours spent on deck. Doctor Lance, being as poor a sailor as

his elder ward, was invisible also; and though Paul Schaffer made his appearance on deck, Eve was very little troubled with him. Once, finding her alone, he had attempted to accost her with his customary cool nonchalance, but *La Princesse* had drawn back and up, with eyes that flashed black flames, and had swept past him in such superb, silent scorn, that even he never attempted it again. Eve had not seen the ominous smile with which he looked after her, nor heard his half-muttered words.

"My bird of Paradise sails high, but I think I will clip her glittering wings before long. *La Princesse* reigns it right royally, but I think I will humble her pride before she is many weeks older. Be as scornful as you like, my dear Eve—smile as sweetly as you please on Monsieur D'Arville—we will change your tune when you are Madame Schaffer; for Madame Schaffer you will be, in spite of earth and all it contains!"

From that time until the end of the voyage, Monsieur Schaffer never attempted to address Eve when alone; but when others were with her, and she could not, without exciting remark, help answering him, he was ever near, in spite of brightly angry glances, forcing answers from her reluctant lips.

When they entered the railway-carriage, at Southampton, it was he who handed her in, leaving Miss Hazel, who had a sick and sea-green look still, to the care of D'Arville. He sat beside her, too, all the way; for he was going to Essex first; he might as well travel with company while he could, he said; and his proximity spoiled the journey for the young lady.

D'Arville devoted himself to Hazel, who looked worried and jealous; and Doctor Lance was deep in discussion with Senor Mendez on some new scientific discovery.

Eve was heartily glad when, in the golden sunset of an August evening, they rattled up to the terminus, and she saw the word, "Monkswood," painted above the little station.

"You come with me, I presume, monsieur?" Senor Mendez said, leaning forward, and speaking to Mr. Schaffer.

"Of course. We are fellow-voyagers in our pilgrimage through this, to me, unknown land. Is there a hotel in this one-horse village?"

"There is an inn—a *chef d'œuvre* in its way, I assure you. You had better take this fly, Doctor Lance—Miss Wood looks fit to die of fatigue."

"My poor Hazel! You do look terribly used up," laughed Paul, "while Miss Eve's roses are still unwilted. Adieu, ladies! Doctor, will we be allowed to go up to the hall and pay our respects?"

"I know nothing about it," snarled the doctor, whose temper was not improved by the discomforts of traveling. "Here, you girls! pile in, and let's be off."

The two gentlemen, left behind, took off their hats to the young ladies as the fly drove away, and then set off for their inn.

"A pretty place, this English village—is it not, mademoiselle?" D'Arville said, speaking to Eve.

"Oh, it is charming! These gardens and cottages, and queer old houses and churches, and there—what place is that?"

"Blackmonks Priory," said Doctor Lance, just glancing at a great park as they rattled by. "We have no time for stopping to stare now. You'll see enough of it before you leave here, I'll warrant you."

They left the village behind, and drove along a lovely country road, where the houses were few and far between, and Eve began to look out for Hazelwood Hall.

They soon reached it; two great gates swung back to admit them, and they drove through the amber haze of sunset up a winding avenue to a great, gloomy-looking old house, silent and lonely as a tomb.

"What a dismal old barn!" said Hazel, fretfully. "And this is Hazelwood Hall! I wish I was back in New York! I'm sick of England already!"

A servant out of livery—a solemn-looking old man—opened the door, and stared aghast at the party. He admitted them, however, answering Doctor Lance's sharp questions as he did so.

"Yes; master was at home, but ill, and confined to his room; and Miss Forest, she was in London, and would not be back until next day. He would take the doctor's card, however, and see if he could be received; meantime, would they be pleased to wait here?"

Eve scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry, as he ushered

them into a dark, and grand, and gloomy reception-room—it was all so different from what she had anticipated.

"I wish I was back in New York—I do!" Hazel reiterated, drearily. "I shall die in this horrid place—I know I shall!"

The sober old servant was back directly. "Master would receive the gentleman in his room, and one of the chambermaids, in the absence of Miss Forest, would attend to the young ladies."

The chambermaid, a very spruce young lady, entered while he was speaking, and respectfully proffered to lead them to their rooms, which were ready and waiting.

Eve cast a half-laughing, half-dismayed, wholly-bewitching glance back at D'Arville, and tripped from the room, up a grand staircase, slippery as glass, down a long hall, and into a chamber in the same large, somber and grand style as the rest of the house. Hazel's was adjoining; but Hazel declared nothing earthly would induce her to pass the night alone in such a place, and despatched the girl for refreshments, with information that she and her cousin would be roommates.

"And now I'm going to bed," said Hazel, after the tea and toast had vanished; "for I feel as though I could sleep a week! Will you come?"

"No," said Eve, taking up her hat; "I am going out to have a look at the grounds. It is a great deal too early for bed. I wonder if I can find my way out?"

She did find her way out, somehow, and wandered down to the great gates, standing wide open. To her surprise, she found no less a personage than Senor Mendez there before her, talking to the porter, and smoking a cigar.

"You here?" Eve cried, in her astonishment. "I thought you had gone to the inn."

"So I did; but I rode up here afterward; there is my horse yonder. How do you like your new home?"

Eve did not immediately reply. A carriage was passing—a very grand affair—drawn by two superb grays in silver harness, and from the window a face was looking out at them, as it rolled slowly by.

A lady's face, handsome and haughty, glancing out for an instant, and then disappearing.

Eve turned to reply to the gentleman's question, but stopped again.

What ailed Senor Mendez? His face had turned as white as a dead man's, and his eyes were strained, as if they would start from his head, after the carriage, vanishing in a cloud of dust.

"Monsieur!" Eve cried out, in alarm, "you are ill!"

Her voice aroused him. He turned to her, but, in spite of all his efforts, it was nearly a minute before he could speak.

"It is nothing—a heavy spasm—quite gone now. My friend" (to the gate-keeper) "whose carriage is that?"

"Lady Landsdowne's, sir," the man said; "and that was my lady herself a-looking out of the window."

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO OLD FRIENDS.

THROUGH long corridors, wainscoted rooms, lofty and large, up sweeping staircases, and into galleries and gloomy drawing-rooms, where the furniture was black with age, and grim old ancestors and ancestresses, frowned down from oak panels, Eve and Hazel went the morning after their arrival in Hazelwood Hall. An old butler, as antique and gloomy as anything he showed them, was their cicerone, and looking upon two young ladies in that house, where young ladies had never been before, time out of mind, very much in the light of interlopers, he vouchsafed them as little information as possible about what they saw. Monsieur D'Arville was closeted with the invisible master of the mansion, and had suggested the idea at breakfast to kill time until he should be released.

"A horrid old barn as ever I saw!" was Hazel's displeased criticism, looking round the dim old saloon. "I wish I was back in New York; the Tombs there was a palace compared to it! What do you call that old chap up there in the white, woolly wig, and all those ridiculous ruffles, mister?"

"That is the portrait of the late Judge Hazelwood, Miss," answered the old butler, with slow dignity.

"And that other scarecrow beside him, with the waist of her dress under her arms, and sleeves like two bolsters—who is she? Mrs. Judge Hazelwood, I suppose?"

"It is, miss."

"Did you ever see such looking shapes, Eve? I say, though, are we near done sight-seeing? They ought to have horse-cars or something to run through this house—I'm just dragged off my feet traveling! The Ramble in Central Park was plain sailing compared to it!"

"Hazel, don't be so innocent," said Eve, barely able to keep from laughing at the shocked and scandalized face of the ancient servitor; "it's a dear romantic old place, and I'm in love with it already."

"Yes; you always had outlandish tastes, I know," said Hazel, discontentedly; "but when we're both laid up with rheumatism, and fever and ague, and consumption, and lots of other harms that we'll be sure to catch in this damp, musty vault, you'll sing a different tune, I dare say. Oh, I wish I was back in New York! even the *pensionnat* was a king to this! Here we are in the blessed sunshine again, *Dieu merci!*"

They had reached the grand entrance hall, where the old butler bowed and left them, shocked out of a year's growth.

"I wonder when we are to be admitted to the throne of the Grand Mogul, Hazel," laughed Eve; "he is as mysterious at Mokanna himself!"

"Who was Mokanna? I don't care about the Grand Mogul; but I do wish Paul would come up to-day! Do you suppose he will?"

"I don't know; and with due reverence to you—don't care."

"Oh, of course not! but if Senor Mendez was in question, perhaps you might. Paul says, the way you flirted with that gay and festive old scamp on shipboard was shameful!"

Eve's eyes began to flash.

"Hazel! did Paul Schaffer dare to say that?"

"Dare! Oh, you have not done acting the *rôle* of *La Princesse* yet, I see! Tell your old beau, Eve, to dye his hair before he proposes; it's getting frosty, rather! There, you needn't fire up now; I'm not going to fight this morning, because you're the only living Christian I've

got to talk to, and bad company is better than none! I wish Monsieur D'Arville would come back, if the Grand Mogul hasn't had him beheaded."

"*Quand un parle du*—be careful what you say, mademoiselle!" said D' Arville himself, sauntering in. "I come from the Grand Mogul with his Serenity's orders for you two young ladies to appear at once before him! I am to lead you to the presence-chamber; so come."

His dark eyes were laughing while he spoke, though his face was serious, and he offered an arm to each, to lead them forth.

"Is it going to be very terrible?" Eve asked, as they went up-stairs.

"Very. Summon all your moral courage, and I will wait at the door. If you faint, give me notice beforehand, and I will fly to your aid."

"Well, I'm pretty curious," said Hazel, "but I ain't scared to speak of. Is this the place? Wait for us outside, monsieur."

Monsieur bowed and rapped. The door was opened at once by a natty little valet—French, you could see at a glance. Monsieur D'Arville retreated, the young ladies advanced, the valet closed the door and vanished, and they were in the presence of the Grand Mogul!

Stretched at full length on a lounge, and half buried in its downy pillows, lay an immensely-stout gentleman, smoking a meerschaum pipe. He wore a dressing-gown, and both his feet were swathed in rolls of flannel—Mr. Hazelwood was suffering from the gout. A dumb-waiter, with the remnants of an epicurean breakfast littered over it, stood near him; and lying there, he looked the very picture of sensuous, selfish, indolent comfort. His room was the most elegant in the house; its pale-green walls lined with exquisite pictures. Nothing remained of the Arthur Hazelwood of former days, but his selfishness, his indolence, and a remnant of his artist tastes. He turned his eyes listlessly toward them, and held out one languid hand.

"Ah! you've come, have you? How d'ye do? Happy to see you both! Find seats and sit down."

The young ladies did so. Eve's sense of the ludicrous was too strong to permit her to look at Hazel, lest she should laugh outright at this enthusiastic greeting, but she felt

that Hazel's face was a picture to see, as she stared blankly at the pulpy figure prostrate before her.

"Ah!" said Mr. Hazelwood, drawling out his words, and smoking away, "which of you is little Hazel? You, I presume?"

"No, sir," said Eve, to whom this was adressed, "this is Hazel—I am Eve."

"Ah! and a very pretty Eve you are—very pretty, indeed! The other was stolen, wasn't she?"

"Do you mean my twin-sister, sir?" said Eve, to whom some part of her own story was familiar. "Yes; I believe she was stolen when an infant, and never found since."

"Ah! very droll—very. And you are little Hazel, eh? Not very large yet, either—and plump as a partridge."

"There's a pair of us, sir!" resorted Hazel, pertly, nettled at this last insinuation, which was touching her feelings on a very tender point.

"Eh?" inquired Mr. Hazelwood, feebly staring; "well, I hope you'll enjoy yourselves here, and all that sort of thing. Una will be back by and by, and then it will be pleasanter for you. Jerome!"

The dapper valet appeared as suddenly as if he had risen from the earth, and stood making genuflections before the lord of Hazelwood Hall.

"Show these young ladies out and fetch me some brandy and water, hot. Ah! good morning!"

Monsieur Jerome, smiling blandly, turned them both out of doors, and the interview was at an end. D'Arville, looking out of a window at the lower end of the hall, advanced to meet them.

"Well," he inquired, "and how do you like the Grand Mogul, mesdemoiselles?"

"Don't ask me—don't!" cried Hazel, her lips compressed, her eyes flashing. "I feel as though I should burst! Is it Bluebeard? Is it Henry the Eighth? What sort of monster is it shut up there? Oh! if I was only back in New York, I wish them joy of their eyesight that would catch me here again!"

Eve went off into an irrepressible fit of laughter at the recollections of the scene, and D'Arville's dark face lighted up with a smile.

"It won't do to live in Rome and fight with the Pope,

an old proverb says. You must keep a civil tongue in your head, Miss Hazel. Do you know there has been an arrival within the last ten minutes?"

"No!—who?—not Paul—I mean Mr. Schaffer?"

"No; a lady. She drove up in a fly, and passed through here in a traveling dress. It is Miss Forest, I presume."

"Oh, has she come, then!" exclaimed Hazel, a little disappointed. "What does she look like?—another Leviathan?"

"Not at all? A pale little woman, pretty and ladylike. I only saw her for an instant, but——"

He stopped short at a sudden motion from Eve. "A pale little woman, pretty and ladylike" had entered the hall while he was speaking; her bonnet and shawl doffed already, her flaxen hair combed very smoothly away from her fair, colorless face; her light blue eyes, as quiet and cloudless as of yore, her steps as noiseless, her looks almost as young. Old time, furrowing wrinkles, and thinning locks, and planting crow's feet, had been merciful to her. The white skin was unfurrowed, the flaxen hair as thick, the form as light and slender as fifteen years before, and Una Forest at thirty was a very prepossessing little person, indeed. She floated forward now, in a dress of gray silk prettily made and trimmed, a smile on her pale, thin lips, and a hand extended to each of the girls.

"At last!" she said, in the soft, sweet voice of old, touching first the cheek of Eve, then of Hazel, "welcome to England and to Hazelwood Hall."

"Thank you," Eve said, a little timidly, while Hazel stared at her in silence. "You are Miss Forest, of course."

"Yes, my dear; and you are the little baby Evangeline, I left in New York over fifteen years ago: grown out of all knowledge. And this is the three-year old Hazel, who used to torment me so, looking the younger of the two. And this gentleman?"—

She paused, looking composedly at D'Arville, who stood in the background. He stepped forward, on hearing himself invited, with an easy bow—his composure as matchless as her own.

"I am Mr. Hazelwood's secretary, madam. My name is D'Arville."

Miss Forest bent her fair little head in silent greeting, and turned once more to look at Eve.

"How very tall you have grown, my dear, and how much older than your age you look! Your voyage does not seem to have affected either of you much; were you sick?"

"Hazel was; I had the good fortune to escape."

"Ah, you may well call it good fortune! I know what sea-sickness is! Was the voyage pleasant?"

"Very! We had a number of friends on board—all the way with us, in fact—and the time went like magic."

"Speak for yourself," cut in Miss Hazel. "I dare say it went like magic for you and your old Spanish beau, but I could tell a different story—pent up in a stew-tub of a stateroom. There wasn't an hour from the time we started till we landed I didn't wish might be our last, if only for spite to see the way you acted; and I used to pray fervently the steamer might run into a rock or a mermaid, or something, and pitch head first to Davy Jones, and so end it all!"

Miss Forest's light blue eye and smiling face were turned on the spirited speaker of this reckless avowal, studying her as she had been studying Eve.

"You have not changed, I see, my dear; the Hazel of three years lives yet in the Hazel of eighteen. And now, where is Doctor Lance? Is he with Mr. Hazelwood?"

"He has gone back," said Eve. "He went by the express last night to London, and starts in the next steamer for New York."

"A flying visit! I should like to have seen him. Have you been through the house?"

"Oh, yes," said Hazel, "we've been through it, and, except the prison up in Sing Sing, that they took me to see once, I never went through a more ghostly place! Isn't it full of ghosts?"

Miss Forest's eyes and smile were on Hazel again. Eve looked nearly as shocked as the old butler had done, and D'Arville intensely amused.

"I really don't know. I never saw any."

"Well, it must be full of rats anyhow, and they're as bad, if not worse. They'd no more keep such an old rat-trap as this standing in New York than— Oh, Eve! here is Paul and Senor Mendez! I declare if they're not."

Hazel sped off down-stairs in an ecstasy. Eve looked out of the window, and saw the two gentlemen in question just going up the stone steps leading to the front door.

"Friends of yours?" Miss Forest inquired, loooking in calm surprise on Eve. "I did not know you had any in the village."

"We knew them in Canada," Eve answered, coloring suddenly, and the two looking at her wondered inwardly which of them the blush was for. "I suppose I must go down."

"Of course, and I must go and see about my household affairs. I came here directly on arriving. Farewell—luncheon-hour is at two; at six we dine."

She bowed in her easy, graceful way and left them. Eve, her face still hot, spoke to D'Arville without looking at him.

"Are you coming down, monsieur? They will want to see you."

"Do you think so?" he said, meaningly.

"Of course. Come!"

She led the way down-stairs, without waiting, and D'Arville followed her. In the grand and gloomy drawing-room they found Hazel chatting away like a magpie to the gentlemen. She was painting their portraits in vivid colors, and her auditors wore laughing faces, but both turned eagerly to the door when Eve entered. She gave her hand frankly and cordially to Senor Mendez, but she just touched Mr. Schaffer's extended digit, as if it had been red-hot, and dropped it again.

"You see we have found our way to Hazelwood Hall," Schaffer said. "A fine old place, but nothing to Black Monk's Priory. Senor Mendez and I were over there this morning."

"That's great praise, to say it's nicer than this," said Hazel, contemptuously. "It's another old vault, I suppose. Oh, give me a brownstone front on Fifth avenue, and you have my idea of heaven on earth at once."

"You shall have it," said Mr. Schaffer, in a voice audible only to her, "when you and I go back to New York together. You ought to see it, Miss Hazelwood," raising his tone. Hazel might not fancy it, but I am sure you would."

"She saw Lady Landsdowne last night, and fancied her

excessively. Did you not, Miss Eve?" asked Senor Mendez.

"I told you I thought her a most beautiful woman, and," rather mischievously, "I think she affected yourself, senor, even more than I, for you turned as white as that marble bust up there at sight of her!"

"Was it at sight of her," said Senor Mendez, coolly. "I thought I told you it was a spasm."

"Oh, yes, you told me that, of course; but I know you watched the carriage out of sight, and inquired very particularly about her from the lodge-keeper. Is the Priory shown to visitors?"

"Not when the family are at home, as now," said Mr. Schaffer. "I was disappointed in my hopes of going through it to-day, and I hope the family may make their exodus soon for my benefit. We saw the grounds, though, and the exterior of the mansion, and very magnificent both are. What is more, we saw Lord Landsdowne, though I should have preferred seeing his lady."

"And is he as lovely to look at as she seems to be?" inquired Hazel.

"No, he is not what you girls would call handsome; he is tall and stately, gentlemanly, and rather distinguished-looking, grave and middle-aged."

"Grave!" said the Cuban. "I should say so! His face is that of a man whose life has been a great mistake."

"Do you judge from faces?" asked D'Arville, speaking for the first time. "If so, I should like you to see the mistress of this establishment, and read me her character. I have been puzzling over it ever since I saw her."

"Is she a study, then?"

"Is she pretty? that's the question?" interrupted Paul Schaffer. "A pretty woman never can be very disagreeable."

Senor Mendez looked at the last speaker, and so queer a smile, so bitter, so cynical and so scornful came over his face, that a new light dawned on Eve's mind. It broke on D'Arville's, too, and he spoke:

"Senor Mendez has lost faith in the sex, but it is not fair to judge all by one. Miss Forest is no common woman, and not to be judged by common rules. She is pretty, too, but it is a strange type of prettiness—unfamiliar to me."

"The more charming, then, I should think," said Paul Schaffer. "*Prenez garde de tomber,* Monsieur D'Arville!"

Monsieur D'Arville's lips curled at the insinuation, and just then there was a tap at the door. D'Arville opened it, supposing it to be a servant, and was taken rather aback to find himself confronted by the fair, still face and soft gray dress of Miss Forest herself. He stepped back, holding the door open for her to enter, but she declined.

"Do not let me disturb you! Mr. Hazelwood desired me to tell you to go to him directly after luncheon, and luncheon waits now."

She was gone again. D'Arville closed the door and looked at the rest.

"Is that the Marble Bride turned Quakeress?" asked Mr. Schaffer. "Her voice is like the music of the spheres, though I can't say I ever heard that melody."

"I take it upon myself to say that is Miss Forest," said Senor Mendez.

"And something out of the common—do you not think so?" inquired D'Arville.

"Decidedly, or she would have invited us to luncheon," said the creole gentleman, rising; "but as she has not, we make our exit. Miss Eve, Miss Hazel, you should go down and see Monkswood; it is worth the journey, I assure you."

"We will," said Eve, "and perhaps this afternoon. Eh, Hazel?"

"All right," said Hazel. "I was bound to go any way; and, what's more, I am going to call at the Priory, too. Will you gentlemen chaperone us—we might go astray in this barbarous land."

The gentlemen asseverated that they would only be too happy and blessed to do so, and took their departure, and the trio sought the dining-room. Miss Forest was waiting there, before a table glittering with silver and cut-glass, and took her place at the head at once.

"I have grown so accustomed to being alone on these occasions," she said, smilingly, "that I fear I have half forgotten how to preside. Mr. Hazelwood so rarely leaves his room, and we never see company, so I live like a female Robinson Crusoe. Let me help you to some of this pigeon-pie, Mr. D'Arville."

"You are worse off than Robinson Crusoe was," put in pert Hazel, "for he had a man—Friday."

Miss Forest only noticed this speech by a cold stare, and went on carving the pie. It was not a very comfortable meal; for the solemn old butler hovered in the background, glaring upon them all in awful silence, and Miss Forest was so very ceremonious and stately, that it completely took away even Hazel's appetite.

"I declare, Eve, I'm starving!" she burst out, when it was safely over at last, and they were alone, D'Arville having gone to Mr. Hazelwood's apartments. "I'll be skin and bone shortly, if this state of things continues. I hate that Una Forest! There!"

"Hazel, hush!"

"I won't hush; and you don't like her yourself, only you're too great a hypocrite to say so. I wonder if there is such a thing as an oyster-saloon in Monkswood?"

"Oyster-saloon!—rubbish! Do you think you are back in New York?"

"Oh, don't I wish I only was! But there must be a cookshop, or a baker's establishment, or something or other there, to keep people from starving. I'm going to see, anyway. Will you come?"

"Of course—anything for a quiet life. Wait till I get my hat."

Arm in arm the two girls strolled down the avenue to the gates, and passed out into the highroad. Pretty green lanes branched off from this road right and left; and, passing one, Eve stopped suddenly, holding Hazel back. The young lady, following her cousin's glance, saw nothing more startling than a group of three persons standing under the shadow of some ash-trees, talking—one, a man; the other two, females. The man had his back toward them, but his height and form were too familiar to be mistaken. The woman nearest him was old, bent, and faced them; but the hood of her crimson cloak partly concealed her face. The third leaned against a tree, shadowed by its long arms, so that only her floating skirts and gipsy hat were visible.

"What is Paul Schaffer up to now?" asked Eve. "And, Hazel, isn't that the old fortune-teller we saw at Madam Schaffer's the night of the *fête?*"

"Nonsense! How could she get to England? It looks

like her, though, don't it? That's Paul for certain; and who can the third one be? I think it's a young girl."

"I am certain that is the same old woman. There! she sees us, and is gone!"

The old woman had caught sight of them, and she and her female companion disappeared among the trees. The man turned round and advanced. Paul Schaffer it certainly was, and as much at his ease as ever.

"What!" was his greeting. "You, too, here! Well, this is an unexpected pleasure!"

Hazel looked at him with jealous eyes.

"Is it a pleasure, sir? Who were those two women you had with you there?"

"Oh, you saw them, did you? Gipsies, of course; didn't you see their red cloaks? There's an encampment of them in the woods, and I was having my fortune told."

"Eve says it's the old woman we saw at Madam Schaffer's *fête*—the fortune-teller, you know."

Mr. Schaffer burst into a laugh.

"I beg your pardon!" he said to Eve; "but that is rather too droll a notion! She is quite as old and quite as ugly, I agree; but all the old beldames look alike."

"Were they both old women, Paul?" Hazel asked, taking his arm, and quite reassured.

"Of course! Come, Senor Mendez is waiting somewhere, and we are going to take you both to see Black Monks. Oh, here he comes with the fly; and now, my dear Hazel, you will see something that will eclipse the whole Fifth avenue, with Madison square thrown in! There is not a finer place in England, they tell me, than Black Monk's Priory."

CHAPTER XVIII.

EVE'S SECOND PROPOSAL.

"You had better not go—it will certainly rain."

"Rain! Oh, nonsense, Miss Forest, there is not a cloud in the sky. It is as clear and blue as—as your eyes."

Miss Forest smiled slightly, and bowed her acknowledgment to the speaker, Mr. Paul Schaffer.

They were standing together in the open hall door, with the August sunshine glowing upon them, and watching the scene on the lawn. Two young ladies in riding-habits were being assisted into their saddles by two gentlemen, whose horses were held by a groom. Eve and Hazel, of course; the former waited on by Senor Mendez, the latter by D'Arville.

Mr. Schaffer's own horse stood near, too, but he seemed in no hurry, as he stood whipping his boot and talking to Una Forest. Somehow they had managed to become very good friends, these two, during the last few weeks.

"Miss Hazelwood is looking her best, this afternoon," Mr. Schaffer said, watching her under his eyebrows as she gathered up the reins.

"Eve is a pretty girl," Miss Forest answered, quietly, "and pretty girls generally look their prettiest on horseback."

"So Senor Mendez seems to think, by his devotion. Is the Spanish grandee trying to cut out the Canadian schoolmaster?"

"And is Mr. Paul Schaffer jealous?"

"Bah! You know I am done for! Yonder dumpy little darling is my fate, of course."

"Of course! You may as well be content with the goods the gods have furnished you, for Eve's case is settled."

"You think so?"

"I know so. I am a woman, Mr. Schaffer, and she loves Monsieur D'Arville."

"Are you telling me that by way of news, Miss Forest? I have known it these two months, and what's more, she is not the only lady who worships at the same shrine."

"You don't mean Hazel?"

Mr. Schaffer laughed and pulled his mustache.

"Oh, no! I don't mean Hazel. I flatter myself that small person has no idol but your humble servant. No, Miss Forest, I don't mean Hazel Wood—do you understand?"

Their eyes met. Yes; she understood, and turned away.

Mr. Schaffer bent his head and lowered his voice:

"This time comes to all of us sooner or later, they say; and I believe it; and, like measles and whooping-cough,

the later in life we take it the more severe it is apt to be. Miss Forest, you and I understand each other, I think."

"Mr. Schaffer, you had better go and ride. They are waiting for you."

"Let them wait! Miss Forest, will you be my friend, as I am willing to be yours?"

"I don't understand you, Mr. Schaffer!"

"Oh, yes, you do! Clarence D'Arville is a handsome fellow, I know, though I am not a woman, and he loves Eve Hazelwood; but for all that he will never marry her!"

"You are raving! If she cares for him, what is to prevent it?"

"The fates and Paul Schaffer! Of course you know my secret, as I do yours!"

"Long ago; and so does D'Arville."

"And so does she, and my wife she will be in spite of her teeth!"

"How? Are you going to carry her off to some Canadian castle, in the old knight-errant style? This is the year of grace eighteen hundred and sixty, remember!"

"Very well; she will marry me for all that, and I shall not carry her off. If you will promise to aid me, Miss Forest, for your own sake, you shall know my plans. I cannot work alone, and I know you have no love for your cousin."

"My cousin," Miss Forest said, with a strange smile.

"Oh, I know all about that, too; and she is your cousin. There, they are off—for the present, farewell. This evening you shall know all, and the play will begin."

"Take care of the storm!" Una cried after him, as he cantered down the avenue.

But a careless laugh was his only answer as he joined Hazel and D'Arville, who rode last. Hazel was inclined to pout.

"Were you making love to Miss Forest, pray," she demanded, "that you stayed so long?"

Una, by the way, was always Miss Forest to the girls; they would as soon have dreamed of calling Queen Victoria by her Christian name, had they chanced to meet her, as the stately and cold little Albino.

"No, my dear! She was merely warning me about the weather."

"Why, what ails the weather?"

"Nothing that I can see. Miss Forest, though, it seems, has had private information from the clerk of the weather that it is going to rain."

"And we will have a thunder-storm before long," said D'Arville, whose eyes had been dreamily fixed on the graceful figure of the lady before him hitherto, lifting them now to the sky. "Look at that cloud!"

"Oh, it will blow over! Don't predict evil! Sorrow's soon enough when it comes."

"I wonder what Senor Mendez is saying to Eve," exclaimed Hazel. "How devoted he looks, and how he bends down to catch every word! What shines these old fellows do take to girls, now and then!"

"Senor Mendez is not old," said Mr. Schaffer, blandly, glancing sideways at D'Arville, whose brows were contracting. "He is a fine-looking man, and in the prime of life. When do you suppose Miss Eve will go to live in her castle in Spain, Hazel?"

"Shortly, I should think, for it is a mutual strike."

"Indeed! has she told you so?"

"Oh, la! no! Catch Eve talking about such a thing, but I know the symptoms, you see," said Hazel, gravely, "and—goodness me! how dark it's getting!"

"We are in for a wetting! Miss Forest was right, after all!" said D'Arville. "Listen to that!"

It was a sharp and sudden peal of thunder, followed by a vivid flash of lightning, and great drops of rain. The whole face of the sky had blackened with astonishing rapidity, and the storm was upon them in its fury. Worst of all they had been riding fast, and had left the village behind them, and were out now on a lonely country road, with no house in sight.

Hazel gave a little screech of dismay.

"Good gracious, Paul! whatever will we do? It's going to pour down straight, and I've got my new hat on!"

But one step from the sublime to the ridiculous; but it was only human nature—a girl's first idea in a tempest is about her hat.

Before Paul could offer consolation, there was another deafening thunder-clap, another sheet of flame, a rush of rain, another wild shriek from Hazel, and a cry from D'Arville.

The horses of the pair before them had taken fright, at least the gentleman's had, and was flying off like mad; and the lady's, startled by the proceeding, was dashing off at full speed after it. It was quite evident Eve had lost all management of her steed, only a half-tamed thing at best.

"She will be thrown! she will be killed!" shouted Paul Schaffer, excitedly, "and Mendez cannot help her. Great heavens! she is down!"

It was true; the frightened animal had thrown her, and was away like the wind. D'Arville, his face perfectly white with horror, dashed the spurs into his horse, and in five seconds after had vaulted off and lifted the prostrate form in his arms, with a passionate cry:

"Eve, my darling! My darling, are you killed?"

No; or if she was, his words had magic power to charm her back to life, for the dark eyes slowly opened and looked up in his face with her whole heart in their depths. In a rapture he bent over her, reading it all.

"Thank God! Oh, thank God, she lives still! My darling, are you hurt?"

Her face was perfectly colorless, and there was blood upon it, but she forced a smile and made an effort to rise. But he held her fast, though the other two were riding up.

"Eve, they are here—one word before they come. You know I love you!"

Yes, she knew it. One little hand still in his, one other glance from the dark eyes, and he was a happy man. The other two were beside them, with faces of consternation, and the rain was coming down in torrents.

"Oh, Eve! are you much hurt?" was Hazel's shrill cry, forgetting all about her new hat.

"Set me up, please, and I will see," Eve said, faintly, smiling up in D'Arville's face. "My head struck something; but I think, on the whole, I was more frightened than hurt."

She stood up as she spoke, very pale, and with the blood flowing from the cut in the forehead, but with no broken bones.

"Thank Heaven, it is so well!" exclaimed D'Arville; "but, Eve, what are we to do with you? It won't mend matters to stand in this downpour."

"Eve!" Paul Schaffer's keen glance flashed from one to the other, and read the whole story. It was the first time Claude D'Arville had ever called her other than Miss Hazelwood.

"There is a house over there," said Hazel, pointing. "Let Eve take your horse, Monsieur D'Arville, and we will be under cover in no time."

"An excellent idea. Miss Eve, let me assist you to mount."

"But you," Eve hesitated, "you will be exposed to all this rain."

"It is of no consequence about me, I won't melt. Here, up with you."

Eve mounted his horse, and bent down to him as she gathered up the reins:

"You will hurry after us," she said, anxiously, and his answer was the bright smile that so vividly lit up his dark, handsome face.

"Yes, I will hurry. Off with you now."

They dashed off, leaving him to follow on foot, and in five minutes were at the house. It was a sort of wayside inn, and held other storm bound wayfarers it seemed; for a gentleman stood in the open doorway, watching the storm. He drew back as the young ladies, with uplifted skirts, skimmed past him into the parlor, and Eve thought of Paul Schaffer's description of the lord of Black Monk's —"grave and middle aged, tall and stately, gentlemanly and rather distinguished-looking"—and made up her mind that this was Lord Landsdowne. The parlor was tenanted, too. In a leathern easy-chair in the chimney-corner a lady sat—a lady richly dressed in silk and velvet, with diamonds flashing on her white hands, whose haughty and handsome face Eve had seen before. It was Lady Landsdowne. Eve remembered the proud, cold face, framed in golden-brown hair, that had looked from the carriage window that first evening in Monkswood village. She was dressed in walking costume now; her blue velvet mantle falling off her sloping shoulders, the dainty bonnet, a snow-flake, sprinkled with azure, still on her head. She had been looking into the fire, her brow contracted in an impatient frown when they entered, and the first glance had been careless and supercilious enough. But that glance changed, fixed, grew wild and amazed, and the

bright blue eye dilated on Eve as if she had been a ghost. There had been a stifled cry, too, and a half bound from her chair, but she sunk back as the eyes of the trio turned on her in wonder. Her face, her very lips had turned ashen white, and her blue eyes still were riveted on Eve's face, with a look none present could comprehend. What was there in that beautiful face to inspire that look of fear, of affright, of positive horror? Paul Schaffer made a step toward her.

"Madame, you are ill—you are——"

The sound of his voice was magical. She started to her feet at once.

"Yes," she said sharply; "you have startled me. I cannot bear the sight of blood! What is the matter with that young lady?"

"She has had a fall from her horse and has cut her forehead. I regret that our entrance should have so disturbed you."

The lady's only reply to Mr. Schaffer's civil speech was to gather up her mantle and sweep past him to the door, with a stormy rustling of silk. There the gentleman in waiting met her with an inquiring face.

"Has the carriage not come yet, my lord?" she demanded, in the same sharp tone.

"Oh, isn't she a Satan!" Hazel whispered to Eve.

"Not yet," the gentleman answered. "It will be here presently, though."

"I want to go," said the lady, still more sharply. "I don't choose to sit in a room crowded with people. Who are those persons who have just entered?"

"Civil, that—upon my word!" exclaimed Hazel, whistling, while Eve's eyes flashed.

"My dear," they heard the gentleman say, in a low tone, "they are most respectable. They are the Hazelwoods. You had better wait——"

"I don't choose to wait any longer," the lady, almost passionately, cried. "I shall go if I have to walk, sooner than sit among such a crowd. Go and see if the people who keep this place have no sort of conveyance at all that will take us home?"

"Here is the carriage, at last!" exclaimed the gentleman, in a tone of intense relief. And as he spoke, a handsome carriage, drawn by handsome horses, and with the

arms of the Landsdowne family upon the panel, drew up before the door. Right after it came cantering a rider at a furious pace. It was Senor Mendez, in a state of intense excitement and anxiety about Eve. He had seen the horses at the door, and sprung from his saddle at once, and strode past Lord and Lady Landsdowne into the parlor.

"Eve—Miss Hazelwood—are you hurt? There is blood on your face!"

"It is nothing—only a scratch," Eve answered. "Are you sure you are quite safe yourself? It was a second edition of Mazeppa or John Gilpin—I hardly know which."

"Oh, I am safe enough, only completely blown, and frightened out of my wits about you. I knew you were here when I saw the horses."

He took off his hat as he spoke, to fan himself, revealing his face for the first time to the pair without. As he did so, there was a wild shriek from the lady, a sudden reel forward, and a something fell to the floor like a log. The cry was echoed by the gentleman, and all rushed out. Lady Landsdowne had fainted, and was lying on the floor like one dead.

"The lady has fainted," said Senor Mendez, coolly. "Can we be of any assistance to your lordship?"

"None, thank you. John, open the door."

John, the coachman, obeyed, and Lord Landsdowne carried my lady in his arms, got her in with John's help, followed, and gave the order to drive home. Our party stood in the doorway until the carriage was out of sight.

"Is my lady mad, I wonder?" asked Paul Schaffer. "What made her faint?"

"And what made her scream and stare at Eve so when we came in?" asked Hazel. "She must want a square of being sound, or she would never cut up so."

"What does Eve think?" Senor Mendez asked, looking at her with an inexplicable smile.

But Eve did not answer. She was watching a figure coming through the slanting rain, with a look at once tender and anxious in her eyes.

"Here comes Monsieur D'Arville," cried out Hazel, "looking like a drowned rat! Look at Eve's face. One would think she was ready to cry from sympathy."

"Do you see?" Senor Mendez said, looking significantly at Paul Schaffer, and that young gentleman smiled superciliously.

"I see Miss Eve wears her heart on her sleeve, for daws to peck at, and that it is D'Arville's turn to-day—mine may come to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A MOONLIGHT INTERVIEW.

LONG lances of moonlight streaming through the vast window, mingled with the light of two wax candles, and fell on the pale face of Eve Hazelwood, as she sat in an easy-chair, having her wounded forehead bound with long strips of court-plaster.

On two pale faces, for Una Forest was the surgeon, and her blue eyes were full of tender solicitude, as they rested on the colorless face of her patient.

"How pale you look, my dear!" her soft voice was pityingly saying. "I am sure your poor bruised forehead must be very painful."

Eve laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, no. It is not very painful; it only feels a little stiff and sore. Don't I look shocking with all this plaster? Why could not I have bruised my arm or my head instead of my face, I wonder?"

"My love, you have reason to be thankful it was not your neck you broke! What would Monsieur D'Arville have done then?"

Eve blushed, as only sixteen years ever does, at the allusion. What a happy ride it had been for her, in spite of her cut face!

"And that reminds me," Miss Forest placidly went on, noting the telltale blush, "that you had better keep your room this evening, if you don't want to disenchant him. Of course, our Eve must be pretty at all times, but I can assure her she is a great deal prettier without strips of court-plaster."

Eve glanced at herself in the mirror, and fully concurred in the opinion.

"It's too bad, but I suppose there is no help for it! My head feels a little dizzy and confused, too; and I think, on the whole, the best thing I can do is, to go to bed."

"Exactly, my dear! You will feel all right to-morrow morning, and your roses will have returned in full bloom. Now I shall fetch you some tea and toast and see you safely tucked in bed. Hazel must not disturb you to-night—she will make you ill and feverish with her tittle-tattle, and must keep her own room."

"How kind she is, after all!" thought Eve, as the little Albino tripped away, "and how Hazel and I have misjudged her! I feel as if I could go down into the valley of humiliation and beg her pardon on my knees for rash judgment. Oh, what a night it is! and how happy I am! I wonder what he is doing down-stairs! I wonder if he will miss me this evening!"

Alone as she was, she felt her face glowing, and covered it with her hands, with a little laugh at her own silliness. A soft rustling of silk made her look up. Miss Forest was there again, carrying a tray herself, laden with tea and toast, and marmalade.

"Now, my dear, take something before you retire, it will make you feel all the better to-morrow."

"How good you are, Miss Forest!" Eve cried out in the fulness of her heart, "to take all this trouble for me!"

Oh, Una Forest! little white hypocrite! had you ever in all your life been guilty of a blush, it should have been then! But the pale blue eyes only shifted away under the grateful glance of the luminous black ones, and the little fair hands twisted in and out among the plates.

"Don't mention it, my dear; it is nothing! Why do you not eat? You taste nothing."

"I am not hungry, thank you! I want nothing but the tea. And now I think I will lie down, and sleep away this dizzy head."

"And I will take away these candles, lest they should tempt you to sit up and read; and I will lock your door to keep that little tomboy, Hazel, from breaking in," said Miss Forest, laughing and nodding. "And now, my love, good night and pleasant dreams to you!"

She kissed her as she spoke—the little female Judas—and left the room, putting the key in her pocket. She

glanced back at it from the head of the stairs with a cold, glittering, evil smile.

"They may be pleasant to-night, pretty Eve," she said, softly, "but they will hardly be so sweet to-morrow night. You shall never be D'Arville's bride until my brain loses its power to plot, and my right hand its cunning to work."

She clenched the little digit fiercely as she spoke, and went down-stairs to the parlor.

Hazel and D'Arville were there: the former jingling away at the piano; the latter holding a book, but seeing only a pair of black eyes, a shower of black curls, and a very young face, fresh and sunshiny as Hebe's own, looking up at him from every page.

Hazel stopped clattering the "Wedding March," whirled round on her stool and faced Una.

"Where's Eve?"

"In her room."

"Ain't she coming down?"

"Not to-night, she says. She has court-plaster on her forehead, and feels light-headed after her fall, so has gone to bed. I locked you out for the night."

"Locked me out!" shrilly cried Hazel. "What is that for?"

"She thinks she will feel better alone, I suppose. All I know is, you are to keep your own room to-night."

"The hateful mean thing! I'll go and sleep in the attic with one of the maids, before I roost alone in there among all the ghosts and rats and other vermin. Eve's nothing but a nasty selfish thing!"

"My dear, if you are really afraid," said Miss Forest, blandly, "you can share my chamber for this one night."

"Oh," said Hazel, wilting down suddenly at the proposed cure, which was worse than the disease, "I guess I shan't mind it so much, after all. If Eve and the rest of you can face the ghosts alone, I dare say I can, too. Well, what's the matter now?"

For Miss Forest, putting her hand in her pocket suddenly, uttered a sharp exclamation of alarm.

D'Arville lifted an inquiring face from his book.

"I have lost my purse, and it contained money to a large amount! I had it when I was out in the grounds this afternoon. I must have dropped it there."

D'Arville rose up.

"The night is clear as day; permit me to go out and search for it, Miss Forest."

Miss Forest hesitated.

"It is so much trouble."

"It is no trouble at all. In what part of the grounds were you?"

"Oh, in several places; but I think I may have dropped it near the old well, at the ash-trees. You know the place? I remember pulling my handkerchief out there to throw over my head, and may have pulled the purse out with it."

"What kind of purse was it?"

"A portmonnaie of gold and ebony. It was a gift from a dear friend; and, independent of the money it contained, very valuable to me on that account. Hazel and I will go with you and help in the search."

The three started. All traces of the thunder-storm had disappeared, and the full moon rode in a cloudless sky, studded with countless stars.

As D'Arville had said, it was clear as day, and the old house looked quaint and picturesque in the silvery rays.

"What a lovely night," Una exclaimed. "Who says it is all fog in England! Your blue Canadian skies were never brighter than that, Monsieur D'Arville!"

"The night is glorious, and old England a very pleasant place, Miss Forest. Hazelwood looks charming by moonlight."

"And Eve's gone to bed!" sententiously put in Hazel, following his glance. "Her room is all in the dark. That's a bran-new idea of hers; for of late she has taken to sit at the window and star-gaze. I believe the girl's in love!"

"And who is the happy man, *petite?*" smilingly inquired Una.

"Oh, a friend of ours; either Senor Mendez, Mr. Schaffer, or Monsieur D'Arville, here. And," said Hazel, with an innocent face, "I really don't know which."

The dark Canadian face of D'Arville lit up with its rare smile.

"Mademoiselle, I thought Mr. Schaffer was your property?"

"Well, that's the very reason why Eve might want him

too. One girl always does want what another possesses, and tries to cut her out. I know I should myself!"

"A very amiable trait in young ladies' characters. But, here we are at the ash-trees, and now for Miss Forest's purse."

But though they wandered up and down, and here and there, and in and out among the ash-trees, no glittering speck of gold and ebony flashed back the moonlight from the grass.

"We had better go over to the old well," said Una, anxiously; "it is just possible I may have dropped it there, and it is quite certain it is not here."

The "old well" was some half-dozen yards of—a lonesome spot, shaded by gloomy ash-trees, where few ever went. The three turned their steps in that direction—steps that awoke no echo on the velvet sward—when Hazel suddenly stopped and raised a warning finger.

"Hush!" she whispered; "listen to that!"

"It is voices," said D'Arville, lowering his own. "Some one is at the old well before us, and may have found your purse."

"Let us see who they are," said Una. "We can do it without being seen ourselves. I don't want to lose the purse, if I can help it. And——"

She stopped short, and laid her hand over Hazel's mouth, to stifle the cry that was breaking from her at the sight they beheld. In the clear moonlight, under the old oak-trees, two figures stood distinctly revealed. There was no mistaking their identity. The tall young man was Paul Schaffer; the girl, wrapped in a large shawl familiar to all three, with strips of white plaster on her forehead, was Eve Hazelwood. Yes, Eve Hazelwood. There was no mistaking that beautiful face, that shower of shining hair, those lustrous black eyes, uplifted to the man's face. Together these two stood as only lovers stand, his arm encircling her waist, his head bent down until his own dark locks mingled with hers. They were talking, too, as only lovers talk; and as they moved away very slowly in an opposite direction, the listening trio distinctly caught every word. It was Paul Schaffer's laughing voice they heard first.

"And so the poor little Canadian schoolmaster has

actually come to it at last, and you have won your bet. What a wicked little thing you are, Eve!"

"And I'm going to write to Kate, to-morrow," said the voice of Eve—that sweet and silvery voice. "It was the night of the *fête*—you remember, Paul—that she and I made that memorable bet that I would not have the flinty professor at my feet before the end of three months. Kate thought him like Achilles, invincible; but I knew better, and to-day he came to it at last."

"Your fall was not so unlucky, then, after all," he laughed, and Eve joined in.

"What would you say, Paul, if I told you the fall was more than half planned? He was so tiresome and so long coming to the point, that some *ruse* was necessary, and that was only one I could think of. It answered the purpose admirably. Oh, you should have heard him!"

"You pretty little sinner! And what do you suppose I am going to say to such goings-on, Mistress Eve?"

"Nothing at all, of course! You know I care for no one in the world but you, Paul. And I have not half done yet, for I mean to number Senor Mendez among my list of killed and wounded before I am satisfied."

"Now, Eve!"

"Now, Paul!"—with pretty willfulness—"I must, I tell you! My reputation as a beauty is at stake, and I feel in duty bound to humble the old grandee! Oh, what a splendid night it is! And they think I am sleeping the sleep of the just up in my room! My poor bruised forehead"—laughing gayly—"was a fine excuse to steal out and meet you."

"Eve, what did you say to D'Arville?"

"Nothing at all. Do you think I am so poor a diplomat? But actions and looks, you know, sometimes speak louder than words. Oh, he has his answer, and is a happy man!"

"Poor fellow! Eve, you ought to have a little mercy!"

"Bah! you lecture, indeed! Why have you no mercy on Hazel? You do nothing but make love to her from morning till night, and pay no attention to me."

"My dear, dear Eve, you mistake. She makes love to me! As to not noticing you, is it not some of your provoking diplomacy? I give you fair warning, I won't stand it much longer!"

The girl clasped his arm with both hands, and looked up in his face, with laughing, loving eyes.

"You dear, cross, good-natured Paul! It won't be necessary for you to stand it much longer. Once I have conquered Monsieur Mustache Whiskerando, as Hazel calls him, I'll be good and obedient, and let you have your own way in everything. You know well enough I care for nobody but you. Do I not run risk enough in meeting you like this?"

There was a caress, and an answer breathed so low that they could not catch it; and then the lovers turned into a side-path, and disappeared. But both faces, as they turned, were for a second full toward them, with the bright moonlight shining full on them; and every vestige of doubt, if such a thing could still linger, vanished. Beautiful, treacherous, deceitful, it was indeed the face of Eve Hazelwood—all her black curls fluttering in the night-wind; and that other, bending over her, was Paul Schaffer, Hazel's false lover. Then they were gone, and only the cold, mocking moonlight remained where they had stood.

A spell seemed to have bound the three lookers-on to the spot. Their evanishment broke it. There was a sound, something between a cry and a hysterical sob, from poor Hazel, as she grasped D'Arville's arm.

"Oh, Monsieur D'Arville, it is Paul and Eve!"

He had been standing as motionless as if changed to stone, his eyes never moving from the pair before him while they had remained. Now he turned to the poor little speaker, his face like white marble, but with pity in his deep, dark eyes for her.

"Yes, poor child! I have long known that this must come to you some day; but I never thought of its coming in this manner. We have both been deceived, Hazel—I far more than you."

"Can I believe my eyes! I feel as if I were dreaming! I always thought she disliked Mr. Schaffer," said Una Forest, with a bewildered look.

A smile, cold and bitter, and mocking, broke over D'Arville's face.

"Did you not hear the reason?—it was the young lady's diplomacy—she wished to win her bets and make more conquests. I have known this long time Mr. Schaffer was

one of her admirers ; but I was so well deceived by the fair diplomat that I imagined the love was all on his side. Miss Wood, get up—you had better go back to the house."

Poor Miss Wood ! She had sunk down on the wet grass, sobbing hysterically, sobbing as a little child does, who has lost a precious toy. D'Arville raised her gently and drew her hand within his arm, and Hazel let herself be drawn away, weeping still, but "passive to all changes."

"You had better let her stay with you to-night, Miss Forest," he said, "and try and comfort her ! Her dream has been broken rudely and bitterly enough."

"I shall do my best," Una said ; "but, good heavens ! who could have imagined this was Eve Hazelwood.? I thought her simple as a child—pure as a saint."

"My mistake, exactly ! " D'Arville said, with the same cold smile ; "I have often heard how fair an outside falsehood hath—I have never fully realized it before."

"I shall inform Mr. Hazelwood to-morrow," said Miss Forest, firmly ; "it is my duty to put a stop to such shameful doings. Miss Eve will find she must turn over a new leaf for the future."

D'Arville said nothing—his heart was far too sore and bitter for mere words. When they entered the house and stood in the upper hall, on the way to their apartments, he stopped at his door and held out his hand to Una.

"Good night, Miss Forest," he said ; "let me thank you now for all the kindness you have shown me since I have been in this house. Be good to this poor little girl, and try and comfort her, if you can."

He was gone, and his door was shut. Una stood looking at it, with a puzzled face.

"What does he mean—thanking me now, and with that look ? He cannot mean to go ! Oh, pshaw ! of course not ! come along, Hazel ! "

She drew Hazel along to her room—poor Hazel, who did nothing but cry, and began early preparing for bed.

"Don't be a baby," was her consolatory address ; "wipe your eyes and go to bed ! Let Mr. Schaffer go—he was only fooling you all the time, and everybody saw it but yourself ! "

"Oh, I wish I was dead—I do!" was Hazel's wicked but natural cry, her passionate sobs only increasing for their comfort. "Oh, I wish I had never been born ! "

There was another in a room near, who, though he shed no tears, uttered no cry, was perhaps wishing the same in the bitterness of his heart. He was on his knees, not in prayer, alas! but packing his trunk, hustling everything in in a heap, as men do. It did not take long—the trunk was packed, locked, strapped, so was his portmanteau, and then he sat down at the table to write. It was a letter, and a short one.

"Sir:—Pardon my hasty departure, but circumstances render it unavoidable. I desire no remuneration for the short time I have served you. Miss Forest may perhaps explain matters more fully.

"Yours respectfully,

"CLAUDE D'ARVILLE."

The note was addressed to Mr. Hazelwood. Then, after a moment's hesitation, he began another.

"MY DEAR MISS FOREST:—After the scene we witnessed to-night, it is impossible for me to remain longer at Hazelwood. I leave by the first train this morning for London—from there I will send an address to which my luggage can be forwarded. Thanking you once more for your past kindness, and begging you to be good to poor Hazel, I remain your sincere friend,

"C. D'ARVILLE."

The gray dawn was creeping in, pale and cold, as he sealed this last, and arose. He put on an overcoat, for the air was chill, took his traveling-bag in his hand, and went down the grand staircase, and out of the great hall-door of the Hazelwood mansion.

And so, while Eve slept and dreamed rosy dreams of to-morrow, the gray and dreary dawn of that to-morrow saw him of whom she dreamed, flying far from her as fast as steam could carry him, to the busy world of London.

CHAPTER XX.

A STORMY DAY.

RAIN lashing the windows, rain drenching the grass, rain dripping from the trees, rain blurring and blotting out everything in a pale blank of sodden mist, and a high gale driving it in slanting lines before it—that was what Eve saw, looking from her chamber-window, next morning. A change had come over the night, and the cloudless sky and brilliant moon-light had been followed by a drear and dismal day. A gloomy prospect Eve's dark eyes looked on, the deserted avenue, the splashy country road beyond, the storm-beaten trees, writhing and tossing their long arms aloft, and the weird blast shrieking through them with a wild, half-human sort of cry. But the heart makes its own sunshine, and Eve was singing, half-unconscious, with a smile on her face like a happy child, singing a snatch of the sweet ballad somebody—her somebody—had sung months ago, at Madam Schaffer's *fête :*

"Ellen Adair, she loved me well,
Against her father and mother's will.
To-day I sat for an hour and wept
By Ellen's grave on the windy hill.
Shy she was, and I thought her proud—
Thought her cold and fled o'er the sea;
Filled was I with folly and spite,
When Ellen Adair was dying for me.
Cruel, cruel, were the words I said,
Cruel came they back to me."

She stopped short, and dropped the curtain over the window, with a delicious little shiver.

"What a song for me to sing this morning! Oh, how happy I am, and how good every one is to me! What a thankful heart I ought to have to the Author of all good gifts!"

There was a picture over her bed—"Christ Blessing Little Children." Eve's face grew grave and reverent, as she lifted her eyes to that divine countenance, so sublime in its calm majesty; and kneeling down, she bowed her

head in her hands to say her morning-prayers. So long she knelt, that ten struck from the loud-voiced clock in the hall without, and a tap at the door only aroused her at last. She rose and opened it, and saw one of the housemaids standing there.

"Oh, is it you, Mary?" Eve said. "I suppose you have come to tell me breakfast is ready?"

"Yes, miss, and Miss Forest is waiting. Is your face better this morning, miss?"

"Much better, thank you. Tell miss Forest I will be down in a moment."

She had taken the disfiguring court-plaster off, and only a few red scratches remained. Eve took a parting peep at herself in the glass to make sure that her curls were smooth and her collar straight; and thought, with a smile and a blush, as she ran down-stairs, she would not look so very frightful in his eyes, after all. She might have spared herself the trouble. Una Forest only was in the room, standing at the table, waiting. One look at her face sent a chill to Eve's bounding heart; and had it been carved out of an iceberg or a snow-wreath, it could not have been whiter or colder. Her thin, pale lips were cold, compressed, smileless; her eyes as devoid of light or warmth as the sapphire stone; and even the rustle of her Quakerish gray dress had something chilling and repellent in its sound. Where was the kind, motherly, warm-hearted Una Forest of last night? Had she been a changeling of the radiant moonlight, that had gone forever and vanished with it?"

"I have kept you waiting, I am afraid," Eve faltered, her air-castles shivering on their frail foundations.

"Yes," Miss Forest coldly said; "you have. Be good enough to take your place."

She poured out the coffee and passed the toast in a manner that effectually took away Eve's appetite; but indignation was coming to her aid now and giving her courage. Miss Forest, watching her as a cat does some unfortunate mouse it is going to devour, presently saw a hot red spot coming into either cheek, and a bright, angry light in either eye. What had she done to be treated like this? She had committed no crime, that she need be afraid. She would speak, and show Miss Forest she was no slave of her humors and whims.

"Where is cousin Hazel?" she demanded, looking up.

Una Forest's pale-blue orbs met the bright black ones with a glance so cold, so stern, so severe, and so prolonged, that the outraged crimson rose in a fiery tide to Eve's brow.

"You want to know where Miss Wood is, do you?"

"Yes, Miss Forest."

"Then she is in my room, where she has been all night, too ill to leave it."

Eve rose precipitately.

"Hazel sick! When—how—what is—Miss Forest, I must go to her at once!"

Miss Forest pushed aside her plate and cup and rose, too.

"I beg your pardon. You will do nothing of the kind."

"Miss Forest!"

"Miss Hazelwood—if that be your name—I am mistress here, I think, and accustomed to be obeyed. You do not set foot in my room, either to-day or any other day, while you see fit to remain at Hazelwood Hall!"

Eve stood looking at her, utterly confounded. Had Miss Forest suddenly gone mad? The cold, sweet voice of that pale little lady broke the brief silence.

"You thought no one was watching you last night, doubtless, when you held that shameful interview. You thought the lie you acted would never be discovered; but both are known now, and so are you, you wicked and shameless girl! And yet, after it all, you can dare to stand and look me in the face like this! Oh, I could blush for you, so young and so depraved!"

"Stand and look her in the face!"

Eve's great dark eyes were dilating in utter bewilderment, to twice their natural size, while every trace of color was slowly fading from her face.

"Go to your room, now," Miss Forest's pitiless voice continued, as she moved to the door; "to one more injured than I, I leave the task of upbraiding you. Go to your room, unhappy girl, and remain there until sent for."

She was gone, but Eve never moved. She stood literally rooted to the spot, so completely lost in wonder, so utterly dumfounded by this amazing and vague charge

of crime, that she scarcely knew whether she were asleep or awake. She passed her hand over her face in a bewildered way.

"What does she mean? What did she say I had done?" she asked herself, confusedly. "I don't understand at all! Go to my room and stay there! What will I do that for? I will not do it. No, I will not! If Miss Forest has gone mad, I will find out what she means."

Indignation had come to the rescue again. Eve's spirit, naturally bright, flashed up in her pale face, kindling a red glow there, and blazing like black flame in the flashing eyes. Impetuously, she started after Miss Forest, but Miss Forest was not to be found. She had given a brief order about dinner and had gone away, and the servants knew nothing of her. With a step that rung and rebounded, Eve marched across the upper hall, and knocked at her door. There was no answer; and though she knocked again and again, it was all labor lost. Eve stood and listened, the angry blood coursing tumultuously through every throbbing vein.

"She is in there, I know," was her thought, "and she hears me well enough. I shall not stir from here until she comes out, if I have to wait the whole day long."

Too excited to stand still, the girl began pacing rapidly and vehemently up and down the long hall, watching the door that never opened. No, indeed; why should it when there was another door within that chamber communicating with the lower hall, of which she knew nothing. So Eve trod up and down like a handsome young Pythoness going into training for expeditions as an Amazon sentry, while Miss Hazel was serenely attending to her duties downstairs. So while hour after hour of the dark, rainy day wore on, Eve paced her lonely beat undisturbed—for not even the housemaid came near her—until she grew so completely exhausted that she could walk no longer. Even then she would not leave, so sure was she that there was some one within; but seated herself within the wide window-ledge at the end of the hall, and gazed out at the bleared and desolate evening, with all its own gloom on her face. Oh, where was D'Arville? Where was Hazel? Had they all deserted her together? Had they all gone crazed with Una Forest?

Six struck from the hall-clock. A voice at Eve's ear an instant after made her bound; but it was only the servant who had come to her in the morning, and whom she had not heard cross the hall.

"Miss Eve, Miss Forest wants to know if you will come down to dinner?"

"Miss Forest: is she in her own room?"

"Oh, dear, no, miss; she's been down-stairs all day."

Eve pressed her hand to her throbbing forehead.

"And is it I who am going mad?" she thought.

"You look poorly, miss; your face is as white as a sheet," the girl said, pityingly, for all in the house liked the bright-eyed, pleasant-voiced young American girl. "I'm afraid you've caught cold up in this damp, nasty 'all, which it's as drafty as ever it can be. Do come down and take your dinner comfortably, Miss Eve."

Eve rose passively to follow her, her head all confused, feeling as if some one had struck her a blow and stunned her.

"Is Miss Forest alone?" she asked.

"No, miss; Miss Hazel is with her, and you can't see an eye in her 'ead for crying, whatever be the matter."

Eve said no more—Hazel in trouble, too—it was all of a piece with the rest—all mystery to her. Miss Forest turned sharply upon her the moment she entered.

"I wish, Miss Eve Hazelwood, you would come to attend your meals in proper season, and not keep me waiting and the servants tramping all over the house for you! Mary, go up to Mr. D'Arville's room and ask him if he will please descend to dinner."

Eve's heart bounded. Oh, he was coming at last; he who never could be cruel or unjust, whose love would shield her, whose strength would support her, whose clear brain would find out what all this dreadful mystery of unkindness meant. Then her eye fell on Hazel, who sat in a corner, her ruddy face pale; her laughing brown eyes red and swollen; her bright, round, good-natured face clouded and sullen. Yes, sullen—that, I am sorry to say, is the only word for it. Hazel had cried until she could cry no longer, and had relapsed now into a state of unmitigated sulkiness. Eve went over eagerly to her.

"Hazel, dear, what is the matter with you? Are you sick—are you in trouble?"

She laid her hand on Hazel's shoulder, but that young lady started up and flung it off violently.

"Don't touch me! don't come near me, you mean, underhand, deceitful, treacherous, lying thing! I hate you—there."

A hysterical outburst of sobs wound up the outburst of temper. Eve recoiled as if she had been struck in the face, and a malicious smile dawned on the thin lips of Una Forest. Mary came suddenly in with a startled face and two letters in her hand.

"Oh, if you please, Miss Forest," she began, vehemently, "Mr. D'Arville is not in his room at all, and his bed hasn't been slept in all night, and his trunk and things is all packed, and here's two letters as I found on his table; and if you please, miss, I do think as how he's been and gone away."

Una Forrest crossed the room and snatched the letters out of the girl's hand. That she was excited, could be seen; for the fingers that tore open the one addressed to herself trembled perceptibly. As she read it, she uttered a sharp cry—a cry of bitter disappointment and mortification. Gone and left her! never to return, in all likelihood! Was this what she had plotted and planned for—was this the way she was to turn him against Eve, and keep him at her own side—was this the end of all her schemes? Surely her cunning had overshot the mark, and she had been foiled with her own weapons.

"Gone!" she cried out; "where did he go? Some of the servants must have seen him! Mary——"

But the address was interrupted by another cry, more startled than her own, and Eve was by her side.

"Gone!" she echoed, her lips pale, her eyes wild. "Gone, Miss Forest! Do you mean to say that Mr. D'Arville has left Hazelwood?"

Una Forest turned upon her like a tigress, her eyes flashing blue flame, her whole face livid with suppressed passion.

"He has gone! He has left Hazelwood forever, and it is you who have driven him from it! You, you wicked, you shameless, you disgraceful creature! He has gone, hating, despising, abhorring you, as we all do now. Don't look at me so, you vile girl! with your miserable white face! Go to the man you met by night in the grounds;

go to Paul Schaffer now, and exult with him over your work!"

Eve stood motionless, paralyzed, dumb. Mary stood with eyes and mouth agape, Hazel looked up with a frightened face, but Una Forest had lost the self-control of a life in an instant, the tide of passion, so seldom moved in that stagnant breast, all the more powerful for that very reason, swept everything before its resistless force. Five minutes later, she might be her own calm, ladylike, coldly-severe self again; now she was mad—mad with rage, jealousy, and disappointment. Now she must speak or die.

"You!" she half-screamed, "you wretched, dependent, nameless thing—living on the bounty of strangers—you, a miserable beggar, for all your airs and graces—you, lower than the servants who wait on you, for they are honest, at least—you, with no right to the name you have disgraced, whose mother was a wretched street-walker of New York—you, who, springing from the filth and scum of the city streets, dare to reign here like a queen, and yet show the scum and dregs you spring from, by night and by stealth, it is you, you, who have driven him from the house, to which he had far more right than yourself, in which you never were wanted, from which you should have been sent long ago to earn your living, like any other pauper. I tell you, girl, I hate and despise you, and shall never rest until you are turned from the house you have disgraced; and then let the man you met by stealth protect you, or else follow your vile outcast mother's example, and——"

But she did not finish! There had been one wild shriek from Eve, and then she had turned and fled from the room, from the house, like a mad creature. Mad! for the time being she was so—the terrible words of Una Forest were ringing in her ears like death-knells, seared on her brain in letters of fire. She was conscious of nothing, only one wild, frantic, delirious idea of flying very far away, anywhere—anywhere out of the reach of that serpent-tongue. She knew not where she was going, what she was doing, only that they had driven her wild.

And so she fled on. Night was falling fast, a drenching rain with it, and everything was blurred in a mist of sudden fog. Heaven and earth were dark alike, but she saw

not the darkness; her head was bare, her long hair fluttering in the night-wind, but she felt no cold, heeded not the soaking rain. Stumbling, slipping, falling, rising, and flying on again, that frantic figure rushed through the night and the storm, in and on, and over, a very maniac, until at last exhausted nature gave way, and she sunk down, prone on her face, on the soaking grass. She never thought where she was; in that first delirium she did not care. And so there, with the dismal night falling, with the rain drenching her through, Eve Hazelwood, who had risen that morning happy, loving, and beloved, lay at night a homeless, friendless outcast.

Oh, truly has it been said, "We knew not what a day may bring forth."

CHAPTER XXI.

BLACK MONKS.

SHE did not faint; lying there prostrate, with the rain beating upon her, and the wind fluttering her hair and garments—she was yet conscious. Perhaps it was that very wind and rain, cooling her burning brow, that kept her so; but for a time nature was so completely exhausted that she was unable to move. Then slowly, as the first mad excitement and delirium died out, all the horror of her situation dawned upon her. It was night—a tempest was raging, she was friendless and homeless—without where to lay her head. Must she stay in this dreadful place all night?—must she lie here and die? Oh, if death would only come at once! Eve wished for it then, as we all wish for it in our first moments of sinful despair. What is there left to live for now? All love—and love makes up all that is worth living for to some—had faded out of her life, and why should she wish to drag on a dreary and unloved life? Ah! Eve could not remember then, in her first bitterness of despair, that

> "There is a love that never fails
> When earthly loves decay."

Heaven and earth, that dismal night, looked black alike. A clock struck nine—the clock of the village church.

She was in Monkswood, then, and near shelter, if she chose to ask for it. She raised herself on her elbow, pushed back the dripping masses of hair from her face, and looked round. Lights twinkled in the distance—stars of hope—from the cottage windows.

Eve was well known in Monkswood. She had been good to more than one poor sufferer there; her bright face had made sunshine in many a poor home; her sweet voice had whispered hope in many a sorrowful ear; her princely hand and heart had shared with them the last farthing she possessed. Yes, she could not die on the roadside this terrible night; she would go to some of these humble homes until to-morrow should come, and then she would fly—she knew not whither, cared not, either, so that it was far from Hazelwood.

Faint, dizzy, staggering, the girl rose up and toiled slowly on through the darkness and the rain. Now that the feverish excitement had passed away, the false strength it had lent her had gone with it, and she was so weak she could hardly totter. She had eaten nothing since early morning, and at the first cottage she came to, she dropped down on the door-step, feeling that, if her life depended on it, she could not go one more step.

It was a poor place, this cottage, with thin doors and curtainless windows. Eve could hear voices within, and one—the voice of a man—had a strangely-familiar sound. She tried to think who it was, but her head felt all wrong and confused—memory would not come to her aid. She rose up again, resolved to see, before she asked for shelter; it might be one of those cruel ~~enemies~~ she had left, for all she could tell. The little window was uncurtained, the room bright with fire and candle-light—as humble within as without, too; but Eve saw nothing of that—her eyes were fixed on its three occupants. Surely, that old woman on the stool in front of the fire had a strangely-familiar face. Where had she seen her before? And that man—that tall gentleman wearing that well-known cloak, must be Senor Mendez, her Cuban friend. And that third face—ah! what sight of horror was that: her own face looking straight back at her—her own face as she saw it every day in the glass. There was a shrill shriek of affright, a heavy fall, and Eve Hazelwood had fainted for the first time in her life!

What a strangely confused and bewildered feeling is the return of consciousness after a swoon. Gentlemen, perhaps, not being of the fainting sex, know very little about it; but their sister-sufferers, being used to it, know the dizzy, disagreeable, distressed sense of vague bewilderment with which life and recollection come back. Everything looks unusual; the most familiar objects unfamiliar; voices at our ear sound afar off, and the well-known home faces strange and visionary like the rest. But when the fainter come to in a strange room, where everything is really unfamiliar—furniture, faces, voices and all—then she is, indeed, an object of pity.

It was Eve's case, as she rose up and looked round her. What large room was this, with its strange, antique furniture, its black oil-paintings, its wood fire burning on a marble hearth, its tall wax candles flaring on an inlaid table, its huge tented bedstead looking like a house? Who were these three tall men looking at her, one of them sitting beside her holding her wrist? and who was the elderly lady in black dress and snow-white cap, watching her with such kind, compassionate eyes? What had happened, and where could she be? She moaned out something vaguely to that effect, as she passed her hand over her forehead piteously, trying, poor child, to clear her mental vision.

"All right now," said the gentleman holding her wrist, dropping it and putting a glass to her lips; "I said you would come to presently! Drink this, my dear, and you will be as well as ever."

Eve drank as submissively as a little child. It was port wine, and helped her at once. She looked again at the man beside her, with new-born resignation in her great bright eye.

"Are you, Mr. Holmes?" she asked.

"Of course, I am, my dear Miss Hazelwood," answered the village-surgeon. "How do you feel now? Like a giant refreshed—eh?"

"I feel better, thank you," very faintly; "though please to tell me where I am?"

"In a very nice place, Miss Eve, Black Monk's Priory."

"Black Monk's! Why—how——"

"There, don't get fidgety now. You fainted, you know, and we found you as dead as a door-nail; carried you off

here, and brought you to life again. For further explanation, I must refer you to this gentleman here."

The gentleman thus evoked stepped forward and bent over her. Eve grasped his hand with a glad cry—it was good to see that familiar face, where all was so strange and new.

"Senor Mendez," she cried out, holding his kind hands. "Oh, I am glad you are here."

"My own little Eve!" he said, a little huskily, "thank Heaven, you are conscious again. You feel better do you not?"

"Oh, yes! but I want to know how I came here! When did I faint, and what made me?"

Senor Mendez turned to the third gentleman still in the background:

"My lord, if you and Mr. Holmes will kindly leave me alone with Miss Hazelwood, for a few moments, I will give her all the explanation she requires. It will be better for her to know at once than work herself into a fever with wondering."

"Of course," said Lord Landsdowne, courteously, "for as many minutes as you please. Mrs. Roberts?"

Mrs. Roberts, who was the housekeeper at Black Monks, obeyed the hint, and followed his lordship and the physician out of the room. Senor Mendez took the chair beside her, and looked into her great dark eyes, fixed so wistfully upon him, with a smile. There was something so infinitely kind and genial in his face, something so protecting and reassuring in his smile, that Eve's heart went out to him in a great cry:

"Oh senor! what does it all mean? Am I going mad? Will you turn against me, too?"

"My dear child! turn against you! why should I?"

"Oh, I don't know! I have not done anything that I know of, but they all have turned from me—they all hate me now! I have no friend left in all the wide world, I think!"

"Not even me, Eve?"

She looked at him earnestly, longingly; truth, honor, manliness, friendliness—nay, love, shone in those deep dark eyes, in that gentle smile, in that tender handclasp. Yes, Eve had one friend left! Her face told him so, and his pleasant smile deepened.

"Thank you, my little girl," he said, as if she had spoken. "You are not quite deserted yet! And now tell me what they have been doing to you at Hazelwood—I think I half guess, though."

"I can't tell you what they have been doing to me—only that they have all turned against me, and Miss Forest—oh," Eve cried, passionately, "how shall I ever forget the dreadful things she said?"

"Humph! it was Miss Forest then, the little sleek, sharp-clawed cat! What did she say to you, Eve?"

"Dreadful things, senor, and Hazel told me," with a choking sob, "that she hated me!"

"The deuce she did! But Miss Forest, what did she say?"

"Senor, she said that I—that I—oh, I can't tell you," cried Eve, suddenly, covering her face with her hands, but not before he saw that sensitive face turn scarlet.

"Yes, you can, Eve; remember I am your only friend! Tell me all! She said you did something very shocking, I suppose! She said you——"

"Senor, that I met Monsieur Schaffer in the grounds by night, and by stealth, and that she, and Hazel, and Monsieur D'Arville saw me with him there!"

Senor Mendez gave a long, low whistle.

"Whew! the little liar! and what did Hazel say?"

"That she hated me, and that I was a wicked, treacherous, deceitful creature!"

"Forcible language, upon my word! These little female angels, however, have the devil's own tongue. And Monsieur D'Arville—surely, he denied it!"

"Senor," Eve said, her voice trembling pitiably, "he has gone away!"

"Gone! where?"

"To London, and is coming back no more." And here Eve's courage all failed, and her voice was lost in a tempest of sobs. The Cuban planter looked at her pityingly.

"My poor Eve! they have been conspiring up there, I see! When did all this take place?"

"This morning, at breakfast, senor, Miss Forest commenced. I did not see her all day, or Hazel either; but when I went down to dinner, Monsieur D'Arville's letter, telling of his departure, was brought her, and I think it

set her wild! It was then she said all those terrible things, until she nearly drove me mad."

"And you rushed out into the storm just as you were, and ran until you could run no longer, I suppose?"

"Yes, senor! And, oh, I don't know at all what it means, for I never left my room last night."

"Oh, you need not tell me that! I quite understand, and so does pretty Miss Forest, that you never set foot in the grounds with Paul Schaffer! Was that all she said to you?"

"No, senor—she spoke of my mother, of my dead mother, whom I never knew, and said things of her too frighful to repeat."

"The little ——," Senor Mendez ground out the rest between his mustache, "said she was no better than she oughr to be, I suppose, Eve?"

Eve hid her face, flushed again. But she was pouring out her whole heart to this man, and could not help it.

"She said I had no right there—no right even to the name I bore."

"Indeed! Much she knows about it! Did she say anything of your father?"

"No, senor, she never spoke of him, but," Eve cried, struck by something in his face, "perhaps you knew him, senor! Oh, if you do——"

"There! there! don't get into a fright now! I did know your father when a young man, but never much good of him. He was a young scamp, and the less you know about him the better."

Poor Eve! there was no ray of hope for her anywhere. Her eager face saddened and darkened again.

"Then perhaps it was all true that Miss Forest said!"

"Not a bit of it! Your mother was a bad woman. Oh, don't start! I knew all about her, too; but she was your fathers's wife, as fast as a minister, and a marriage-ceremony, and a wedding-ring could make her. In fact, they were a bad lot, both of them; and the less you find out about them the better for your peace of mind. Where ignorance is bliss, and so on, you know!"

There was a table near. Eve laid her arms wearily upon it, and dropped her poor sad face thereon, not to let him see the tears that were raining down.

A hand was laid on the bowed young head, with a touch as tender as a woman's.

"Dear child! don't cry; it will all come right after awhile, believe me. There is a destiny in these things, and that destiny is in the hands of One as merciful as He is mighty. Every cloud has its silver lining, my Eve. You will see yours glittering through the darkness yet!"

Eve turned and touched her lips to the caressing hand, but her voice was too choked to speak.

"And for whom were those tears, Eve? Sacred to the memory of an unworthy father and mother, or a false lover."

"He is not false," Eve said, sobbing, "but he believes me guilty, and has gone forever."

"Let him go, then! One so easily deluded, with so little faith in you, is not worthy of a sigh. Cheer up, Eve! send Una Forest and Claude D'Arville *au diable*, and be happy in spite of them. I am going now; it is getting late! but I will be back again early to-morrow morning. And so, my baby, good night!"

What a strange man he was! But Eve liked him and his hearty, fatherly manner; and once alone dropped where she sat into the heavy slumber of exhaustion, and never woke till morning.

The red sunrise was slanting rosy rays through the curtains when she opened her black eyes in this mortal life again, a little stiff and tired from her uncomfortable position, but thoroughly refreshed, and her own bright-eyed, clear-headed self again. But at her heart the dull pain still ached, heavy as lead it still lay in her bosom; no sleep could ever chase away the aching there.

She drew back the curtain from the window and looked out. Every cloud had gone, the sun was shining in a sky as blue and cloudless as—Una Forest's eyes! Far below she could see the village of Monkswood; the smoke curling up from the cottage chimneys, and the farms out over the road. Right below her was a rose-garden, hot with scarlet bloom, and the birds were piercing the air with their matin hymns.

It was all very charming and Black Monk's was a delightful place, but how came she in it? She remembered now she had not found that out last night; she remembered,

too, with a thrill, the face so awfully like her own, and she knew it was that made her faint.

She must wait now, she knew, till Senor Mendez came, to find out everything; so she bathed her face, brushed out her tangled curls, said her prayers—a little more fervently than usual, perhaps—and then sat down by the window to wait and think.

A clock, somewhere in the house, struck loudly ten. As its last echo died away, there was a knock at her door, and the old housekeeper entered.

"Oh, you are up!" she said, looking pleased; "and not quite so much like a corpse as you were last night! Do you feel better?"

"Very much better, thank you."

"Will you have breakfast here, or will you come down? My lord sent me up to see."

"I will go down," Eve said, in some trepidation. "Who is—is any one there?"

"Only his lordship. My lady won't be back for a week."

"Is she away, then?" Eve said, very much relieved; for she instinctively disliked the supercilious, handsome Lady Landsdowne.

"Yes, miss; she started for London yesterday morning. This is the breakfast-parlor."

They had been walking through a long hall, and down a great flight of stairs while conversing, and soon the old lady opened a door and ushered Eve into a large and handsomely-furnished parlor, where Lord Landsdowne and a well-spread breakfast table were alone. He advanced to meet her with extended hand.

"I am glad to see you looking so much better, Miss Hazelwood! I trust you rested well last night."

"Thank you, my lord," said Eve, finding the title rather odd to her American tongue. "I did. I feel as well as ever this morning."

"That is right. We are to have a *tête-à-tête* breakfast, I find, this morning. Lady Landsdowne is in London, and Senor Mendez declined my invitation to breakfast. Pray be seated."

If Eve had never known before that wealth and rank do not constitute happiness, she might have found it out that morning by looking at Lord Landsdowne's face. It was

the face of a saddened and disappointed man, of one who has made some great life-mistake. Yet it was kindly too: though he rarely smiled, its deep gravity was gentle; its melancholy patient. Eve felt sorry for him somehow, without very well knowing why, and disliked the absent Lady Landsdowne more than ever.

During breakfast they talked of the weather, of yesterday's storm, and of Black Monk's.

"Would you like to see it?" he asked her, as they arose. "It is rather a gloomy old place, and considerably out of repair, but still worth looking at. I will be your cicerone, if you like. No one can do the honors of Black Monk's but a Landsdowne."

So they went through it—up and down grand old oaken staircases—through dark suites of painted rooms, through wainscoted halls, until Eve was tired out. It was a gloomy place, gloomier than Hazelwood even, all but one suite of rooms. They were my lady's; everything antique had been removed; everything modern, elegant and costly was there. Eve had never seen anything so beautiful before; but she looked in vain for one thing—a portrait of their owner.

"Is Lady Landsdowne's picture not there?" she asked at length, curiously; "I have not seen it anywhere in the house."

"No; she never had a picture taken—it is one of her whims; not even a photograph. And now, if you are not too tired, will you take a stroll through the grounds? The fresh air will do you good, after these damp and dreary old rooms."

Eve was very willing to leave the gloomy house for the bright sunshine and blessed breeze out of doors; so, with only a handkerchief thrown over her head, she went out with him into the grounds. Spacious they were; roseries, graperies, deerparks, long avenues of stately trees, thickly wooded shrubberies, everything old and grand, but somehow the same show of gloom and solitude reigned without as within. Eve admired and praised all, as she could not help doing, but she turned away with a feeling of relief to Senor Mendez, galloping up the avenue. He jumped off his horse, and raised his hat.

"Allah be praised! the dead is alive again. I see quite another girl to the ghost of last night. My lord, was it

coffee or the elixir of life you gave Miss Hazelwood at breakfast this morning ?"

Lord Landsdowne smiled as be turned to go.

"I shall leave Miss Hazelwood herself to answer that question. *Au revoir.*"

"Here's a bench," said Senor Mendez ; "and you look tired, I think. Sit down and tell me how you feel."

Eve lifted her melancholy, dark eyes to his face for a moment, and then dropped them again.

"Oh, I see ! Very lonely, and dreary, and sad ! How do you like Lord Landsdowne ?"

"Very much."

"And my lady ?"

"She is away."

"Oh, true ; I had forgotten. And the place ?"

"It is a very fine old place ; but, oh, so desolate and gloomy ! Even the sunshine does not seem to brighten it !"

"Sunshine ! How can sunshine brighten a place like this—a place that is accursed ?"

"Senor !" Eve cried, startled by the strong word.

"I repeat it—accursed ! If ever a curse rested anywhere on earth, it does on Black Monk's ! Can you not see it in its master's face ?"

"You never mean to say," said Eve, still more startled, "that it is haunted ?"

"Yes, I do ; and by an incarnate imp of the Evil One himself ! But don't look so white about it, if you can help it. I don't know as this spirit of darkness has any power or any will to injure you."

"I'm not going to remain here to tempt it," said Eve, tartly ; "I am going away."

"Oh, are you ? Where to, pray ?"

"Anywhere—anywhere that I can earn a living. I will never go back to Hazelwood again."

"My dear girl, don't make any rash promises. Where do you wish to go to—back to Canada ?"

"Oh, no ! not there—not even to New York. I want to go to London. No one knows me there."

"And what will you do when you get to London ?"

"Anything ! Be a governess, a school-teacher, a seamstress, a housemaid, or anything by which I can earn a living."

Her eyes were flashing—her cheeks glowing—her voice ringing—but the phlegmatic gentleman beside her caught none of her excitement.

"A very laudible design, indeed, but don't be in a hurry. Suppose you wait until Lady Landsdowne comes home? These great ladies always want a companion, or something of that sort, and——"

"I wouldn't stay if she did! I don't like this place, and I don't like Lady Landsdowne. I want to go far from here."

"Oh, that's the way of it, is it? Well, she may know some other great lady in Belgravia who wants a companion or a governess, and may get you the situation. Take my advice, and wait till she comes; there are worse places to stop in than Black Monk's."

"How did I ever come here?" asked Eve. "I remember seeing you through the cottage-window that dreadful night, and that is all. How did I get here?"

"I heard you scream and fall, and so did another gentleman, driving home in his carriage. It was Lord Landsdowne, and he stopped to find out the matter; and, when we recognized the young lady, he insisted on putting her into the carriage and driving her home. You understand?"

"Yes; and what cottage was that you were in, and who were the two women?"

"What a pretty inquisitor it is! The two women were grandmother and granddaughter, and I went in out of the rain."

"Senor Mendez, I want to see that girl again. I thought it was my own face looking at me over the fire. We must look exactly alike."

Senor Mendez looked at her as if struck by a new idea.

"Why, yes; now you mention it, I do think there is a slight resemblance. Rose—I think I heard the old lady call her Rose—Rose has black eyes and curls, and is about your height; but she is browner in the skin, and has redder cheeks, and not so much to say! And now I must leave you for awhile. I am going to Hazelwood."

"To Hazelwood!"

"Don't faint! I won't tell them you are here! I want to see what they are about over there, and won't say a word about you. Good-by for awhile. Don't excite yourself.

Wait till my lady comes home. It will be in a few days—and who knows what the upshot will be? Keep up a good heart. Remember what I said before. Every cloud has its silver lining."

"But the lining is on the wrong side," said poor Eve, wistfully; "and it is very long and dreary to wait."

"Perhaps you won't have so long to wait—who knows? Wait anyway until her ladyship comes back, and we will see what will follow. Wait, Eve, wait and see!"

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CLOUD.

THERE come to all of us, now and then, days that seem endless. We get up and sit down, and yawn, and saunter wearily about and the long dull hours drag their slow length along, each one a lifetime of dreariness in itself. It was one of those black-letter days to Eve, that first one in Black Monk's—she wandered through the grounds, sauntered in and out of the house; tried to read, and found it impossible; and all the time unconsciously to herself, she was listening for the coming of some one, for a voice, for a step, as all of us poor creatures have listened at some period of our lives. In vain, too—that is the worst of it. Eve did not know she was listening for Claude D'Arville; but she was starting at every footstep, her foolish heart throbbing and then sinking back with a sickening sense of disappointment, and still her pride would not let her own to herself why.

At seven she and Lord Landsdowne dined in solitary state. His day deemed to have been little more agreeable than her own—he looked weary and dejected, and by tacit consent neither talked much.

When the mute performance was ended, Eve went out again to the grounds, thinking that the curse of *ennui* certainly rested heavily on Black Monk's, if none worse did.

The sun that had throbbed all day like a heart of fire in the blue vault above was dying out in the west. Dying,

too, as a monarch ought, grandly and serenely, wrapped in rainbow-glory. The girl was standing watching it, forgetting half her own troubles in its splendor, when a step coming near made her turn round with the same flutter at her heart. It was a man, a young man, but not he for whom she looked—a very different person indeed—none other than Mr. Paul Schaffer. He came up to her rapidly and excitedly.

"Miss Hazelwood—Eve! have I found you at last? What is this they have been doing to you at Hazelwood?"

Eve's answer was a flash of her black eyes, an attempt to pass, but he stopped her.

"No, Miss Hazelwood, do not go. You must not leave me. I have been searching for you all day, and only discovered half an hour ago that you were here."

Eve was too proud to struggle—she drew back, and stood leaning against a tree, with her eyes fixed on the flaring sunset.

"Eve," he repeated, still excitedly, "what is this they have been doing to you at Hazelwood that you have fled here? That much, at least, I know."

"Yes, I am sure you do!" Eve said, frigidly.

"I went there this morning, and heard a most remarkable story. In fact, I was met by Hazel with a tempest of tears and reproaches, and accused of having met you the night before last in the grounds. Miss Forest confirmed the tale with the hauteur of a dowager duchess offended, and informed me she and D'Arville had been looking on. Now, Miss Hazelwood, what does this mean?"

"Will you allow me to pass, Mr. Schaffer?" was Eve's cold reply. "Simple as you think me, I am not deceived by your acting. Whatever plot has been laid for me, you, the accomplice of Miss Forest, know best."

"Eve, you wrong me! I swear you do! I love you too well ever to enter into any plot against your happiness! It's all a mystery to me—no, not all—for I know Miss Forest's motive for hating you!"

Eve turned her large, truthful eyes from the sunset to the man's pale and excited face.

"For hating me? What have I ever done that she should hate me?"

"The greatest crime one woman can commit against another. You have been her rival?"

"*What?*"

"Her rival, Eve! Oh, you have been blind while all the rest of the world saw. Una Forest loves Claude D'Arville."

Eve's heart gave one wild bound, and then seemed to stand still. A thousand trifles rushed on her mind to confirm the story. She knew this man to be a liar; but he spoke the truth now. All the blood in her body seemed to rush into her face, and she clasped her hands over its burning.

"Yes, Miss Eve, that is Una Forest's secret. He knows nothing of it, any more than you did; but that hidden passion is the spring that has set all this shameful machinery at work. Her aim was to turn him against you, and she has succeeded—how, I do not know—though it seems she has involved me in it."

He stopped, but Eve did not speak; her face was still buried in her hands, and he could not see its expression.

"It proves that she hates you—it proves something else, how weak and contemptible a creature this D'Arville is! If he had any mind of his own, would he not see through a woman's poor machinations? If he had any real love for you, would he, at the first word, spurn you unseen and unheard and shamefully desert you without one word? Oh, Eve! listen to me—I love you, if he does not! I believe in you, if he has no faith! I respect you, if he has scorned! I will be true, if he has deserted you! Let the miserable ex-schoolmaster go, Eve, and be my wife—my beloved and honored wife! I can give you a happy home, wealth, friends, position, everything; he can give you nothing but his fickle heart, his empty brain and emptier pocket! Come back to Canada, Eve, where the friends are who know and love you, and forget one who can so easily forget you!"

He spoke vehemently, passionately, trying to take her hand; but Eve drew back, and the face she lifted seemed to have turned to marble.

"Will you let me pass, Monsieur Schaffer?" she coldly said.

"Eve! Eve! have you no heart? Will you not hear me?"

"I have heard you. If you are a gentleman, monsieur, you will let me pass."

"Eve, do you refuse? Oh, Eve, you know I love you!" he cried out, distractedly.

"I have refused you before—I refuse you again! You are plausible enough, but I know you of old, Monsieur Schaffer; and if you were to kneel down and swear to me you are not concerned in this plot against me, I would not believe you! I scorn your offer as I do yourself, and I would sooner be turned out to stand and die in the streets, than to become your wife. Now will you let me pass?"

"And you defy me like this?"

"I do defy you, monsieur! You thought, I know, when you had brought me to this, made me homeless and friendless, that I would be only too glad to come to any terms. But I am not friendless, monsieur," she said lifting her head to the radiant sky, her face and voice solemn alike, "the Father of the orphan reigns there, and my trust is in Him. Mr. Schaffer, let me go!"

What was there in that white face, in those solemn, earnest, dark eyes that awed the man. The same soul—that one spark of divinity within us that awes the tameless beasts of the forest—looked forth, perhaps, and cowed him. He drew back, his own face livid with suppressed fury.

"Go," he said, "but I will conquer you yet. No one ever defied Paul Schaffer with impunity; and before another sun sets, you will be turned out of Black Monk's as you have been out of Hazelwood! Then we will see what kind of a tramp *La Princesse* will make. A few days' starvation will prove a wonderful cure for these fine airs and graces, my pretty Eve!"

But Eve was gone, and Mr. Paul Schaffer walked away, beaten and baffled. He had counted so surely on his schemes succeeding, and here he was foiled at the first turn. But he had another card to play yet—the game was not quite ended.

That night, a letter addressed to Lady Landsdowne was posted in the little post-office of Monkswood. It was short, pithy, and anonymous:

"My Lady Landsdowne need be in no hurry home. His lordship is not at all lonely in her absence, as he has a younger and even prettier lady than his charming wife for company in the dull old mansion. The young person

is Miss Eve Hazelwood, of Hazelwood, who, for some mysterious reason, has left the latter for the former residence. How long she is going to remain is also unknown —probably your ladyship may find out on your return—if both birds, in the mean time, do not take unto themselves wings, and fly away. A FRIEND."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SILVER LINING.

How Eve passed that night she best knew. Lord Landsdowne did not, though he partly guessed, seeing the white face and sunken eyes across the breakfast-table next morning. Worst of all, Senor Mendez and her only remaining friend now came not, though the morning was wearing away; and she stood straining her eyes, half wild with impatience, watching for his arrival. Noon came, and brought him not; the sultry afternoon stole on, and still he was absent. Oh! was he, too, turning against her! Was he, too, forgetting and deserting her, like the rest of the world? No, surely this was he at last. A fly had entered the gate, and was driving rapidly up the avenue. Eve started forward to meet it. Alas for her hopes! it was a fly from the railway-station, and held only a lot of trunks and a lady—the sad, haughty, handsome face of a lady she had seen before, and instinctively distrusted. It was Lady Landsdowne returned. Eve drew back with a low bow, but recoiled at the fierce bright glance she met from the lady's blue eyes—a glance that, had her looks been lightning, would have blasted her where she stood. The next moment she was gone, gathering up her silken skirt with her gloved fingers, as if she feared it might be contaminated by the slightest contact with the other.

"It never rains but it pours." Oh, truest of all true proverbs! Eve stood and looked after her with a strained and bewildered air. What had she done now to incur that fiery glance? Long ago she had heard of the intense and unreasonable jealousy of Lady Landsdowne, but it never occurred to her now. "To the pure all things are pure."

Eve thought of everything, but not of that, until at last roused, indignant and outraged, she turned into the house with a brightened color and flaming eye.

"I will leave this instant—I will stay no longer where I am not wanted! Let Senor Mendez go. He has forsaken me, like all the rest; but I will lie down on the roadside and die before I stay to be treated like this!"

She ran up-stairs, and was crossing the hall on her way to the room she occupied, when, through the half-open door of the library, she heard a loud and passionate voice pronouncing her name. Instinctively she stopped—I think the best of us would, in her place—and listened. The library was the room in which the lord of Black Monk's spent nearly all his time, but he was not the speaker. This raised angry voice was a woman's—was my lady's.

"I tell you I will speak!" she was passionately crying out, "and I will not lower my voice. Let the shameless creature hear, if she likes; such vile wretches care little what is said to them. But you, my lord, the saint, the paragon—I have found you out at last, have I? This is the way you pass the time when I am absent! I wish Miss Eve Hazelwood joy of her conquest!"

"Lady Landsdowne," the calm, low voice of her husband said, "have you gone mad? For Heaven's sake lower your voice, or you will have every servant in the house at the door in five minutes!"

"Let them come!" cried the excited lady, "I want nothing better than to expose the pair of you! You're the model husband forsooth!—so kind, so indulgent, so faithful—the admiration of all the weak-minded female fools I know! But I have found you out in time, and I shall turn that miserable girl from the door in five minutes, and expose her to the whole country."

Lord Landsdowne rose from his seat and crossed the room to close the door, when the sight of Eve, standing there like a stone, made him start back as if he had seen a ghost. He turned scarlet for the woman who could not blush for herself.

"Miss Hazelwood, you here! Good heavens! you must have heard all!"

"I have, my lord," Eve said, her voice sounding even to herself strange and far off, "and I am going. I thank

you most sincerely for your kindness, but I wish I had been dead before I ever came here!"

Lady Landsdowne came to the door, her shawl hanging off her shoulders, her bonnet still on, her face distorted by the storm of jealous fury into which she had lashed herself.

"Yes, go, you wretched girl, before I order my servants to turn you out, but do not think your infamy is to be concealed. No, I will expose——"

"Peace, woman!" her husband thundered. "Hold your poisonous tongue, or I will forget I am a man and——"

"Strike me!" screamed Lady Landsdowne, who seemed to be fairly beside herself. "I knew it would come to that. But I will expose you both, the whole county shall know of it; shall know I am a wronged, slandered, insulted wife!"

She finished with an hysterical peal of laughter that ended in a wild and noisy storm of tears. Eve fled horrified, and Lord Landsdowne, seizing the bell, rung a peal that brought half a dozen curious servants to the spot at once.

"Her ladyship is not well! Attend to her!" was his order, and then he too was gone. Not in search of Eve, though—he had not moral courage enough for that, but to lock himself in his own room for the rest of the day, out of the reach of his wife's serpent-tongue.

And Eve, bareheaded and unshawled, as she had fled from Hazelwood, was flying now from Black Monk's. She did not fly far, however; the gate opened before she reached it, and a tall gentleman entered, and with a cry of joy she looked up into the kind eyes and friendly face of Senor Mendez.

"What's your hurry, Eve?" he said, stopping her; "running away again, eh?"

"Oh, let me go! let me go!" she cried, passionately. "I shall die if I stop here!"

"Die, will you? You look like it, I must say! What has happened?"

"Oh, do not ask me—it is too dreadful to tell! Only take me away from here!"

"Directly! Has Lady Landsdowne returned?"

"Yes, yes, yes! Oh, she is ten times worse than Miss Forest?"

"Yes; I know she is! But what has she done to you? Oh, I see!" he exclaimed, his eyes firing and his face flushing; "Eve, has she turned you out?"

A passionate gesture was her answer—her voice was too choked to speak.

"My poor child! My poor persecuted little Eve!" he said compassionately, "and what are you going to do now?"

She broke out into a wild cry—the wail of a half-broken heart.

"Oh, I don't know! I only want to lie down and die!"

A change came over Senor Mendez. He took both her hands in his, and looked brightly down in her face.

"Not yet, Eve! not yet! Not till you see the silver lining of all these clouds, as I promised you. You have been thinking hard of me, I know, for leaving you so long; but I could not help it. I have been up to London since, in search of another runaway—a friend of yours, Eve. It will all come right yet, believe me. Can you bear a shock, Eve?"

She looked at him in silent questioning; and met his reassuring smile.

"Eve, did you ever hear of Conway Hazelwood?"

"I have heard he was my father," she answered, her heart beginning to throb fast, "and that he was dead."

"Half true and half false! He is your father, and he is not dead! Eve, your father lives!"

"Oh, where?" she wildly cried, "where in all the world have I a father?"

He took off his sombrero and held open his arms.

"Here, Eve; here, beside you! When all the world forsakes you, it is time your father should come to the rescue. Yes, Eve; no longer the creole planter, no longer Senor Mendez, but Conway Hazelwood and your father!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

THE door of carved oak, studded with brass nails, leading into my lady's boudoir, stood ajar, and peeping through, you might have fancied you saw a glimpse of fairyland, so brilliant was the little room. Curtains of rose satin and snowy lace tempered the garish morning sunshine, and fluttered softly in the light summer breeze. Your foot sunk deep in the velvet-pile carpet. The pictures on the walls were each worth a fortune; and there were rare Indian cabinets, and inlaid tables, and Psyche mirrors, and the thousand and one costly trifles ladies with more money than they know what to do with love to gather round them. It was, altogether, a perfect gem of a room, this boudoir of my Lady Landsdowne.

On a lounge under the window, in a charming morning toilet, half-buried in rosy cushions, lay my lady herself. A pretty woman, as you know already, blue-eyed, golden-haired and fair-skinned, with regular features, and an air that might have done credit to a princess royal. Fair-haired, blue-eyed and delicate-featured, a gentle delineation surely; but Lady Landsdowne would not have impressed you with the idea of gentleness. The fair face looked hard and haughty at the best; at the worst, as it was this morning, it looked sour, sullen, and almost fierce.

A little stand with the remains of an epicurean breakfast, stood at her elbow; the last new novel was in her hand, but she was not reading; she was listening—not in impatience, not in eagerness, but with a look of sullen determination about the thin, bitter lips and in the wicked blue eyes. What she listened for came at last. There was a tap at the door, and her French maid entered, dipping and smiling.

"A gentleman was below, and wished to see mi ladi. He did not send his name, but said he came on important business. *Oh, mon Dieu!* here he was!"

Sure enough, there he was, at mademoiselle's elbow—a

tall gentleman, with a handsome, bronzed face, jet-black beard and mustache, dark-bright eyes, and the air generally of an Italian brigand.

"Your mistress will see me," said this dark apparition; "have the goodness to go, mademoiselle!"

Mademoiselle looked at her mistress, aghast. My lady had risen to a sitting position and waved her off with her jeweled hand. She seemed very little surprised or startled by this strange visitor; she had turned pale, it is true, and mademoiselle noticed it was like the gray pallor of death; but that was all. Her glittering eyes were fixed on his face as he came in and closed the door, and she was the first to speak, clearly and steadily.

"So you have come," she said; "sooner or later I knew you would!"

"I have come," said the deep voice of Senor Mendez, standing before her, dark and stern as Radamanthus, "I have come to seal your fate! Murderess, matricide, bigamist, your career is run. I come as an avenger, to lead you to your doom!"

A strange mode of saluting a great lady in her own house! But Lady Landsdowne only looked up in his face with a smile that showed all her glistening white teeth.

"Will you not take a seat, Mr. Hazelwood?" she said, in her sweetest tone, "or perhaps you prefer to rant standing. That tragic speech would bring down the house if you were in Drury Lane, or in the Bowery, in your own delightful land over the sea! Did you expect me to faint at sight of you, this morning, Conway?"

He looked at her in amazement. Bold and daring as he knew her to be, he was hardly prepared for such hardihood, for such brazen effrontery as this. She broke into a derisive little laugh as she watched him.

"Even so, Mr. Hazelwood! Strange to say, I fear you no more to-day than I did sixteen years ago, when I poisoned your pretty bride, got your brother hanged, broke your father's heart, and sent you a wanderer over the world. Oh, no! I am not afraid of you, Conway; I never was afraid of any thing or any one in my life, and I am not likely to begin now."

"You are the devil himself, I believe," said Mr. Hazelwood; "but if you were ten times the incarnate demon you are, your race is run, your power to do evil is ended.

For stone walls, a treadmill, or a strait-jacket have rendered harmless worse fiends than you."

Again she laughed her low, mocking, derisive laugh. The woman seemed to be scarcely human in her daring fearlessness; and it was no mock courage, you could see; some secret sense of power suspended and lifted her above all fear.

"'Justice, though the heavens fall!' Is that your relentless motto, Mr. Hazelwood? Well, I have reason to be thankful to you for the sixteen years' grace you have given me! You see I have not wasted my time—I have gained wealth, rank, title, position. I have drank the wine of life hot and sweet, and now that I have got to the lees I find them rather bitter and palling to the taste. I am getting *blase*, Mr. Hazelwood, and even the treadmill may be pleasant by way of change! How has the world gone with you these sixteen long years, my dear husband?"

"Woman! woman! is no spark of human nature left in your black and murderous heart, that you can talk like this? It matters not to you where I have been—I have known where you were this many a day, and I spared you. You had entrapped a good and honorable man into marriage by your devilish wiles; and for his sake, though he was a stranger to me, I spared you. You were a double, a treble murderess. You had ruined my life, made me a wanderer and an outcast, but still I spared you. And, fiend that you are, I would have spared you to the last—I would have left you to the Great Avenger of all wrongs, but for this last, cruelest deed of all. The shameful and inhuman deed committed last night!"

"Committed last night! Oh, you mean turning that girl out of doors! Why, Mr. Hazelwood, reflect—I come home and find a young and pretty woman domiciled with my husband, a young and handsome man, and——"

"Silence!" he thundered, raising his voice, for the first time, and with a flash from his dark eyes, that made even the female fiend before him cower. "Silence, or I will forget I am a man, and strangle you where you sit! Wretch, Jezebel, fiendess! You know as well as I do, that girl is your own daughter!"

Lady Landsdowne, stretched out her hand for a jeweled fan on the table, and began fanning herself.

"Mr. Hazelwood, oblige me by not shouting out in that manner! It's extremely ill-bred, and you'll have every servant in the house here to see what is the matter. Suppose she is my daughter—what then? It only makes the matter worse! I don't want her here—you stole her from me when a child—you thought I wasn't the proper sort of person to bring up your daughter, and you have kept her ever since. I didn't care much for her then—I care a great deal less now! I knew perfectly well, from the first moment I saw her, who she was—and a rare start she gave me, I assure you, for my nerves are not at all strong at times; but, as I said, I didn't want her here—so I turned her out! If it were to do over again I would do it in half an hour—just the same!"

"I don't doubt it! You would murder your own mother if you took it into your head!"

"Yes, and if she ever comes troubling me here, I shall feel tempted to do it! Oh, you need not stare! I know she is in Monkswood, and has the other one with her—I have seen them both, though she never saw me. I know more than you think, Mr. Hazelwood. I know how she stole Rosamond, and would have stolen Evangeline to spite you, if she could! Poor little wretch! a sweet life the one she did get must have led with her—half-starved all her days, I dare say!"

Conway Hazelwood stood looking at her, his dark face white as death.

"And this creature who sits there and says such things is human and a woman. Oh, in all this wide world does such another monster exist?"

She smiled up in his face and fluttered her pretty fan.

"You think me unique, then. I take it as a compliment! But if I am a monster and a murderess, and all the other sweet things you call me, whose conduct made me so, pray? I was the daughter of a New England innkeeper, a pretty, innocent barmaid, who used to fill the glasses of Captain Forrest and his fast young friends from New York, make their punch, and sing for them with such charming simplicity and such innocent blue eyes and long golden curls, until the blue eyes and golden curls turned Captain Forrest's head, and he made the pretty little bartender his pretty little wife!"

"Yes, when I was half-mad with your father's cursed

liquor, and knew nothing of what I was doing. That was the one mad act that has ruined my whole life!"

"Very soon," Lady Landsdowne placidly went on, "Captain Forrest—an assumed name, but no matter—got tired of his artless little bride and deserted her. Her father died, and by and by came two little baby girls, with big black eyes and black curly hair—the very image of their papa. Papa found it out, relented, and came to see them, gave them money, and went away again. The ill-used wife waited, and waited, and at last, growing tired of that, began to act. She got money from him regularly. It enabled her to act all the better. She found out the reason of his absence—he was about to break the laws of his country and marry another wife, a richer and more presentable bride. She found out she was not Mrs. Forrest but Mrs. Hazelwood; but her husband was rich, and treacherous, and despised her. To add to it all, he stole her children from her one winter-night, out of a poor and lonely house, in a lonely marsh, where she and her mother were stopping for a few days, on their way to New York. That was the last drop in the cup; not that she cared much for the twins—they were only a burden and a torment to her; but the act galled her woman's nature. She resolved to be revenged, and in her own way. All that was savage within her—and Old Nick had always lain latent behind those innocent blue eyes and golden ringlets—rose fierce to the surface. She left her mother, secretly came to the city, obtained a situation as housemaid in the house of her husband's bride-elect, and laid her plans. It was she who wrote the notes to the bride and her lover; it was she who followed him down Broadway that memorable night dressed as a man. Had her trap laid for him succeeded, he might have been arrested for the murder; but he baffled her there. It was her hand administered the poison, hidden in a cup of coffee, and for which his brother died! Yes, she became a murderess! but whose was the first fault?"

"Yours, woman; for you entrapped me into a marriage I never would have thought of in my sober senses! Who can blame me for tiring of you? Why did you not come forward and proclaim the marriage, as you might have done? Mine alone was the fault; mine alone should have been the atonement. But, no, you were merciless, and

now. I shall be merciless to you! With the measure you have meted to others shall it this day be measured to you! The hour of retribution has come!"

"Has it? What are you going to do, Mr. Hazelwood?"

"I am going to summon Lord Landsdowne here and tell him your whole diabolical history. You entrapped him as you entrapped me. You have been his bane and the curse of his home, as you have been of mine! Then you shall enter a carriage that awaits you at the door, and I shall take you to the house where you are to drag out the rest of your wretched life."

"Might I ask where this house is?"

"It is an English madhouse! There is your stone prison, separated even from the unfortunates who will be your fellow-captives, you may learn in solitude to pray for pardon, and, perhaps, mercifully obtain forgiveness from Him who is more merciful than man; from Him who has said: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as wool.'"

"Thank you for your sermon! But suppose I do not believe in a future state; suppose I do not choose to pray—what am I to do then?"

"What you please! Your power to do harm will at least be ended. You should be thankful that your punishment is so slight!"

"Oh, I am—excessively! When am I to go?"

"Immediately! I am going to send for Lord Landsdowne now. You had better put on your bonnet and shawl, and be ready to accompany me in half an hour."

He rung the bell as he spoke, and my lady arose, with her cold, slight laugh:

"Short notice! But it is all poetical justice, I suppose. My bonnet and shawl are in my bed-chamber, you know. I shall beg you to excuse me while I put them on."

"Any attempt at escape will be useless," he said, sternly. "You shall not go out of my sight!"

"I shall not ask to. You may go in and examine the room. There is no door—no secret and mysterious trap-door, and the window is twenty feet from the ground. Go in and look yourself, if you do not believe me."

He did go in with her, and she watched him with her cold, evil eye as he examined the apartment. What she had said was true, and he left her carefully adjusting her

shawl round her graceful shoulders, and went out again to the boudoir to answer a rap at the door. It was a servant come to reply to the call."

"Is his lordship in?" Mr. Hazelwood asked.

"Yes, sir; he is in the library."

"Ask him to have the kindness to come here at once, will you?"

The man bowed and disappeared. Mr. Hazelwood glanced into the inner room. My lady was still busy before the glass. Five minutes passed, then Lord Landsdowne opened the door, staring with all his eyes at the stranger.

"Senor Mendez—you here! Where is her ladyship, and what——"

"My lord, come in," was the grave answer.

A quaking cry and a heavy fall in the next room. Both rushed in. Before her dressing-table, my lady lay flat on her face, writhing in dreadful convulsions. Conway Hazelwood lifted her up, and her face was an appalling sight—blackened, convulsed, distorted, the lips foaming, the eyeballs starting. In one clenched hand she held convulsively grasped a vial, whose label told the whole story. The ghastly struggle lasted but for a moment. The blackened and horrible face turned livid, the awful deep rattle sounded through the room; the hand fell back; the eyeballs turned in their inflamed sockets; the jaw dropped, and her soul was gone! Rose Hazelwood—Lady Landsdowne—had gone to render an account of her dark and guilty life before the highest of all tribunals, and the two living husbands stood looking on the dead wife!

CHAPTER XXV.

THE STORY TOLD IN THE DEATH-ROOM.

SILENCE and gloom have, for many a day, been the pervading characteristies of Black Monk's Priory; but a deeper silence, a more dismal gloom hung over it this serene summer day than the oldest servitor of the house ever remembered before. With bated breath and noiseless step they stole from room to room, speaking in hushed whispers and with awestruck faces; for an awful visitor

had entered unseen, unheard, unannounced. Death, grim and relentless, had been in their midst; and in one of the upper rooms my lady lay cold and rigid, and lifeless. She had never been loved by one in the place. She was not regretted. There was not a living creature to drop a tear to the memory of the hard, cruel, haughty, overbearing mistress of Black Monk's; but its appalling suddenness stunned them. She had risen that morning in her usual health. She had eaten her breakfast with her accustomary appetite. She had not evinced the slightest symptom of the slightest indisposition, yet now she lay in her room a corpse. It was indeed enough to startle the most stolid among them; and, clustered together in the servants' hall, the tragic event was profoundly discussed in all its bearings. Mademoiselle Rosine, the French maid, deposed how the tall dark gentleman had followed her to the boudoir, had ordered her away, and how horribly pale my lady had turned at sight of him. Mademoiselle was of opinion that the dark gentleman was either his Satanic Majesty, or Death in bodily form; for no one had ever seen my lady alive after that. The two rival village physicians had been sent for in great haste, but they must have come too late; for all their combined efforts could not kindle one spark of life in that cold breast. The old housekeeper was the only one among them who had seen her, and that excited their curiosity all the more. It was a crying shame, they all decided, that she alone should have the handling of the corpse and the *entree* of the death-chamber. Then there were other things to arouse their curiosity. The tall stranger whom William, the coachman, knew, and "who was a foreign gentleman from Spain or Rooshia, and was named Mendez, which he stopped at the Black Monk's Arms, along of another foreign gent, and was great up at Hazelwood," had taken his departure about noon; and the housekeeper, having arranged the corpse in its grave-clothes, had been turned out of the room by my lord, who was watching by the dead alone. Then a little after sunset a carriage had driven up to the door, and the foreign gentleman had alighted with three ladies. Two of the ladies were evidently young, though their faces were hidden behind thick veils. The third was old, and ugly, and wrinkled, and bent, and poorly dressed, and was crying and moaning pitifully, and twisting her

skinny old fingers, and wiping her bleared old eyes all the time she was in sight. The whole four had gone up-stairs to that room, and there they were now ; and the assembly in the servants' hall could make neither top nor tail of the whole matter. Some inclined to differ from Mademoiselle Rosine in her view of the case, and were of the opinion that the foreign gentleman had murdered my lady in cold blood ; and this dismal view of things was about agreed upon between them, when the housekeeper came sweeping down upon them, and dispersed them about their business.

And how was it in that chamber of death—that chamber of horror ? The gray and mystic twilight (the only light fitted for such a scene) stole drearily in through the closed curtains, lingering darkly in the corners, and brooding darkest of all in that corner where the bed was. A white sheet covered the bed, and under it there was the outline of a stark form in the marble rigidity of death. In an armchair, at the foot of the bed, but not near it, Lord Landsdowne sat, a little paler, a little graver than usual, but quiet and self-possessed. The first shock of horror had passed away. The brief explanation, which had shocked and horrified him more almost than the suicide had done, was past, too, and the worst that could come was over. There had been no love many a day—there could be no sorrow now. It was only ghastly and appalling to think of, and he wanted to forget it all as fast as possible ; to go far from Black Monk's, and remember the last few years only as a hideous dream. Crouching at the head of the bed, rocking to and fro, moaning and crying, was the old woman ; her hands clasped round her knees, and her dim old eyes fixed piteously on the bed. Yes, there was one human being to regret Lady Landsdowne—her wretched old mother. On a sofa by the window, clinging together, white and startled, two young girls sat ; two so strangely alike that the resemblance might have astonished you. The same wealth of jetty curls, the same brilliant black eyes, the same dark, clear complexion, the same regular features, the same height precisely, in all things the same but one—that one was in expression. One of the two had a strangely cowed and subdued look—a shrinking, frightened manner, the result of long years of hard treatment, and blows and abuse. Poor Rosamond Hazelwood ! The whining old beldame beside the bed could have told a

pitiable tale, if she chose, of the life she had led the granddaughter she stole.

One other person was in the room, walking up and down with restless steps. It was the foreign gentleman, who was telling, in the twilight, his dark and tragical tale.

"Yes, my lord," he was saying, "what I told you was all Heaven's truth. That dead woman was my wife and the mother of these girls; and I am no Cuban, no Senor Mendez, but Conway Hazelwood, and the rightful owner of the estate which my brother Arthur now holds. This old woman is the mother of her who bore the name of Lady Landsdowne."

"Yes, I'm her mother; her poor, forsaken, broken-hearted old mother," the old woman whispered; "and I never knew she was a great lady like this, or I would have come here long ago. Oh, dear! oh, dear! and now she's dead—and p'isened herself!"

"I have committed many a mad deed in my life," Mr. Hazelwood said, "but that marriage of mine was the crowning madness of all. With half a dozen hair-brained college friends I went to a New England village one summer, to fish and shoot, and we took it into our heads to go under assumed names. I took that of my mother's family, Forrest, and we stopped at the village inn, kept by this old woman and her husband."

"Yes, yes, yes!" shrilly put in the old woman herself, "a lot of high-flyers, and Captain Forrest the worse of all—turning the silly heads of the girls, and drinking and carousing till all hours of the night. I warned Rose, but she always wanted to be a lady, and now she's dead! Oh, dear, dear, dear!"

"She was pretty, very pretty," Mr. Hazelwood went on, glancing slightly at the bed, "and I believed her as good and as innocent as she was beautiful. Still, in my sober senses I should never have married her, for I never really got beyond admiration of the fascinating little barmaid; but I was mad with liquor and altogether reckless when the thing was done. It was indeed marry in haste and repent at leisure with me; and before long I found out she was as corrupt of heart as fair of face. That settled the question. Much as my chains galled me, I might have been true to her but for that. I left her; perhaps I did wrong, but Heaven knows I had good cause. She did not

know my real name; I hoped she never would. I sent her money plenty, and I never lost sight of her. When those children were born I went back; but I found that living with her was an impossibility—I need not tell you, my lord, what she was: she has made your life a curse, as she has mine—and I left her again. Then came that other marriage I told you of this morning; Helen was gentle, and loving, and innocent; and I really loved her, as she did me, with her whole heart; I was wrong, I know; I knew it then, too, but more than love led me on. My pride, my honor, her happiness, all were at stake, and I would not pause. I resolved to provide amply for Rose; I knew that she loved money a thousand times more than she did me, and to take my children from her. She was no fit guardian for anything innocent; I laid my plans and succeeded. I placed the twin infants under my father's care; I sent her an ample supply of money, and flattered myself she would go her own way and let me go mine. My lord, how terribly I was mistaken, you know. What I have all ready told you, I will not repeat; it is not fitted for the ears that are listening now. It half maddens me yet to think of my bride, my brother, my father! To that father I told all before I fled from my native land, and that tale was his death-warrant. For years I was a wanderer, and the most miserable of men; I went to the East, and lost sight completely of America and all I had left behind. In Syria, I made the acquaintance of a Senor Mendez, a Cuban planter of immense wealth and failing health. He was an eccentric old man, with no near relatives; we became fast friends and traveling-companions; and at his death he left me all he possessed. I went to Cuba; my estate was a little paradise below; and for a few more years I spent a tranquil, idle, indolent, luxurious life. Then I grew tired of that, too; I came back to New York. There, under the name I had assumed with the estate, I found that I had fallen heir, long before, to Hazelwood, where my brother reigned in my place; that one of the twin infants I had left under my father's care, had been stolen shortly after, and had never been heard of since, and that the other was at school in Canada. I came to England before going to Canada; saw my brother and my cousin Una, without being recognized, made another tour of the continent, and went back. This time I

did visit Canada. I had known the preceptress of the school in Cuba; I visited her, and saw Eve, and from that time I never lost sight of her. When she was sent for to come here, I came too. I accompanied her to Monkswood, and determined to remain and watch over her. The very evening of my arrival, as I stood talking to her at Hazelwood, a carriage passed us, and a lady looked from the window. I recognized the face instantly; it was one I had good reason to remember, though so many years had passed since I last beheld it—it was the face of the woman I thought dead—of Lady Landsdowne."

"I had met her in France," Lord Landsdowne said, helplessly, "four years before. She was nursery-governess in a family where I was visiting, and I don't know how it was, but her beauty, and her winning ways, and her sorrowful looks——"

"Oh, I understand it," Mr. Hazelwood said; "there never was a better actress. You married her as I did, and found out the difference. She did not see my face that evening; the first time she saw me was that stormy day at the village-inn, when the suddenness of the shock overcame even her irons nerves, and she shrieked and fainted. It was for your sake I spared her; I would have spared her to the end had she been merciful to her own child."

"Perhaps she did not recognize her," Lord Landsdowne said.

"She did recognize her; she told me so. She knew her from the first, and Rosamond and her mother too. By one of those strange freaks of fortune that astonish the world at times, this old woman had brought Rosamond to the Canadian village where Eve was at school. Eve was recognized by her grandmother as soon as seen; and Paul Schaffer found out the whole story from her by a bribe, and resolved to make use of it for his own ends. He was the open lover of Hazel Wood, and the secret lover of Eve; he was jealous of young D'Arville, and laid a plot, with the connivance of others, to frustrate his rival and compel Eve to marry him in spite of herself. Una Forest, who should have been Eve's protectress, joined with him against her. You see the resemblance Rose and her sister bear to each other. You could scarcely tell them apart yourself, my lord. Rose was compelled to meet Schaffer by night in the grounds of Hazelwood, and carefully trained

in the part she was to play ; D'Arville was brought out to witness the performance ; the diabolical plot succeeded to perfection ; he never for a moment dreamed it could be other than Eve ; and in the first impulse of outraged pride and love, left Hazelwood, without one word of explanation or farewell. Next day, Eve was driven from Hazelwood by the abuse of Miss Forest, and you know how you and I found her. I resolved that she should remain here until her mother returned, and see if one spark of human nature lingered in her hard and vindictive heart. You know better than I do, my lord, the scene which followed. I met my daughter flying from this house, as she had fled from Hazelwood ; and then, and not till then, I told her who I was. I took her to the inn where I stopped ; I found out this woman and my other child ; I brought the three together and told them the tale I have now told you. That was the first part of my task ; my second was one of retribution. I felt no mercy, no compassion now for her who lies there dead. I came here this morning to exact justice to the uttermost farthing. You should have heard the tale before her, and the cell of a madhouse should have been her home for life, had she not taken her fate in her own hand. She expected me and was prepared ; she believed in no future life, she was weary of this, and so——"

He stopped and stood looking at the bed. Lord Landsdowne followed his glance for an instant, and then turned away with a slight shudder.

"I shall leave this horrible place within a week. May I ask what is to be your next step ?"

"Retribution still ! The mercy that others have shown shall be shown unto them. Hazelwood is to be the next place I visit ; and Paul Schaffer and Una Forest will find out the game is not all in their own hands ; that a power superior to theirs is at work. You must be there to witness the family reunion that is to take place. You have seen Eve's humiliation ; must you also see her triumph."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JUBILATE!

AND so there was a funeral at Black Monk's—a very quiet and retiring affair—and the county magnates were all there, with condolences; and maneuvering mammas with marriageable daughters began building castles in the air for their Laura Matildas, as they inspected the broad lands of Black Monk's, and reflected on the widowed state of its master. And in the family vault beneath Monkswood church there was another coffin, and the house in Belgrave square had crape on the door, and among the obituary notices in the *Times* there was one of Rosamond, Lady Landsdowne, who had died suddenly of congestion of the brain; and then it was all over, and the county magnates went home, to eat, drink, and be merry, and the handsome and haughtly lady of Black Monk's was out of the world and forgotten.

Among the gentlemen who had attended the funeral procession was Mr. Arthur Hazelwood, of Hazelwood. It had been a good deal of a trial to that human snail to crawl out of his shell; but Miss Forest, with her customary clear-headed foresight, had represented so strongly what society in general, and Lord Landsdowne in particular, required of him, that he had been morally dragged from his sanctum of ease, and turned out in the cold. He had drawled forth his regrets in most gentlemanly fashion, and tried as much as in him lay to keep from yawning in church during the oration and burial service; and then he had shaken hands languidly and under protest with the people he knew, and gone home, and been exceedingly bored by it all. It would take at least six months of undisturbed repose to recover him fully from the shocks his delicate nature had lately undergone. There was the arrival of those two hoydenish girls from Canada—Shock Number One; there was the ungentlemanly and unbusinesslike flight of his secretary—Shock Number Two; there was the other flight of one of the girls—he was not quite sure which; and now here was this dismal burying, which

had upset him most of all. Mr. Hazelwood's nerves were in a shattered state as he sunk into an easy-chair next morning, and, wrapping his gorgeous dressing-gown around him, broke his first egg. It was half-past twelve; but Mr. Hazelwood had had some tea and toast in bed, so he was not quite starving, late as was his breakfast-hour. Miss Forest was there, in a dainty morning toilet, looking very fair and pretty, as she poured out his chocolate, and giving no sign outwardly of having ever loved, or suffered, or plotted, or done wrong.

"And so there were a great many at the funeral, Arthur?" she was saying. "Of course—I knew there would be; and just think how it would look if you, the nearest neighbor of all, stayed away. Was Senor Mendez there?"

"Ya-as," drawled her cousin; "and it strikes me I have seen that man somewhere before. His face looks familiar."

"So it does," said Una. "I have often thought so, too. He reminds me of Conway; but I suppose that is nothing but fancy. Was Mr. Schaffer there?"

"Oh, yes, and no end of people. Come in."

This was in answer to a rap; and his valet made his appearance, bearing two cards on a salver.

"Senor Mendez and Mr. Schaffer," said Una, glancing at them. "Speak of the— You know the old proverb, Arthur. What can they want with you?"

"They want to bore me to death. It is the aim of all my friends," Mr. Hazelwood said, helplessly. "I suppose I must see them. Show them up, Louis; Una, another cup of chocolate."

Before Miss Forest had finished pouring out the chocolate, the two gentlemen were in the room; Senor Mendez with an unusually grave, not to say stern, face, and Mr. Schaffer looking rather puzzled and at a loss. Miss Forest, bowing distantly, was about to depart, when Senor Mendez interposed.

"Pardon, madam," he said, gravely, "but the business which brings me here this morning concerns you as well as Mr. Hazelwood. So you will have the goodness to favor us with your presence for a few moments."

Una flashed an alarmed glance at Paul Schaffer; but that gentleman's assuring look said as plainly as words:

"I know nothing about it, I assure you. It's all Greek to me."

Mr. Hazelwood, who had been beating the devil's tattoo with his spoon, dropped it and his jaw at the mention of the appalling word "business."

"Business!" he faintly echoed. "My dear fellow, you must be mistaken! What business can you possibly have with me?"

"A good deal, as you will find out presently," said Senor Mendez, helping himself to a chair and drawing off his gloves; "and we will proceed to it at once. Mr. Schaffer, there is a chair; pray be seated, Miss Forest. The matter may detain us some time."

But Miss Forest, standing by the window, looking out, chose to pay no heed to the invitation. She was watching a carriage driving up the avenue—the carriage of Lord Landsdowne. What could possibly be bringing him to Hazelwood?

"Mr. Arthur Hazelwood," Senor Mendez began, leaning forward and transfixing that bewildered gentleman with his dark, eagle eye; "may I ask how long it is since you inherited this estate?"

"Senor Mendez!" cried Miss Forest, facing suddenly and sharply round, "what business is that of yours?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Forest; my question was addressed to your cousin! Will you be kind enough to answer, Mr. Hazelwood?"

"It is nearly sixteen years ago," said Mr. Hazelwood, looking more and more helpless and bewildered.

"It was left by an uncle, was it not, to the next of kin?"

"Yes."

"Were you the next of kin?"

"Ya-as."

"Indeed! I fancied you had an elder brother, Conway. The estate fell to him, I should think—did it not?"

Una Forest fairly bounded, and stifled a cry in its birth, as she looked wildly at the speaker, but the obtuse Arthur was still "far wide."

"He was away—nobody knew where, and he has never been heard of since. He is probably dead long ago."

Senor Mendez rose from his chair, his commanding form drawn up to its fullest hight.

"He is not dead, Mr. Arthur Hazelwood. He is alive

and here to claim his own! I am Conway Hazelwood!"

The master of Hazelwood rose from his chair, white as a sheet, and perfectly speechless. There had been an exclamation from Paul Schaffer; and Una Forest stood grasping a chair, her lips apart, the eyes dilating. In silence they all stood, the two brothers confronting each other across the table.

"Yes, I am Conway Hazelwood," the *ci-devant* Cuban repeated; "and I come to demand an account of your stewardship, Arthur. Oh, you need not stare so! I can easily prove my identity! Look here—do you know this? You ought to, since it is some of your own handiwork!"

He lifted the clustering dark hair from his temple, and showed a long purple scar. Arthur gave a cry as he saw it.

"Conway! Can it indeed be you? How could I have been so——"

"Stupid! very true. but then you know, Arthur, you never could see very far into a millstone. I only wonder our bright-eyed, sharp-sighted little Una did not recognize me from the first!"

"I wonder at it now, myself," Una said, coming forward; "but we all thought you dead. Oh, Conway! What a surprise this is!"

"Isn't it? You're glad to see me, I suppose, Una?"

"You know I am," she said, holding out her hand; but the blue eyes shifted and fell in the old way, as she spoke. "Why did you not tell us long ago?"

"Because I always was and will be an oddity—I suppose! Well, Mr. Schaffer, you are staring very hard; what do you make of all this?"

"Upon my honor!" said Mr. Schaffer, in all candor, "I don't know what to make of it, unless you are privately rehearsing theatricals. It all seems exceedingly like it!"

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women players," quoted Mr. Conway Hazelwood. "Your part in the performance will come in presently! Well, Arthur, old boy, you are quite satisfied I am myself, and nobody else? Your brother Conway, and no ghost?"

"I cannot doubt it! But where in the world have you been all this time?"

"Never mind that! It is my time to ask questions

now—yours may come by and by. Arthur, where is my daughter?"

"Your what?" gasped Mr. Arthur, aghast.

"My daughter! If you don't know Eve Hazelwood is my daughter, Una does. Una, where is she?"

"She your daughter! Then poor Eugene was right!"

"To be sure he was, as you knew many a day ago—as my father knew, and as the paper he left for her and her sister on his deathbed will prove. Dr. Lance told me about that—he told me then how Rosie was stolen when an infant, by a person or persons unknown. But Eve was not stolen—where is she—she may be glad to find a father."

Paul Schaffer drew suddenly back, and then looked down.

"Conway, I am sorry—I am very sorry—but she is not here!"

"Not here! Where then is she?"

"That I cannot tell. You had better ask Mr. Schaffer!"

"What has Mr. Schaffer to do with it?"

"A great deal," said he, very boldly; "as poor Hazel Wood could testify if she were here."

"Where is she?"

"Hazel? sick, poor child! She has been very ill ever since Eve ran away. Perhaps I was a little severe with her, but it was for her good!".

"What had she done?"

"She was engaged to Mr. D'Arville—she gave him to understand she loved him, yet we saw her steal out to meet, by night, and by stealth, Mr. Schaffer in the grounds. The sight, and the words he heard, her perfidy confirmed by her own lips, drove D'Arville from the house. I reproached her next day, as I felt it my duty to do, and she ran away in a passion, and we have never seen her since."

Conway Hazelwood turned to Paul Schaffer:

"Is this true, Mr. Schaffer?"

"It is," he answered, unflinchingly.

"Did Eve Hazelwood hold nocturnal interview with you in the grounds?"

"She did!"

"What was she to you?"

"My betrothed wife before we ever left Canada!"

"She must have been a most reckless flirt, then! How came she to be also engaged to Monsieur D'Arville?"

"It was only to win a foolish wager made with my cousin Kate. She never cared a jot for him; she told me so herself."

"I heard her," chimed in Una, "and so did Monsieur D'Arville and Hazel Wood."

"But she may have told him the same story of you. Perhaps she was only flirting with both of you. Was it the first time she had met you like this, or was she in the habit of it?"

Mr. Schaffer hesitated.

"Speak out!" Mr. Hazelwood said, "I am her father and have a right to know. Was it the first time?"

"No."

"She was in the habit of it, then. But why was secrecy necessary?"

"She did not wish to arouse the suspicions of D'Arville. She wanted to make sure of him and win her bet."

"Ah! I see. But is it not strange that after leaving her, she did not fly to you?"

"That, I confess, is the strangest part of it. But there is no accounting for a girl's whims."

"Very true. And Monsieur D'Arville saw you meet her in the grounds?"

"We did," said Una. "We were out searching for a purse I had lost, and came by chance upon them. I am convinced the fault was not Mr. Schaffer's but hers. The secret meeting, it appears, was her wish."

"A very odd wish, too, I should think, not to say improper; and you did quite right, Una, to scold her for such conduct. Will you excuse me for one moment?"

He was gone before they could speak, and back again directly, but not alone. Monsieur Claude D'Arville was with him. Una suppressed an exclamation, Mr. Schaffer an oath, while Mr. Arthur Hazelood set with mouth and eyes agape, utterly bewildered by it all.

"Monsieur D'Arville," said Mr. Hazelwood, "before you left this place, over a week ago, were you engaged to Miss Eve Hazelwood?"

"Yes," said Monsieur D'Arville, "I was."

"Why, then, did you leave her as you did?"

"Because I discovered her to be false. Miss Forest lost her purse, and I went out with her one night to seek for it in the grounds, and there I discovered Eve and Mr. Schaffer together. I heard her tell him she loved him only; that she only laughed at me, and had drawn me on to win a bet. How could I stay after that?"

"Not very well. You are quite sure it was Eve you saw? Might you not be mistaken in the moonlight?"

"Hardly. It was her voice, her face, and then her allusion to myself. Oh, no; a mistake was impossible! Miss Forest and Miss Wood recognized her, as well as I."

"And that was the cause of your leaving?"

"It was."

"Of course, you despise her now? You do not care for her any more?"

"Mr. Hazelwood—since such is your name—when a man really loves, he does not forget so easily. I still love her as much as ever."

"Then we will let her speak for herself," said Mr. Hazelwood, opening the door. "Come in, Eve."

Another astonisher! Was Conway Hazelwood a magician? In answer to his call, Eve Hazelwood entered, dressed in white, but wrapped in a long, dark mantle, and wearing a hat. She looked pale and agitated, but her glance went fearlessly around the room.

"Miss Hazelwood, give an account of yourself. Were you ever engaged to either of these gentlemen?"

"Yes, father," Eve clearly and distinctly said, the name coming very sweetly from her lips.

"Are you sure you were not engaged to both?"

"Quite sure."

"To which of them, then, were you betrothed?'

"To Monsieur D'Arville."

"Did you love him, Eve?"

Eve's pale face flushed, and her sweet voice faltered a little.

"Yes, father, with all my heart."

"Were you not also engaged to Mr. Schaffer?"

"Never, father, in all my life."

"Eve," Mr. Schaffer began, reproachfully; but Mr. Hazelwood interposed:

"You have had your say, Mr. Schaffer; let the young lady have hers, now. Did you ever love him, Eve?"

Oh, the flash that leaped from Eve's black eye, and the indignant flush that flamed in her cheeks.

"Love him?—love him? I always detested him, and always shall, as long as I live."

"Very good. How come you then to meet him by night, in the grounds?"

"I never met him."

"Never in all your life?"

"Never in all my life. I would have died first!"

"Eve! Eve!" cried Miss Forest, but again Mr. Hazelwood interposed:

"Wait, if you please, Miss Una, there is another witness to be heard. Come in, Mrs. Western."

He opened the door again, and this time there entered the bent, and skinny, and disagreeable-looking old lady, who, many a year ago, wanted to tell Una Forest her fortune, and would not be let.

"Mrs. Western," said Mr. Hazelwood, "just cast your eye round the room and see if you know any one here."

"I know him!" exclaimed the old woman, shrilly, pointing to Mr. Schaffer; "I know him very well."

"She lies!" cried Mr. Schaffer, white with rage and fear. "I never saw her before in my life."

"Oh, yes, you did, though," said the old lady, exultingly; "yes, you did, though! You saw me in Canada, you know, and you saw my Rosie, too, as was the very image of the pretty young lady in the boarding-school, that you were in love with; and here she is now, her own self. You paid our passage over to England—mine and Rosie's, you know—and you made us keep out of sight, down in the village there, until you should want us, you said. Then you came one night, and told us you were going to play a trick on some one, and Rosie must dress herself up, and meet you in the grounds of Hazelwood, by moonlight, and you were to make love to her, and she was to make love to you. You had it all down, in black and white, what you were both to say; and you called her Eve, and she was to tell you she loved no one but you, and that she was only fooling Monsieur D'Arville there! Oh, you needn't look so blank, Mr. Schaffer, it's all Gospel truth; and Rosie went, and you brought her home afterward, and gave me five golden guineas for my trouble. You never were stingy about your money; I'll say that for you."

"It is false!" Paul Schaffer cried, white to his very lips; "the old hag lies! Is it likely there should exist another in the world so like Eve as to deceive Monsieur D'Arville, Miss Forest, and Hazel Wood! I tell you it is a fabrication from beginning to end! Such a resemblance would be impossible!"

"Eve," Mr. Hazelwood said, turning quietly to his daughter, "go and fetch in your sister, and do not be long. No, Mr. Schaffer; you must not leave just yet," as that gentleman made a motion to quit; "please to stay, and see the play played out. Eve will not be—ah! here she is!"

There was a general exclamation, altogether irrepressible, and Mr. Arthur Hazelwood gave a faint cry of intensest amazement, not to say consternation; for this time there entered two Eves, and which was the one that had gone out, he could not, had the fate of worlds depended on it, have told. The mantle and hat had been dropped, and the two girls stood arrayed in flowing gossamer white, their long black ringlets falling like a sable cloud over their shoulders. The same in hight, in feature, in dress; in everything the resemblance was more astonishing—it was marvelous.

Mr. Hazelwood looked at the twin sisters, standing hand-in-hand, with downcast eyes, and a smile, exultant and triumphant, lit up his swarthy face.

"Now, Monsieur Schaffer, what say you to this? Tell me which is Eve, now, if you can?"

Monsieur Schaffer said nothing; he only glanced at the twin sisters with the eyes of a baffled tiger. With his own weapons he had beed foiled.

"Can anybody tell me which is Eve?" Mr. Hazelwood inquired, looking from face to face. "Monsieur D'Arville, I leave it to you?"

Ah! what resemblance can baffle love, blind though it be? Over one face, drooping and downcast, a blush and a smile was dawning. That was the face of his darling. The likeness might baffle others—it never could baffle him again. The faces were the same in every iota, but the world held only one Eve for him. He was beside her in a moment, with outstretched hands.

"Eve!" he exclaimed, "can you ever forgive me? I have been cruel, unjust and ungenerous, but think how

they deceived me! I do not deserve pardon, but still I hope!"

"Hope on, hope ever!" Eve said, brightly, laying both hands in his; "I forgive you and every one else on this happy day!"

"That's very good," said Mr. Hazelwood, stroking his mustache; "I thought you would find out Eve, Monsieur D'Arville! And now, Rose, I think you have a word to say: Did you ever see that gentleman there before?"

He pointed to Paul Schaffer, and the young girl shrunk away, visibly with the same cowed and frightened look.

"Oh, yes," she said, clinging to her father; "I have seen him often."

"Where? Speak out, Rosie; no one shall hurt you now."

"I saw him in Canada first. He brought grandmother and I to England, and used to visit us often in the village."

"Did you ever meet him anywhere besides in the village."

"Once, in the grounds here. It was one moonlight night last week. He called me Eve, and he made me say that——"

"That you loved him, eh?"

"Yes," Rose said, coloring, "and a great many other things I did not like."

"That will do. And now, my lord, what say you to all this?"

Mr. Hazelwood turned to the half-open door, where two gentlemen had been standing, unobserved lookers-on. Both advanced with the words he spoke, and one was Lord Landsdowne, the other the vicar of the parish.

"It is more like the last act of a drama than a scene in every-day life," answered his lordship; "it seems to have been diamond cut diamond all through the piece."

"A most surprising affair, truly," said the clergyman, looking through his spectacles at the twin sisters; "I should never know one of these young ladies from the other. As his lordship remarks, it is more like a drama than anything else."

"And dramas always ended in marriages in my theater-going days," said Mr. Hazelwood; "so suppose we be consistent to the end. Mr. Vicar, get your book. My lord, will you be best man? Rose, will you be bridemaid,

and I am here *in parentis* to give the bride away. I am sure Mr. Schaffer and Miss Forest will be delighted to witness an impromptu wedding, even though there be no breakfast. Stand forward, D'Arville. Make sure of Eve this time, lest you should lose her again."

It was all so stirringly sudden that neither Paul Schaffer nor Una Forest could do other than look on, and wonder whether they were awake or asleep. The vicar produced book and stole. Claude D'Arville stepped forward, holding Eve by the hand. Rose and Lord Landsdowne took their places, and the ceremony began. "Wilt thou take?" etc., was twice asked, and answered, and in one moment there were no longer two Miss Hazelwoods in the room, for one of them was Madame Claude D'Arville.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A PARTING PEEP.

YES, they were married; nothing but death could separate them more. And Mr. Hazelwood turned to Paul Schaffer, the baffled plotter, with his quiet smile of power.

"You see, Mr. Schaffer, our life-drama has ended like any other drama, in a marriage; the villain of the play has been foiled, and the hero and heroine reign triumphant. There is nothing more; the curtain must fall now; and, before it drops, allow me, in the name of the company, to bid you a very good-morning, and a pleasant trip back to Canada. Shall I ring for a servant to show you out, or do you know the way yourself?"

"I shall save you the trouble, Mr. Conway Hazelwood, or Senor Mendez, or whatever your name may be," said Mr. Schaffer, with an evil sneer, "and I beg your pretty daughter to understand I shall not die of a broken heart, though I have lost her. Farewell, Miss Forrest; I am sorry for you; you have lost your love as well as I, but let the ex-schoolmaster go. There are as good fish in the sea, you know, as ever were caught."

He was gone while he spoke. Eve dared not look at Una; but D'Arville opened his eyes to their widest extent, as he fixed them on her striking figure.

"What does he mean?" she slowly asked; "surely he alluded to me."

Conway Hazelwood laughed.

"Never mind, D'Arville; you have got all you want, so be satisfied and ask no questions. Look up, Una; there is balm in Gilead yet, and we will let bygones be bygones on this eventful morning. Won't you come over and wish Eve joy."

She dared not refuse. But the white face had never been so white before, and the lips that spoke trembled. Eve's embrace was as pitying and tender as it was sincere.

"We will always be friends, cousin Una," she said, "and that miserable night and day will be as if it had never been. Where is Hazel?"

"In her own room. She is not very well," Una said, extricating herself from Eve's arms, and shrinking into the corner again.

"I must go to her, Claude. Poor dear Hazel! I must go to her at once."

"Not just at once, if you please, Mrs. D'Arville," said her father; "we have not quite done with you yet. Just take this paper, and when you have cast your eye over it, pass it to your husband."

Eve took the formidably legal-looking document he held out.

"What is it, father?"

"Your wedding-portion, my dear. A free gift of Hazelwood to you and Mr. D'Arville! There! no thanks; I don't want it. I infinitely prefer my Cuban estate, whither I am going next week, and intend taking Rose with me."

"And what am I to do? Where am I to go?" helplessly began Arthur Hazelwood.

"Very true. It seems rather a pity to turn you and Una out, doesn't it? Eve, what is to be done with this uncle and cousin of yours? The place is your own now, and you must decide."

"Then let everything be as it was! Oh, father! I could never be happy here if they had to leave it to make room for me. Uncle Arthur, cousin Una, I shall take it as the greatest favor if you will stay here always, and let things go on for the future as they have done in the past."

Mr. Arthur Hazelwood looked inexpressibly relieved,

and Una bowed with averted face. Truly, Eve was heaping coals of fire on her head.

"You're a good girl, Eve," her father said, (and D'Arville smiled approval too), "and it shall be as you say. Little Hazel shall come with Rose and me to Cuba, and we will teach her there to forget that scamp Schaffer."

"I should like to go, too," Eve said, wistfully. "I don't want to be separated from you all so soon."

"You ungrateful little minx! what do you think of that speech, Mr. Bridegroom?"

"I think it perfectly natural, monsieur! Eve will be very lonely here, I am afraid, if you carry off her sister and cousin so soon."

"And I want to see Cuba so much," pleaded Eve, "and Hazel would give a year of her life for a walk down Broadway again. Let us go with you, father—please do."

Nobody could resist that "please," no heart less hard than the nether millstone, the kiss that accompanied it. Mr. Hazelwood laughed, and pushed her back to D'Arville.

"There, keep her to yourself, will you. Yes, come; you may as well make your wedding-tour there as anywhere else. See that your furbelows are packed in a week though; for this day week precisely we start for New York, from thence to Havana. Now, go and hunt up Hazel, and tell her the news as fast as you like. It will be better than medicine for her, I dare say."

"I too have a favor to ask," said Lord Landsdowne, coming forward. "Are you overcrowded now, Mr. Hazelwood, or will you make room for me? I have long wished to visit America, and I should never find the trip so pleasant as now. I want to see Cuba, too; will you make room for me?"

Mr. Hazelwood grasped his hand heartily.

"With all my heart, my lord. I do not forget the debt of gratitude I owe you for your kindness to Eve. Come with us, by all means. It needed only your presence to make our party complete. And now suppose we adjourn; I see by Arthur's face we are boring him to death, and I begin to feel as if I should like some luncheon. Una, if you will see to it, we will relieve Arthur of our presence. Gentlemen, come."

And, into the great sea of the Past, two more waves, two more years, have been ingulfed forever. One last look, dear friend of mine, ere we mentally shake hands and part, at the living, breathing, existing figures, that have passed before our magic-lantern for so long.

And to begin at the very end, there is Mr. Paul Schaffer. If you ever go to that quaint French city, Montreal, and take a walk down Bonaventuro street, you will see his shingle hanging out in front of one of the most stylish offices in the street. Mr. Schaffer is a rising lawyer, and a member of the Canadian legislature, and the world goes very well indeed with him. He told Eve, you remember, he would not break his heart; and he has kept his word. He has a handsome town house, and a villa at St. Croix; he has fast horses, handsome equipages, well-dressed and well-trained servants, a full cellar, full coffers, a good name, and gives the best dinner-parties of any man in Montreal. He has married a dashing Canadian belle and heiress, who thinks him perfection, or next door to it, and has never heard of that little English episode in his life that happened two years ago. It's not the rule to make the villain of the story happy and prosperous, I know, and I hate to do it; but truth is mighty and will prevail. Mr. Schaffer was flourishing in Montreal the last time I was there, and his success is no fault of mine.

Dr. Lance is in New York, training the ideas of his pupils how to shoot, and crosser than ever. He has not been to England since, but he talks of going there next long vacation.

And in England—oh, there are happy hearts there! In all broad Essex there is no happier home than Hazelwood, and none more beloved and respected by all than its master and mistress. Eve goes singing through the house all day long, like a lark, and D'Arville has turned out a regular gentleman-farmer, and takes more interest in Durhams, and crops, and overseeing his estate, and his tenants, than ever he did in correcting French exercises and Latin themes, in his days of professorship. There is something else he takes an interest in besides fat cattle, and that is in a fat little baby with big black eyes, that half a year ago uttered its first squall in Hazelwood. They call it Conway; and Mr. D'Arville thinks there never was nor ever will be such another baby; an opinion

in which Mrs. D'Arville fully shares. Mr. D'Arville labors also under the impression that his dark-eyed wife never looks half so handsome as when she bends over that little cradle and sings its small inmate asleep; and there is no doubt he is right.

Mr. Arthur Hazelwood still drags out life in his own way, as much like a snail in its shell as ever; and Miss Forest flits like a little white ghost from room to room, shod with the shoes of silence. She is thinner than of yore, and the fair hair seems to have faded white; but whether she is happy, or whether she suffers, she is not one to wear her heart on her sleeve, and no one will ever know.

And at Black Monk's, there is a new Lady Landsdowne —a very different lady from the last. Her present ladyship is a plump, hazel-eyed, hazel-haired laughing little peeress, who answers, moreover, to the name of Hazel. Yes, indeed! that she is; and she and Lord Landsdowne are like turtle doves, and Black Monk's is a very different place to the Black Monk's of two years ago. The great event happened while they were in Cuba, and Hazel has not quite got used to being called "My Lady" yet; but she thinks it all very delightful, and tries to be stately and dignified, but the happy smiles will come in spite of her, and Lady Landsdowne will be Hazel Wood to the end of the chapter.

Mr. Conway Hazelwood resides on his Cuban estate, but he has been to England to see his little namesake, and he has made his will and has left Master Conway D'Arville all he possesses. He is not an old man, but he never will marry—he is happy enough in his peaceful latter life to atone for his tragic and bereaved youth.

Rose is in Cuba, too, the bride of a wealthy creole planter, and a near neighbor of her father's. Her old grandmother lives with her—Rose has an affection for her, notwithstanding the past, and the old lady has no call any more to tell fortunes for a living.

Yes, dear reader, they are all happy, and so we will leave them. All, perhaps, except one. For Una Forest is thirty-six years of age, and—oh, dreadful fate!—an old maid!

THE END.