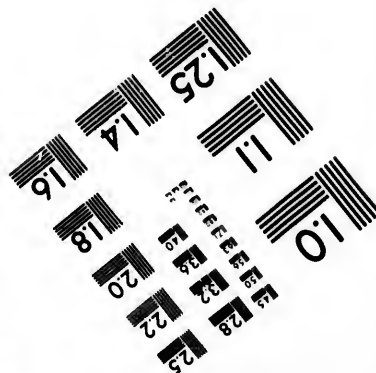
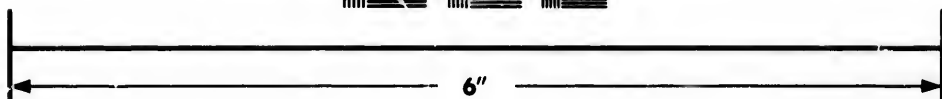
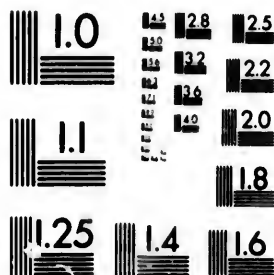


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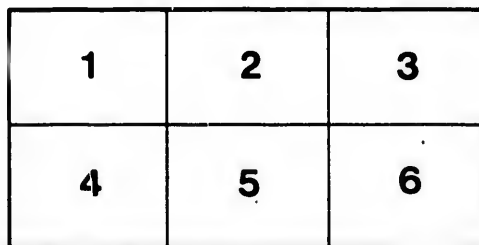
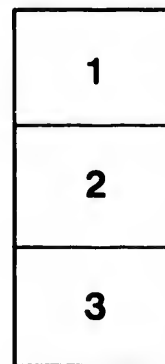
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SHE MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS MAY AGNES FLEMING



Toronto:

ROSE PUBLISHING COMPANY,

25 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO.

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SHE MIGHT HAVE DONE BETTER.

CHAPTER I.

“WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?”

“It is a burning shame I think, Uncle,” said a handsome young lady, turning—in the front seat of the carriage, of which she was the charioteer—towards her two male companions, the person addressed and her father; “you promised that this visit was specially to me. I have driven twenty miles to meet you this warm day, and how do you receive the honour I confer upon you? Since we left the station you have not addressed a word to me.”

“Not addressed a word to you, Ethel? Well, at all events, I have been talking ever since we met.”

“Yes, I have been listening to you. It is not often that you are silent, Uncle. Loquacity itself—like a true Yankee. But your conversation has not been interesting—one of your usual harangues upon politics. But where is the use? You cannot make a Canadian of Papa; he is English. You might as well try to make an American of him; so relinquish the vain idea, and let us have something more interesting.”

“Something more interesting!” echoed her uncle; “you are a Canadian, at any rate, Ethel, and the theme of our conversation should be of interest to you, or anything relating to the land of your birth. Your father is a Canadian by adoption—or should be—considering the number of years he has made

this country his home, and it should also be of interest to him."

"A hopeless idea, Uncle. You may rehearse for ever the greatness of Canada, but Papa is always ready to hang out his British standard by which to measure it. You had better talk to me."

"Which means that you want the conversation all to yourself, Ethel. Very well; I shall tell you a story then."

"That will be nicer. Let us have the story by all means, uncle."

"There is a farmer of my vicinity—an American, of course, or the story would not be worth the telling—who once engaged a neighbour—a real live Yankee from "down east"—to help him in logging up a piece of nearly cleared land, to put it in readiness for a crop. Now, logging—as you may perhaps be aware—is a very laborious business, and requires considerable personal strength in those engaged in it. So far as this quality was concerned, my friend, the farmer, had made a good choice of an assistant, for Ebenezer was as powerfully framed as his master; but he had equally with the latter, an unconquerable aversion to using his strength in any greater degree than he could help; and both being remarkably keen hands, they were constantly striving each to throw the lion's share of the hard work upon the other. During their first morning's work, Ebenezer manipulated so successfully his talents in securing for himself the light lifting, and throwing the heavy work upon his master, that the latter became impatient, as he found himself with at least one half of the labour to perform, while, as master, he conceived himself called upon for a much lighter share. At length, as one particularly heavy log was drawn up to the pile, and Ebenezer—ever alive to his own interests—unhitching the ox-chain, had quietly sneaked off to the small end of the stick for the light lift—his patience gave way. "Always take the butt-end, Ebenezer!" he shouted; "that's your end you know. Never be afraid of the butt end," and the

butt-end Ebenezer had to take, with all the rest of the butt-ends too for that forenoon."

"This, while it brought fatigue to the frame, also brought vexation to the spirit, and he vowed revenge. The dinner hour gave him release at last, and joyfully they wended their way to the house. During the progress of the meal, the farmer's wife laid before her husband a goodly-sized pudding. This pudding the skilful housewife had built upon a very wise principle. The larger part, destined for herself and her husband, was thickly stuffed with nice large raisins, while the smaller, to be allotted to Ebenezer, was but meagrely supplied with those toothsome things. A great saving this, and as Ebenezer was to be served from the same dish as his employers, he, reasonably, could have nothing of which to complain.

"As the farmer raised his hand to divide the pudding, he said: 'Wall! Eb'nezer, seem' as heow yew ar helpin' us to-day, the old woman has made a *dessert* for us.'

"'Ya'as! I sees,' replied Ebenezer, eyeing it narrowly.

"Down came the farmer's knife upon the line of intersection between the richly and the barely stuffed ends.

"'Hold out your plate, Eb'nezer.'

"But Ebenezer remembered his morning's lesson. Stretching across the table, he stuck his fork into the large and well-raised portion.

"'Always take the butt-end; that's the end for Ebenezer, you know,' he quietly observed, as he put the huge morsel upon his plate; 'never be afraid of the butt-end,' he continued, as the pudding, raisins and all, rapidly disappeared before the astonished eyes of the mouth-watering farmer and his check-mated wife."

"Well, what then?" asked the young lady enquiringly.

"That is the story," was the reply.

"Indeed! Then I am glad it is done, at all events, Uncle. But where is the application?"

"That is for you to discern, my dear."

"I see it. Yourself, Uncle, who would take the butt-end of the conversation."

"And you, I imagine, like Ebenezer, would much prefer the butt-end of the pudding, and the lighter share of the work."

"Well, I think you had better continue your talk with Papa. That story is amply sufficient for me," returned she.

"Yes; I think so too," said her father. "If your uncle cannot produce something better than that, he may as well go on with his former subject. It will be the least tiresome."

"Just what I wanted," exclaimed the gentlemen referred to.

"Your story was a regular Yankee trick to bore us into compliance with your wishes. But go on, Uncle. We are now resigned. Commence where you left off, and finish as soon as possible," said the young lady with a comical sigh.

Her uncle braced himself erect in his seat, smiled delightedly upon his disgusted auditors; "I shall have you all my own way now"—and then he continued—"The ultimate destinies of a nation must evidently depend in great measure upon the country in which its multitudes reside: the land itself which forms their heritage."

"No matter what may be the physical or the psychical capabilities of the races inhabiting, the measure of the greatness they may attain will be very much determined by the physical capabilities of the land they inhabit. If their country be naturally great, fertile, beautiful, grand in its contour and extent, its people should become a great people, and reach the highest civilization."

"The peculiar genius and bent of the races composing it, their mental and physical endowments, may be the chief factor of the sum of the civilization and power they may reach; but not the sole causes. The natural conditions of that portion of God's bright world which has become theirs, bear powerful and determining influences."

"The beauties of the land, the pleasant, ever-new and varying charms that the glorious face of nature presents to the eye, most bias the mind towards that love of the beautiful and pure, the elevation of sentiment and of idea which are the first essentials of a high and beneficent civilization; while the national prosperity, continually accumulating, which a rich and fertile country gives to its people, yields the strength and the power for an enduring civilization. 'Together—for enduring greatness.'

"If then the physical beauties and wealth of a country are determining elements to make the people happy, advanced, refined and powerful, this 'Canada of ours' should become a great nation. Springing from untouched virgin wilds into active life; under the ardent powers of a people sprung from Earth's two greatest of races; with their vivifying culture and high civilization—the slow growth of centuries—transplanted ready-made to the new, fresh soil; surely the wide land of the maple and the beaver has all the elements for a future—great and powerful."

"Waving her young flag over half a continent, she has diversity enough, range enough, verge and scope enough."

"No narrow metes and bounds confine her energies."

"The great Dominion, stretching from ocean to ocean, awaits but her millions to bring forth and vivify the vast resources she contains; vast and varied as her wide extent."

"Probably no other country is possessed of so great a diversity; so varied and so opposite a range of beauty in its natural scenery as this 'Canada of ours.' Within its great borders Nature seems to have selected a favourite field; and gloried in her work of grouping together every different and charming effect; every grade of magnificent picturing that her lavish hand could indulge."

"An infinite variety overspreads the land, and no sameness, no fatal uniformity of design mars the ever-recurring freshness and novelty of the wonderful alternation of the scenery."

"What a superb panorama opens on the eye and moves the proud sense, while the Canadian surveys the vast and magnificent land of his birth. From the rock-bound yet grand Atlantic coast—three thousand miles—to the inlet-indented and beautiful shores of the Pacific—what a pageant lies! Mountains and valley; hill and plain; sea-coast and river—the trackless forest and the boundless prairie. The vast lakes—fresh-water seas—expanded to the dimensions of oceans, and the silver lakelet, gleaming like a gem in the bosom of the green woods. The desolate wildness of the frozen north, and the rich, luxuriant beauty of an almost tropical clime. The land of the grape and the icy home of the polar bear. The crowded city, and the grassy range of the buffalo. The rich and cultivated regions of the white man, with all their accessories of civilization, order and wealth; and the rude Indian camp. All; all these, are comprehended within the mighty scene, whose vastness and grandeur might well inspire a patriotic ardour, a true Canadian pride; and give an exultant ring to the voice which proudly says—'This is my Country?'"

"And upon what a magnificent scale has not the great picture been laid? No narrow distances or hemmed-in boundaries are pent in the great Canadian land. Its thousand-miles-long rivers; its thousand miles wide forests and prairies, waiting with their virgin treasures for the coming millions. The mighty St. Lawrence, its great gulf and ocean lakes—in each of which a state might be submerged, piercing the length of the land—draining the waters, and bearing the commerce of a continent, are Nature's great works given to a country that is destined to be great."

"If the influence of the natural beauties, the social advantages which Nature, with so lavish a hand has bestowed on our land, have, as they surely ought to have, an elevating and refining effect on the spirit and mind of the people; and tend to increase and foster that ardent patriotism—that enduring

love of country which every man must feel for the land of his birth; then this Canada possesses the prime elements for a great future."

"The rest lies with the people themselves—their morals, their industry, and their capacity to govern and be governed."

"Our heritage is a great one. If it is not felt to be a heritage and an honour to be named 'a Canadian,' it is the fault of Canadians."

CHAPTER II.

A CANADIAN HOME.

On the shores of one of the charming little lakes, which form not the least attraction of the very picturesque and beautiful tract of country, lying well north of Lake Ontario—stands the extensive and well-ordered demesne of Mr. Henry Mordaunt. An Englishman of some means, who early in life had crossed over to Canada, more from the pleasure to be derived from travel, and from sport, than for any purpose of permanent residence—he had fallen upon the spot (then almost a virgin wilderness) and had been so attracted by its beauty, and the sporting charms of the adjoining country, that he had purchased some thousands of acres of land surrounding his chosen lake, and settled down to improve the property thus acquired, and to lead the life of a Canadian country gentleman.

Possessed of taste, as well as means, he had converted the rough frontier clearing, of which years before he had entered into possession, into what was at once a large and well cultivated property, and a beautiful place of abode: and, while he had cleared up his lands extensively, fully entering into the spirit of the Canadian farmer, who dearly loves wide fields—he studied to preserve the natural beauties of the place: to im-

prove and enhance them by all the arts which his artistic tastes, love of scenery and command of money could bring to that end.

One side of his pretty lake he had suffered to remain fringed to the water's edge with the glorious old maples, elms and pines of the primeval forest—a sheltering and a beautiful back-ground—while on the gently rising and undulating shore of the other bank lay the cultivated grounds; stretching back over a wide extent; interspersed with groves and copses, orchards and ornamental plantations, wherever such would most heighten the effect. The unsightly spots, common to every landscape, and commonly left in their deformity to pain the eye, had been carefully hidden by fringes of trees; and the barns and out-houses (generally unpleasing objects) in the same manner were masked from sight. The fields bordering the shores of the lake were cultivated to the water's edge, with no ragged and unsightly range of bushes obstructing the view; but the smooth grassy slopes met the water, with here and there a tree, or an effective copse to adorn and guard them from sameness.

The property, which under the ruthless and wholesale destruction of the forest (sweeping away every tree with hand that seems to hate—that too often marks the progress of the Canadian settler), would have been but a bare clearing, resembled a handsome and well-laid out park.

On a gentle eminence near the head of the lake, sheltered by the picturesquely-wooded heights adjacent—with its lawns, gardens and ornamental grounds running down to the water—stood the house, a large, handsome and comfortable structure, which looked pretty and homelike surrounded with its trellised and vine-covered verandah; with its handsome conservatory, well-kept walks and bright gardens.

Lake Mordaunt, as its owner had named his property, had been so extensive a purchase that it still remained, as it were, enveloped in its own ancient forests, so that the nearest neigh

hour's house lay at a distance of three miles. The populous village of Ten Lakes was four miles distant, whilst the nearest railway station was twenty miles away. Well might it be called a country place, and was probably none the less valued by its owner for that reason.

Mr. Mordaunt had married, a few years after his arrival in the country,—in Western New York,—an American lady whom he had met in one of his numerous pleasure excursions. A case of love at first sight on both sides, he had been attracted by the winning disposition and delicate charms of the fair American; while she, on her part, had not been unwilling to share the fortunes of the handsome and courtly Englishman, although her future home was then sufficiently far removed from many of the advantages of an older district.

Three children—a daughter, their first-born; a son two years her junior, and a charming little girl, now three years of age—had added to their happiness.

In his habits Mr. Mordaunt presented the somewhat unusual anomaly of a strong love of literary pursuits, and an equally well-developed liking for field sports, with a love of country life. His books, with his gun, his rods, his horses and his great farm pretty equally and very pleasantly occupied his time.

About fifty years of age, he was still a young-looking, active and vigorous man, to whom life was a pleasure; and its duties, which, as far as his abilities went, were carried out to the letter, an enjoyment. In his manners he was polished, refined and courteous; simple as to his habits; of fixed and earnest views—especially as to religion, and utterly intolerant of all that was profane or irreverent. Fond of company and the society of his friends, when at his own house; he barely endured occasional visits into the great world for the sake of his family—to whom he was an affectionate husband and father, and by whom he was tenderly loved.

His wife—*née* Florence Horton—was some ten years her

husband's junior, and still retained a great measure of her superb youthful beauty. Delicate looking, as in her youth, her happy married life and the fresh vitalizing air of her country home—whose active duties she much liked—had preserved her health; and her husband and her children—with these duties—yielded her a loving interest in life which had kept her a happy and a handsome woman.

If she did not quite share her husband's love of abstruse studies, yet she was well educated, refined and agreeable; so happily constituted with the rare charm of rendering all around her pleasurable and bright—that an invitation to Lake Mordaunt was always eagerly accepted by the happy recipients. Many of the adornments of the place had been of her creation. Her conservatories, her flowers and her gardens were the boast of the country around; probably as much for her sake, as for their intrinsic merits; for her suave politeness to all; her kindness and sweet human sympathies gave in return the respect and love of all classes with whom she came in contact; while there was no surer way of gaining her good-will than an honest admiration of the objects of her love: her husband, her children, and Lake Mordaunt.

CHAPTER III.

A YOUNG LADY—A LAWYER—AND A YANKEE.

On a pleasant evening, closing a sultry July day, in the year of grace 1873, three persons were seated in the cool and leafy verandah that shaded the house at Lake Mordaunt, enjoying the fresh evening breeze; watching the declining sun as it dipped over the pretty lake and burnished its tiny wavelets; and admiring the golden tinging of the woody points—the last bright, farewell kisses of departing day.

As the thoughts, actions and events which shall brighten or overshadow the lives of these three people have much to do with this narration, it is but right that they be introduced in proper form.

'*Place aux dames*;' and sweet Ethel Mordaunt—upon whose bright hair the lingering sun's last ray has fallen in golden embrace through the wavy leaves—shall first turn her laughing eyes and delicious face to the reader's glance.

Miss Ethel Mordaunt was very nice; as nice a young lady as could be found in all broad Ontario, and that is saying a good deal. When, too, a young lady is nice, the application of the word to her is very nice also. She was tall and slight, and she was gracefully formed. She was all grace and soft, easy movement. Her long, white neck was exquisitely set, giving a peculiarly delightful and graceful poise to her beautiful little head. She was handsome, refined and intellectual looking, yet replete with the vivacity and quick delighted interest that her twenty youthful summers gave her.

Her violet blue eyes—blue and soft as the sunset skies—looked out on the world with an expression so frank and so open, with so kind a spirit shining in their clear depths, that it was easy to read the innate goodness and amiability that dwelt beneath. The generous and sympathetic nature—manifest in every word and action—exulting in the noble and excellent, sorrowing for the evil, rejoicing with the happy and grieving with the wretched—but heightened her attractions with that ineffable and undefinable beauty which is as much the external signature of goodness, as are the bitter lines—marring many an otherwise charming face—the markings of the poor and cold-hearted spirit.

Her features were regular enough to maintain her present beauty, yet without the cold immobility of the classic models. Her complexion, like her mother's, was delicate, fair and transparent; bright tintings varying with each flitting emotion: warm-

ed or paled as her youthful interest in passing events, or her kind sympathy were aroused.

Educated and accomplished—easy and self-possessed—she could be stately enough if she choose, but her eager, rosy little lips and pearly teeth in general found a smile more natural—as it was sweeter—and her society was very attractive.

She was sensible, too ; and if she liked poetry, she could also make a cake, dust the piano and play it afterwards ; paint a landscape or raise young turkeys. Yet her pretty taper fingers showed that these dissimilar occupations could not affect their whiteness or symmetry. Like all young ladies, she thoroughly appreciated the gaities of a town life—the homage and attention she attracted—yet she did **not** allow these allurements to blind her to the endearing charms of home and its pleasant duties.

She was the very apple of her father's eye—the pride of his heart. And, indeed, for that matter, there were many younger gentlemen—not related—who would only have been too happy to be allowed to look upon her as the apple of their eye also.

As she sits on the cool verandah in her pretty white summer dress—her charming figure framed against the leafy back ground of the vines—her bright eyes dancing with pleasantness, for she is in company very agreeable to her, she forms a very pretty picture, and her companions cannot help but think—one especially, whose eyes are looking unutterable things—that Ethel Mordaunt is, as indeed she is, a very nice girl.

The young gentleman seated near her, and who unconsciously yet very plainly showed his devotion, is Edwin Clereton Vance, barrister-at-law, with very little practice, but wealthy enough to be independent of the profession, and to follow his own ideas regarding it.

The son of a considerable real estate owner of the City of Toronto, he had been well brought up and carefully educated, shortly, however, after he had taken his degree with high honors

and passed the bar, his father died, leaving to the son the care of his widowed mother, and enjoining him with his last breath that whatever befell to live as an honest man.

Edwin Vance had entered on the profession of the law from choice, conceiving it to be the noblest pursuit to which a man could devote his life. Holding the chivalric idea, that as a member of this noble profession, he would become a righter of the wrongs of the oppressed, an aid to justice, and an advocate of the truth and the right, he had entered on the studies which he fondly hoped would yield him a career of usefulness, of honour and of benefit to his fellow creatures.

The instinctive feeling or perception, whichever it may be, of all right-thinking men, that the general intentions of mankind are more directed towards the good than the evil, was with him carried to the highest point. Hence he never imputed the evil motive, or suspected an action, upon whose basis by any reasoning a more charitable construction could be raised.

Thus the study of Law, which is, or ought to be, the exact science of Justice and of Right to all, was to him a delightful one, and probably no young man, fresh from his college honours, ever commenced the practice of his profession in a more enthusiastic spirit than did Mr. Edwin Vance.

It needed, however, but a very few months of its practice to convince him that there lay a great difference between the Law itself and its administration.

That an engine, as nearly approaching perfection as human intellect and foresight could bring it, should be perverted through its necessary formalities, its requisite safeguards, and unavoidably complex machinery, by the misused ingenuity of but too many of his professional brethren, to the delay of the righteous cause, the advantage of the wrong, or to the gaining of their own selfish ends, was to him a dreadful thing.

The maxim, not perhaps openly acknowledged, but so commonly put into practice among legal men as to become strictly

theirs, that the end justifies the means, no matter how dubious may be the end to be attained, or the means employed: that the winning of a wrong cause, so long as it is won, by any chicanery, juggling, double-dealing, evasion or suppression of the truth that may be necessary, is a triumph and a laudable thing, was to him equally abhorrent.

The enormous expense, the needless delay, the encouragement of litigation, the perversion of the plain designs, and the uncertainty in the administration of that which was intended to be cheap, speedy and effective—protective to the rights of all—disgusted him. His keen sense of honour, and the dignity with which he mentally covered that which should be, and was to him, an honourable profession, prevented him from entering upon, or taking part in, any matter that was not wholly straight forward. By him no dubious cause, however lucrative, was ever undertaken, and although ready and desirous to present with proper force and in the best light those things that were facts, and to employ his highest powers, to bring forth the truth to the light of day, yet he would not pervert his faculties to make appear as the right what was not the right, as truth what was not the truth, or gain a client's cause by unworthy means.

In personal appearance he was prepossessing, showing intellectuality and the evidences of a studious life. His broad, white forehead bore the contour which indicates great reasoning power, and the large, clear, dark eyes, which almost spoke, showed his command of language. But the small, well-shaped mouth, the fair complexion, and the lower part of the face too delicately cut, wanting massiveness, while plainly telling the amiability of his character, told also of the lack of strong determination. Yet the tall figure and handsome composed face, carried their quiet air of intellectual power and dignity, and he looked, as he was—a gentleman.

Last, but not least, of our trio, comes Mr. Edward Jabez Horton, a member of Congress for the State of New York, the

only brother of Mrs. Merdaunt, and a frequent visitor to Lake Mordant; for his sister and his niece, Ethel, were especial favorites of his, and in general any relaxation he could obtain from business or his public duties were devoted to a visit to them. Being a widower with but one daughter, married and living in St. Louis, he found the society of his sister and his niece an agreeable relief from the tedium of his somewhat solitary home.

An educated and intelligent American of expanded views, fixed and decided opinions, he was in his own district a man of influence and weight. Like most of his countrymen he was intensely patriotic, yet with the liberality of spirit and broadness of view of the cosmopolitan. The Anglophobia and prejudice which are common to many Americans was not shared by him, nor did he consider himself the less a patriotic American therefor. His views of life, the result of experience and thought, when once formed, were steadfastly maintained with the consistency of a mature and confident judgment.

His politics were not those of parties, but of measures; the good of his country and his fellow-citizens. To his consistent and untiring efforts in the cause of temperance, of which he was an ardent upholder, his consecutive elections to Congress had been mainly due, and to have opposed him in his own district would have proved a hopeless task.

In person he was tall, of large and powerful frame, active and energetic, and though he had passed his fiftieth year, retained the vigor of youth. His features were finely cut, though decided; his nose aquiline, his mouth firm; capable, however, of a pleasing expression; and often lighted by a smile. His forehead broad, prominent and well arched down over the clear, steel gray eyes, gave a striking expression of power and force to the face, which was one that instantly attracted attention and commanded respect.

A personality he never uttered; or a word, even in the heat of debate, that could injure the feelings of another, and this

amiable quality he carried into his private as well as his public life.

A vein of genial humour lay under the grave and thoughtful exterior. With pleasant people around him he formed a most agreeable and entertaining, as well as instructive companion. He had managed to accumulate a handsome fortune by his perseverance and success in business, and although his energetic habits would not allow him wholly to give up his active pursuits, yet he had begun to give more of his time to leisure, and the society of his friends, the Mordaunts in especial, than he had heretofore done.

He was externally neat and fastidious in person and attire, dressed habitually in black broadcloth, wore a glossy beaver hat, good jewellery and faultless linen.

"Well! Uncle Edward, are we to remain here all evening star gazing?" said Ethel. "or shall we take advantage of the cooler air for a row upon the lake. I know you are longing for your evening cigar, only abstaining from it that you fear its odour might penetrate through two feet of brick wall into my mother's drawing-room."

"I do not see, my dear Ethel," he replied, with comfortable laziness, "why you should throw the responsibility of our movements upon my shoulders, any more than I can see why you should call me Uncle 'Edward,' thereby implying that you have numerous Uncle 'Josephs' and 'Henrys,' et cetera, at your imperative call, when you are perfectly well aware that I am your sole uncle, on this side of the herring pond at all events. Neither am I longing particularly for a cigar, and were I to indulge in one and its odours should invade your mother's drawing-room, which as the windows are open, is probable, it is not from her that I would expect reproof. It would remain for your saucy tongue to remind me of my misdoings. And, again, why not follow your own sweet will as to a row upon the lake. I am ready to obey your behests, and doubtless Edwin Vance

there will be only too happy. We can divide the work equally—he shall row, you shall sing, and I will smoke my evening cigar, as you irreverently term it. Having been very busy all day, any severer labor would be too much for me."

"Such a long speech! with nothing in it, either," replied Ethel. "I will call you Uncle Jabez hereafter for taking me up so. What a sweet name it is! No one can choose pretty names like the Americans. As you say, you must be very much fatigued. You have followed mamma and I about all day, asking questions and giving advice, making the acquaintance of all the turkeys and chickens, calculating the pounds avoirdupoise of every individual pig, and criticizing every fruit tree, plant and flower that did not suit your exact taste."

"That is all right, Miss Ethel," was answered laughingly. "There is no use replying to you, as you will always manage to have the last word. So go and get your hat on and we will walk down to the lake."

"Yes! do, Miss Mordaunt, it will be so pleasant," said Mr. Vance. "I shall be happy, too, to accept the rather onerous share thrown upon my shoulders by Mr. Horton's very equal division of labor and do the rowing."

CHAPTER IV.

"MOONLIGHT FOR THREE."

But just as they were about to start for their moonlight excursion, the good-natured face of Barney Conley, the general factotum about the house, appeared on the verandah.

"Here's a letter for ye, Miss Ethel, and one for ye, too, Mr. Vance, and a couple of them for you, sorr! and fais! if the contents are as warrum as the carrying of them up from the village

beyant made me this blazin' evenin', its the divil entirely the writers ov thin will be after playin' wid yez all, or else its grate love they'll be makin' till yez."

"Warm? Barney," said Ethel. "How could the carrying of these few letters make you so warm; besides, you drove to the village. You didn't call in at the hotel, did you, Barney?" she asked, mischievously.

"Faith! I did thin, Miss Ethel. But what I wor a-saying wor intended for a purlite remark on the grate hate of the season; for I'm tould it's the weather entirely that the quality talk about, when they've nothin' else to say till wan another."

"Very well put, Barney," said Mr. Horton. "Your remark is sarcastic but just. There is not much else to talk about, and it *is* warm. Here is a half dollar for the heat and for carrying those heavy letters. But I fear, Barney, that the calling in at the hotel makes the weather appear so very warm.

"Bedad! an' I would'nt doubt ye, sorr; and is it tobacky thin that I'm to buy wid this? Tobacky makes fire, and fire makes hate."

"Yes! and fire-water makes greater heat still. Better try the tobacco, Barney," replied Mr. Horton.

"Barney!" said Mrs. Mordaunt, stepping out on the verandah; "Barney! to-morrow morning early you will have to take one of the driving horses and a light waggon to Cascades to meet a gentleman coming by the two o'clock train. Start early to avoid the heat, and try and get back by dark."

"Yes! ma'am, it shall be done; and how will I know the gentleman when the train comes in, ma'am?"

"Ask for Mr. Wolverton—but you know him very well already, Barney," was the reply.

"Faix, thin, I know him well enough, and what the divil does he——" but Barney thought better of it and walked off.

"Mr. Vance," said Mrs. Mordaunt, turning to him, "I have a letter from your friend Sydney Wolverton, saying that he

avails himself of an invitation I once gave him to pay us a short visit to-morrow, as he is to play in the great cricket match at Ten Lakes on Saturday, and he wishes to see you, he says. So Barney goes to the station for him to-morrow."

"Yes, Mrs. Mordaunt, I have also just heard from him, telling me he had written you and would be here. He says he has business of importance to transact with me, though what it may be I cannot imagine. If he requires legal advice, I shall tell him not to go to law. Too expensive a pleasure, and unsatisfactory withal. But will you not join us in our sail this evening, Mrs. Mordaunt?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Vance, I think not, as I have a letter to write, too long put off already. So go and enjoy yourselves—Edward shall represent me."

"Come along then, Ethel," said Mr. Horton.

But she, handing a letter to her mother, said—

"In a moment, uncle. Here is a letter, mamma, from Emily Dearborn; she and Ada are coming over to-morrow to spend the day. I asked them, you remember, a week since."

As she delayed, speaking with her mother, Mr. Horton took Vance's arm, drew him to one side, and said, earnestly—

"I think I heard you say, my dear Vance, that Wolverton's coming here is partly for the transaction of some business matters with you. Now, please excuse me for what you may think an interference in your private affairs, and take it as it is meant, the act of a friend, by permitting me to advise you most earnestly to have no transactions outside your profession with that young man. I cannot consider him straightforward, or honest, or to be depended upon, and I have good reason for what I advance, although I cannot at this moment give you any particular proof in support, but merely ask you to rely on my judgment and experience. I have reason to dislike Wolverton; neither do I like his coming here at this time. As a friend he may be well enough; he is plausible and attractive in his

manners, but he cannot be trusted, and, in my opinion, is a dangerous man. I trust you will regard what I say. I can also consider myself your friend, and it is in that quality that I have spoken."

"Thank you, Mr. Horton, for what you have said and its kind spirit. But I have never had, or am I likely to have, any other than professional business with Sydney Wolverton. We were college chums, and have been friends, though of late we have not met often. A year ago he asked me to join him in his milling establishments at Hopetown, and offered me apparently great inducements if I would put in capital. I declined the matter, however, though he pressed it upon me with some persistence, on the ground that I did not care to enter upon a business of which I had no knowledge, and that I could not advance the sum required without disposing of property, which I was not inclined to sell. His present business with me will, I imagine, prove to be something in the legal way. If, however, it is a renewal of his former offer, or aught similar, I will most certainly act upon the advice you have given me."

"So he has been trying to rope you in for that concern of his at Hopetown, has he? Well, this strongly confirms the view I have just expressed, for he had made the same offer to me, and as I am generally ready for anything that has money in it, I went down there to see the thing. The property seemed good enough, but I found in him such a persistent attempt at misrepresentation of values, to foist upon me figures showing the past business of the concern and its capabilities, which bore the impress of being cooked for the purpose, that I abruptly ended the negotiation, which otherwise I should have completed on a fair basis, even though I then foresaw the distant approach of a storm in the commercial world, which if it fortunately has not fallen, is not averted. He is remarkably shrewd and smart in his way of putting things, but I have had too many transactions with my own acute countrymen to be easily blinded. I am

glad of what you tell me, and hope you will keep in the same mind. But here is Ethel."

The young lady coming up, they walked down to the lake together, and getting out a boat, were soon sailing over the smooth waters under the soft twilight sky.

Ethel, leaning over the stern sheets, rippled the water with her white fingers and was silent, the scene and the time being very conducive to pleasant thought, even though it bordered on romance: some bright day dream or happy retrospect, sacred to herself.

Her uncle went forward to be 'solus' with his cigar; to watch its circlets of smoke as they rose in the air, and indulge, perhaps, in a dream of his own, whose romance, if not probably of love, might very well be of love for his fellow men.

Vance, between them, plied his sculls slowly, rewarding himself for the labor by gazing at the fair face before him that he had learned to love so well. Probably inspired by its presence, his thoughts were evidently busy, for he sat silent and pre-occupied, and while the boat is moving slowly into the lake, let us snatch a moment to reveal the subject of his reflections.

Although Mr. Edwin Vance considered himself the friend of Sidney Wolverton, liked and thought well of him, and would have been properly indignant had the strength and purity of that friendship been questioned, yet the reception of the news that he was coming on the morrow had not given him the sensation of pleasure that it ought to have done. On the contrary, he did not like it, and sincerely wished his friend Sydney at Halifax or Hopetown or anywhere else, so long as he was not coming to Lake Mordaunt. He was pleasant enough, clever and attractive enough, our hero liked him and did not suspect his friendly motives, yet still he had an idea that Mr. Wolverton was not as indifferent as he could wish him to be, to the desire of finding favor in the eyes of the fair Ethel. Now to find favor in her eyes was the very thing of all others that he

himself most earnestly desired, and as the best and truest friendship that ever existed is not equal to the strain of such a test, the thought became simply unbearable to him and not to be endured. And so Sydney Wolverton was heartily wished away by his friend—much troubled in spirit at his advent—and who pondered and cogitated, hesitated and doubted, at one moment forming the resolution to act at once, declare his love at the first available moment and forestall danger; and again the modesty and self-depreciation which the very depth of his love threw over him, caused him the fear of being premature, and of bringing on a catastrophe too hideous to be contemplated.

He revolved his own and his possible rival's chances over in his own mind, with painful minuteness and discomfort. Reviewing every chance smile; every stray glance from his divinity's eye, and every word she had uttered since he had learned to love, he could not but feel that, though he had received no direct encouragement on his fair lady's part, yet she had shown no dislike to his attentions, which she must, he thought, with feminine prescience, have interpreted in all their meaning. In fact he felt almost sure that his society had not been found disagreeable.

But a great love, not yet assured of a return, while magnifying its object's worth, attractions and deservings, minimises in its giver's eyes, his own deservings, and robs him of the self-confidence, which in other matters than his love may be assured enough.

And so poor Edwin doubted and hesitated, longed and feared, worshipped the fair divinity sitting before him, feasted his eyes in her sweet presence and tormented his soul with a lover's fears.

Had they been but alone on that pretty lake, the stars shining down upon them, the soft face of nature hushed in the delicious stillness! The splash of the leaping trout rippling the water with moonlit silver, the rustling of the leaves or the chirp of

some waking bird the sole accompaniment, what a fitting moment, snatched from elysium, would not it have been to have poured out his rapturous love and asked its sweet return? Would not then his fair Ethel, impressed with the softness and beauty of all around her, have listened propitiously to his fervid tale, and with a little word dispelled his doubts; dissipated his fears; made that little lake a glorious scene of enchantment, a happy picture that would lie impressed on his mind for all his days.

But they were not alone.

Mr. Horton, sitting with them in that boat, was a very palpable fact. Also with a very palpable cigar in his mouth, a very palpable smile upon his face, a twinkle in his eye, as if he had been engaged in reading the inmost thoughts of his companions, while apparently wrapt up altogether in the fragrance of his Havana.

Removing the latter from his lips and throwing it into the water he broke the silence, which so far had continued, and said—

“Well, Ethel, our boating expedition is a success. Not a word has been spoken to disturb the quiet harmony of the evening, and we have had undisturbed leisure to observe the beauties of the scenery. The delightful aspect of nature sinking into the repose of night always seems the most lovely and appeals the most powerfully to our sense of the beautiful. How the calm and softened tranquillity of all around us infuses its quiet spirit into ours. Freeing us from the dull thoughts of earth, its mild influence lifts the imagination upward and arouses the sentimental and romantic susceptibilities of our minds, so dormant under the active influences of the glaring sunlight. Doubtless, Ethel, the charms of this tender evening scene have raised your sensitive nature to a blissful height of romantic aspirations, far above the grovelling cares of earth, especially as we are at present blessed with the absence of the ravaging musquitoe. I know no more powerful disenchanter,

nothing more effectual as a dispeller of romance, anything that can bring us down from the clouds so quickly and land us on the base earth again so suddenly as the advent of a few blood-thirsty Canadian mosquitoes."

"Oh, what a shame, uncle! You have brought me down to the earth again as effectually as if you had been a mosquito yourself. I do not believe you have an atom of poetry or romance in your whole composition, uncle. Such an unfeeling speech! Adapting your fine words to one's high-strung feelings and then scattering them in the dust with their ridiculous termination. And do you mean to imply that you have no blood-thirsty mosquitoes in those precious States of yours? Yes! Yankee mosquitoes that can bite as well as ours, with the only difference that they will never find any 'romance to dispel' there. Who ever heard of a romantic Yankee? Your mosquitoes, like yourselves, are doubtless a very practical class of insects. 'Canadian mosquitoes, forsooth!'"

"Oh, well, Ethel, I guess we can raise some as respectable mosquitoes in the States as you can in these benighted Provinces, even though you do call them a 'Dominion.' And I take it very hard, too, that you should abuse the mosquitoes of your uncle's native land. It isn't right."

"Never mind, uncle, I'll fix you, as the Yankees say," replied Ethel, laughing. "I'll punish you for all this to-morrow by putting Emily Dearborn under your charge for the entire day. We'll get up a picnic on purpose, and you shall have the pleasure of being her chevalier. She is a dashing young lady, although a 'benighted provincial,' as you would say, and will pay your American gallantry on the *qui vive*, I can tell you."

"Ha! ha! Miss Ethie," replied the uncle, with a chuckle. "A notable arrangement, truly. So that you can have our young friend Edwin to be your own particular 'preux chevalier.' Very well thought of I must say. But how if he objects and prefers the stylish Miss Emily?"

At the rather direct inuendo of the first part of this speech poor Ethel had to blush, while Vance looked supremely disgusted with its termination, and, to relieve his fair lady, interposed—

“Miss Mordaunt’s plan is a very good one, and Mr. Horton will be only too delighted with his charming companion. She is a good talker on every subject, even including politics, and is capable of a flirtation. So, Mr. Horton, beware.”

“And, you, also, are determined to sacrifice me,” he replied. “Well, I don’t wonder at it, seeing your object. But how will you manage with the other young lady? ‘Two are company, but three are none,’” added he, laughing.

“And now Ethel,” he continued, “make room for Mr. Vance beside you. I’ll take the oars, for he has had his share by this time, and you shall give us a song.”

“You don’t deserve it then, uncle, for all your wickedness this evening,” she replied. “Nevertheless, I’ll sing you a song or two before we go home, as it is late.”

As Ethel’s sweet young voice rang over the waters, echoing among the leafy points and bays in the soft melody of a fine old French-Canadian ‘chanson,’ the young lady herself little imagined that her evening’s adventure was not yet ended, or that aught else than a walk home was to be its conclusion.

CHAPTER V.

“BENEATH THE WAVY BOUGHS.”

As Ethel sang and Edwin Vance listened, with wrapt delight to the sweet voice—to him inexpressibly sweet—and thought what little lake a scene of more than mortal pleasure, as is the way with lovers, his well-wished away companion, Mr. Edward

Jabez Horton, who had lighted another cigar, and whose prosaic eyes viewed that little lake as the scene of very comfortable earthly pleasure, quietly indulged himself in various worldly reflections to the following purport:—

“Now that young fellow has evidently caved under to the charms of that saucy little neice of mine, Ethie there—head over ears in love with her, and showing it plainly enough for the very cat to see it. I don't wonder at it, either. I'd be much more inclined to blame him if he wasn't struck. She, too, I calculate, is by no means so indifferent as she would like to be considered, or else I'm very much mistaken.

“What a picture she is as she sits there singing and looking at the stars as if they listened to her; and that young goose gazing at her as if she was sun, moon, stars, earth and everything combined. Very likely she is really the summing up of all happiness to him. Queer, isn't it? But I like Vance—he is honorable and good. Eligible enough, too, for that matter, and I know of no one to whom I would sooner see my pretty Ethie married. Why should'nt Mordaunt and my sister think the same? That vagabond Wolverton is coming here to-morrow, too, up to some deep scheme, doubtless. I've heard it whispered that he entertains a sneaking fondness for Ethel—her father's dollars probably. Well, I would not give much for his chance of either whilst I'm around this clearing, at any rate. Still he might make mischief, and he has got to be watched. Yes, I like Vance; he's just my style, except that he is too yielding and inclined to judge people by his own measure, and an uncommonly high value he places on some very poor human nature, too, sometimes. Grave faults these, especially in a Yankee's eyes, but time cures all these little amiable weaknesses. After all, this tendency to think well of; to believe in his fellow creatures, shows the true metal in the man. Yes, I like him, and I've a good mind to give him his opportunity this very evening to make it all right with Ethel. If he has the pluck

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about him that I think he has, he'll go in and win, and very smoothly put my friend Wolverton's nose out of joint for him with a vengeance."

Ethel still sang and Vance still rapturously listened, while Mr. Horton, highly amused with his own ideas, chuckled over them for a moment or two and finally laughed outright, as he happened to look up at his two companions, for whom he had thus cut out some work.

Ethel concluded her song, the third that Edwin had succeeded in obtaining, and turning to her uncle, said—

"Well, you are polite, uncle, I must say. What was there about my singing for you to laugh at? I rather expected praise instead."

"I didn't laugh at your singing, Ethel," he replied. "Something of which I was thinking struck me as ridiculous. As to praising you, Mr. Vance will doubtless attend to that. He ought to do, for he has been so entranced with melody, and you so delighted with your own singing that neither of you have yet observed that the boat is at the landing."

And such was the case. It lay close alongside the little wharf.

Mr. Horton jumped out at once, walked off a step or two, and said—

"Please run the skiff into the boat-house, Edwin. Mordaunt does not like his boats left out; and, Ethel, see the door is secured. The lock is peculiar, and Vance won't understand its workings."

Edwin looked up surprised and vexed at the sudden close of his delightful evening. He assisted Ethel ashore; put the boat into the house, and locked the door, about which he found no difficulty whatever, and no necessity for Ethel's assistance. Then, looking up, he noticed that Mr. Horton had walked on ahead a short distance with his cigar.

Did not all this appear unusual? as the circumstances of the

strange landing flashed upon his mind. Had not Mr. Horton jumped ashore hurriedly; ordered him to put the boat into its house; Ethel to attend to a perfectly easy lock, and while they were obeying his orders, had he not walked off in advance?

Was it purposely done that he might be left alone with Ethel. A giant hope shot over his heart. Had his feeling been so plainly shown that Mr. Horton, reading them, had been so well disposed towards him as to favor his suit and to do this friendly thing for him.

Poor Edwin's heart thumped tumultuously against his side. Here was his opportunity; here was his golden moment.

A golden moment, truly, yet a very brief one, for in the few minutes' distance between them and the house would his fate have to be decided.

There was no time to be lost, and, checking with a violent effort the tide of emotions which swept over him, he turned toward Ethel, who had moved forward and called to him—

"Come along, Mr. Vance. Uncle Edward has gone forward."

"A moment, Miss Mordaunt," he replied, and then, overtaking her, he walked a few steps by her side in silence, trying to force his spirits into calmness, to clear his thoughts and to regain the confidence that had deserted him.

At length, stepping suddenly before her, in a voice, low, earnest and impassioned, he said—

"Miss Mordaunt—Ethel—if I dare call you so, I have something to say to you so very momentous to myself, for an opportunity to say which I have been ardently longing, that I must ask you to accord to me here a hearing. I love you, Ethel. I love you with such devotedness—you have become so inexpressibly dear to me—that I cannot longer exist without telling you of my love, and asking you, oh! Ethel, if it is possible for its return. It is not a new love—a sudden passion—the transitory illusion of a day, that beauty alone might inspire. It is the

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firm, true and enduring love—grown into my very being—the very springs of my life, that will not end with me on earth. I have loved you from the moment of our first meeting—two years ago, on that bright Toronto morning, whose memory shall never fade from me. And to love you, Ethel, has been so sweet, day by day growing upon me; day by day so multiplied, so firmly rooted, as every admirable quality, every loveliness of your character forced their tribute of respect and esteem into greater love—into the great love for you, Ethel, which has become my very life itself. To love you has been happiness—but a happiness of doubts and fears—a happiness of suspense unendurable. Oh! Ethel, I ask you for the treasure of your love in return—I ask you for that which to me is all happiness—all existence—all the world. I ask you to be mine, Ethel; to be my wife; to give me back myself, for in you, in your love, is all myself, my very being, centered. Can you give me your love, Ethel? One word—but one little word."

Now, Miss Ethel had, ere this, felt in the inmost recesses of her little heart that it had become probable that one day or another some such words as these would be addressed to her by this same young gentleman, and she had also felt in those same inmost recesses that when the words were spoken, the ordeal of hearing them would not be so very disagreeable to her.

Yet she was utterly taken by surprise—so bewildered and overwhelmed by the sudden coming upon her of her ordeal, that she had remained standing—motionless—bereft of breath and almost of sense, and looking up into his face in the very astonished attitude into which his first startling words had thrown her, and had listened to his somewhat unlawyerlike harangue in about as chaotic a state of mind as it was possible for a young lady to be on receiving a not improbable declaration.

Taken by surprise she certainly was, for she had neither noticed her uncle's manœuvre on landing the boat, or the somewhat unusual circumstance of his walking on; leaving them thus

alone, and the latter she had innocently supposed to have arisen from his desire to enjoy his cigar without subjecting her to annoyance from its fumes.

Had she observed her uncle's tactics, which now were manifest enough, though they had seemed so natural at the time, it might have been that Mr. Edwin Vance would have found the opportunity he had seized prematurely cut short.

But he had seized the opportunity, his declaration had been made, her ordeal was upon her, and she had to meet it.

It was hard upon her—very hard. Much harder than if her surprise had come from one whom she did not like, and it was dangerous for him also. Had she been a passionate young lady, of no self-control, it might have been fatal.

As it was, it was very hard.

To a very young lady, to whom a word of love in earnest had never ere this been addressed, receiving her first declaration, surprised in so sudden and unexpected a fashion, unnerving her, taking away her self-possession, even though the lover was the right man in the right place, it was very hard.

As his words ceased, and he stood intent, nervous, uneasy and excited, his love shining in his eyes and anxious expectancy distracting his brain; awaiting his fate, she had to brace up her spirits and force herself, with an effort, into a state of mind that it was possible for her to think.

"If he had not been so sudden. If he had but given a moment of preparation. If I had had but a clue to his intent and had been forewarned. If he had but chosen a less unexpected time and place for his avowal—all happy though it was, and oh! if I had not lost all my self-possession? It was cruel in him to surprise me thus, with his ill-judged precipitancy, and he deserves to be punished for his folly," were the ideas that ran through her mind, and it was only with an effort that she restrained herself from falling into tears.

But then came the thought of her triumph. That she was

loved ; that he loved her—he had told her that he loved her—she had the strong assurance, and it was very sweet.

It was her triumph.

He was hers ; he was at her mercy, to do with as seemed best to her. He was at her feet, her victim ; the spoil of her bow and her spear. He was hers, and for loving her she loved him none the less. He loved her, and had told her that he loved her ; he had asked her to be his wife, and it was very sweet.

And there came over her a flush of maiden timidity—a strong impulse to fly towards her uncle, the glimmer of whose cigar was perceptible in the distance.

But there stood her lover with eager, appealing eyes fixed upon her face, awaiting the answer which she knew she had to give him ; which she knew he ought to have.

What could she say ? What could she do ? How could she tell the man that she loved him ? She would die first, and yet she could not tell the man that she did *not* love him. What was she to do ?

What would her father and mother say, and that wicked Uncle Edward who had left her alone—if they knew that their dear friend, Mr. Vance, was making love to her and had asked her to marry him ? Why had not *he* left her alone, when they were all so happy and comfortable together.

“ Oh ! it was too dreadful, and she must go home.”

She made a step forward—

“ Let me pass, Mr. Vance !” but he interrupted her.

“ Ethel, give me a word first. Do not send me away thus unanswered. Ethel, I love you so dearly, my heart is dying within me in suspense. I cannot go without a word, a smile, one glance—anything to give me a gleam of hope. Ethel, darling, one little word.”

He took her hand, and looked down into her eyes.

“ Oh, Ethel ! you love me—you love me ; my darling, forever my own.”

Without raising her eyes, she laid her hand upon his arm and whispered—

“ Yes, Edwin.”

CHAPTER VI.

BARNEY AND JERRY.

Our friend, Barney Conley, had received his mistresses orders for the morrow's journey with unusual equanimity, and, for a wonder, with no opposition or grumbling. “ The poor dumb bastes av harses 'ull be kilt intoirely wid pounding thim over the roads in such divil's weather,” being Barney's general comment upon all orders of the kind, and that too in every season of the year. In his eyes the sending out of any of the driving horses which were under his charge on any other business than taking the family to church, going to the post office or to the stores in the village, was a monstrous piece of cruelty to his poor “ bastes,” and a personal affront to himself, only to be submitted to under protest.

On this occasion, however, Barney had more than one good reason for his forbearance and willingness to be turned out of bed at an abnormally early hour of the morning. In the first place he would have the advantage of the cool of the morning for his horses performance of the journey, an object to him, as he looked upon each mile travelled as a nail in the coffin, so to speak, of his much loved “ bastes.”

But the most important consideration, in his eyes, was the fact that the ostler of the “ Railway Hotel ” at Cascades, the town whither he was bound, was a most particular friend and crony, a brother of his soul, and he looked forward with great complacency, to a long and very garrulous day with him.

The prospect before his eyes, of the two of them seated on the out-box of the hotel stable, their coats off, their hats pulled

his arm and
down upon their noses, their pipes in their mouths, very comfortably enjoying their chat about "ould times and the ould sod," the new times in their new country, raking over all the bits of scandal that floated about the country, talking over their neighbours concerns, criticizing the merits and demerits of their respective employers, was so delightful that at four o'clock in the morning Barney was up and stirring, his horse fed, groomed and harnessed into the lightest buggy available, yet amid his tender commiserations.

"Faix, an' it's a purty creature ye are, Dolly, me darlint," said he, patting the horse's glossy neck. "An' a murdering shame it is, so it is, and a disgrace to be afther dragging ye out this day, an' for that ould salpeen of a Wolverton, too. The cranky ould stage horses from Tin Lakes wid their bhones stickin' out av their ould hides, are gud enough for sich as him. Whin wance I get ye back agin, the divil a fut ye'll stir out o' this for a wake to come. It's kilt ye'll be entoirely the day."

Barney's start had been so early, and his progress so good, that at the early hour of seven he was approaching the town of Cascades, and began to think it was time to attend to his personal appearance, for, as he had travelled in his shirt sleeves in an *al fresco* attire generally, an improvement was desirable on the score of dignity. Removing the ten cent straw hat which shaded his comical features, he re-placed it with a tall and very furry-looking beaver. A high and tremendously starched white linen collar was next placed in position, to grate nicely his ears, and was secured by a large black silk handkerchief thrice wound around his neck. He next pulled from under the seat of the wagon a newspaper-covered parcel, from which he produced a long and very capacious black cloth coat, exceedingly short in the sleeves and long in the tails. Inserting himself into this spruce garment he considered himself attired in the height of fashion, and proceeded to drive through the town with much dignity and gravity of demeanour. In great state he drove up to

the hotel door and threw the reins to a boy who was standing near ; ordered him to drive the horse into the yard, and walked himself in grave and solemn demeanour, into the office. Going up to the register he seized a pen and, throwing himself flat upon the book, produced, with much labour, a series of hieroglyphics intended to represent his name and style, on the page before him, which, unfortunately, he did not notice to be dated about two months back.

Addressing the sleepy-looking clerk, who had viewed the spectacle before him with such astonishment that he had become almost awakened thereby, he told him that his "harse" was to be put up and "fid dacent."

Considering then that all requisites of dignity had been satisfied, he walked into the bar, where Mr. Horton's half-dollar of the preceding evening speedily resolved itself into a bottle of "potheen," of Ontario manufacture, but good enough for the purpose, which he put into his pocket, and went out to see with his own eyes to the care of his horse, and to find his freind Jerry Coghlan, the ostler.

As he proceeded into the stable-yard, his ears were saluted with an angry colloquy between the boy who had driven the horse round and the ostler, and, as he was unperceived, he listened with much interest.

"Here's a horse to be put up right off, Jerry, that one of the queerest old guys you ever seed drew up with a minute since," said the boy.

"What's that ye say, ye young pup," exclaimed Jerry, sticking his head out of the stable door.

"Here's a horse to be put, right off, I tell yer," screamed back the boy. "What's the matter with you this morning? Did the old woman lick yer before breakfast that you're so mighty ugly?"

"A harse to put up, did yer say, ye young imp. At this time

of the morning too," answered Jerry, dancing with rage on the stable floor.

"You'd better put her up, I can tell you, Jerry, for the old guy that owns her will be around here in a minute or two, you bet." said the boy, by no means daunted by Jerry's anger.

"Begorra! it's an ould guy, and a lunathic he is too, so he is, cavourtin' 'round the counthry wid his ould baste afore sivin o'clock av the marning, a botherin' dacent folks that keeps a dacent hot-tel afore there out av their war-rum beds. I suppose now he thinks its plazed we are to put up him an' his old bones that the crows ought till have had tin years agone. Faix, it's mishtaken he is. It's a shebeen he thinks we kape, is it, musha? And what the divil did ye bring his ould baste here for? Why didn't ye tie her till the post an' leave her there? ye young imp ye!"

"Because he told me to bring her round and get her put up," screamed back the boy. "And you'd better put her up, too, or the boss will be down on yer like a thousand of brick, my old galoot."

"Be off wid ye, ye young limb, afore I break yur hid fur ye. Lave the baste wid me, I say!" roared Jerry, as he unwillingly came forward to his duty. "Belike as not now, the man sthole the harse, and is aff to the States wid her. She's a purty baste, anyhow, and its a quality vehicle, so it is. Troth, and I believe it's wan av ould Mordaunt's up at the lake beyant. and, be my sowl, here's Barney himself. The top ov the darnin' till ye Barney, me honey. Ye're as welcome as the crows in May, and it's plazed I am to see ye."

"It's plazed ye are, is it?" replied Barney, in chilling tones, with an icy air of indignant hauteur. "And wud ye be so kind as to tell me, Misther Coghlan, who it was yer were plazed to call an ould lunathic the while? Eh! will ye? No more an ould lunathic thin yirself, Misther Coghlan. And it's a shebeen this, ta it I ought to put up at, Misther Coghlan? Faix, it's plis-

anter and dacenter looking min than you'll iver be, I've seen at a shebeen, Misther Coghlan. An' I sthole the baste, did I, Misther Coghlan? Bad scran till ye, but it's not far that I'd thrust a harse, nor anything else wid ye, for an ould rip as ye are, Misther Coghlan. Begorra! but it's a grate mind I have to lave yez, baste and all, and go where thay'd thrate a gintleman dacent, instid of blaggarding him, black and blue, because ye're too lazy to do the wur-ruk ye're paid for."

"Och, musha, Barney dear, sorra a bit av me knew it was yirself, so I did'nt, till I seed ye. I tought it was some other botherin ould baste coming wid his harse whin I wor in the middle ov my marning's wur-ruk."

"Lookee here," he continued to the boy who had listened open-eyed to their colloquy, "you clare out av this, ye young divil: back to the hotel wid ye, and mind the bells. Ye're wanted there and not here; ye're room is better than your company, any day. Sthep in Barney, intill the sthable, an' take a sate, while I put yer baste up.

"Och, thin," said Barney, "it wor all a mishtake, I suppose, and we'll say no more concernin it. But I'll give ye a hand till put up the baste, Jerry, and give him a taste av hay and oats till ate."

"And how's the wife, Jerry," continued Barney, when, his work finished, he had got his precious coat and stove-pipe hat off, his pipe lighted, and, very comfortably, they were seated on the oat-bin.

"Faix, she's well enough," replied Jerry, "barrin' that she's as cross as a badger this marnin'. It's kilt I am wid her intoirely."

"Crass is it, she is?" said Barney. "Begorra! and that's bad enough. The crathurs will git as crass as two sticks betimes, an' jist for nothin' at all, at all. Lave her till herself a bit, Jerry, and by-and-by she'll come philandering around ye wid a smile on her face, as swate as ye plaze."

"Sure, thin, I wish ye had a wife till yerself, Barney, till ye burnt the differ," was Jerry's mournful reply.

"The howly saints forbid," ejaculated Barney, faintly. "There's throuble enough in the world widout poor Barney going fur till make more av it."

"Musha, and you're right there!" replied Jerry. "But may I make so bould as to inquire, Misther Conley, by your lave, what brought ye down from the lake so bright and airy, wid twinty good miles ahint ye?"

"Shure, thin, I'll tell ye, Jerry, how it is ye have the honour av me company, as the quality say, this blissed day. It wor the mistress as kem to me yesterday and guv me a five dollar bill. 'Barney,' says she, 'ye'll take a harse the morn and a kerridge, and ye'll take a holiday till yirself, for ye've been working hard av late, so ye have, and, bedad, it's a day's pleasuring ye'll be wantin', and the money's for yirself, Barney,' she said. And thin she tould me to take care av mesilf, and not to forgit to go to Cascades and see me ould frind, Jerry Coghlan, the dacent man, and that I might, as well as not, wait fur the two o'clock train, fur Misther Wolverton wud be aboard, and I might fetch him up wid me, an' that's the how and the wherefore av it, Jerry."

"Och! that's it, is it, Barney," said Jerry, laughing; "I tought the last part av yir spache had more trute in it nor the beginning av it, sorra a bit! an' what fur wud the ould lady be afther givin' ye a foive dollars fur yersilf to go on a day's jaunt with? They pay ye more nor ye earn, so they do, ye lazy ould rip. But it's dacent people they are, the Mordaunts, every mother's son av them, and daughters, too, mind ye that, and raie quality, even the ould Yankee general or member of Parlemint that's up all there wid them. But what's Wolverton afther that ye've takin' him up to the lake fur wid ye, the spalpeen."

"The divil a know I know what's takin' him up, bad scrán till him," said Barney.

"Begorra! ye may be sure it's not fur nothin', thin. It's some

deludhering schame he has afut," continued Jerry. "Mebbe it's the daughter he's after, wid some of the ould father's dollars. His ould mills at Hopetown beyant are in a bad way, I'm tould, and it's money he wants to square his corners with. Faix, if the Mordaunt's knew as much av him as the folks here do, it's little conversation they'd have wid him, good or bad, so they would'nt. Bad scran till him."

"Sorra a bit av me knows what's fetchin' him up anyhow," answered Barney. "The misthress got a letter yisterday, and the minit she read it she tould me to come down here afther him. But it's the day afther the fair he is, if it's an eye on the young daughter he has, for Mистер Vance, the young lawyer, from Toronto, is up there these tin days, is swate as ye plaze, and fur all she looks as innercent as a cat in the panthry, it's asy telling that it's dacent running he's making, and it's news we'll be hearing before the wake's out, if Barney's old eyes don't desave him. Mистер Wolverton will find his porridge burnt fur him, so he will, when he commences his deludherings wid her, begorra, and sarve him right too."

"Arrah, thin, it's sould he is, and I'm glad av it, fur he's mane anyhow," answered Jerry. "A matter of tin days or a fortnight ago, he was here at the hotel a drinkin' and a gamblin' wid tree wild, taring chaps that kem aff the train, a spending his money as if there was no end till it, when it's betther he'd have been at Hopetown beyant a mindhin his business. There's little Jenny Houlahan, the wife's niece, as ye know, that works at his mills beyant, and has'nt seen but one tin dollars av her arnins this three months back. Faix he was a boastin' and a blowing round with them chaps that he wud marry ould Mordaunt's daughter and straighten out his loose ends wid her father's money. But they laughed at him, and wan of thim axed him why he didn't go and ax the girl at oncet—just as he was, blind drunk—and give the crathur a chance to see what kind of a man he wor. The baste tould him, so he did, that it would'nt be till

either the wedding that she'd find that out. Bad cess till him."

"Ye did that, did ye. Mистер Wolverton," exclaimed Barney, as if in indignant address to a present enemy. "Begorra, ye'll find out that Barney has a nate Irish tongue in his hid, and ull get convarsin as simple as any omadhaun wid the mistress and she'll hear tell av ye, me bhoy, before ye ate yir taa there, this blissid night, ye vagabone thief av the world."

"And, Barney, avick," said Jerry, "the day's murthering warm, and ye have no nade to start till well on to evening. He'll have to wait at the hotel here, and he'll get dhrinking, av coorse, as usule, and whin you're a dhriving home, he'll be talking and axing questions aff ye. How innocent ye'll be actin', Barney—a soothing of him down till ye find out what schame he's got in his eye. Begorra, but it's the fine joke ye'll be playing on him."

"Thrue fur ye, Jerry, and it's not all the trute I'll tell him, either. He'll have more'n he likes, so he will. And now we'll go in and soother the crassness out av the crathur wid a bit chat."

"Arrah! d'ye suppose she'd be crass whin company comes to the dure? Faix, it's as purlite as ye plaze she'll be. It's kilt entoirely I am wid her, but it's plazed as Punch she'll be till see ye, Barney."

"Here's with ye, Jerry, till the train comes," said Barney.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST KISS.

When Mr. Edwin Vance awoke the next morning he became very pleasantly aware that he was a very happy man—a very happy man indeed. For him the world had put on a very bright aspect. The new day opened for him wlt h a new interest—a very delightful interest too. A new day surpassing all other

days—the red-letter day of his life. A new day whose morning brightness shone with new lightings. He was very happy, and his new world was a very beautiful world. His troubles were over; his doubts and fears were ended. He had obtained that which of all things was in his eyes the most desirable. His love was a successful love, and so he was happy.

Yet he could hardly realize it all—this bright issue of his uncertainties.

Was it not all a dream—a magnificent hallucination—that evening scene of but a few hours ago—anxious, fearful, tortured in its multitudinous and intense drawn out emotions? in a moment transfigured by a word into his unmeasurable happiness.

Was it not an impossibility that he had really attained that so longingly hoped for, that so doubtingly wished, that blissful goal, seeming so distant that its height was so unutterably desired.

How far off did it all seem but yesterday—how helplessly unattainable—and yet it was his to-day; he had got it—he held the sweet assurance. The fair Ethel was his fair Ethel, and the world was very bright for him this new morning.

Yet he hesitated with a shame-faced hesitancy to go forth to meet his happiness before the world. He hesitated to go down and meet the family. He had upon him a half guilty feeling, as if he had been stealing something and got caught at it too.

He was a lawyer, yet where was all the brazen-face of his profession, which should stand him in good stead?

No youthful appropriator of his mother's jam ever shrank from that mother's outraged eye as he shrank at the prospect of meeting the calm gaze of Mrs. Mordaunt, of any of them, except perhaps that of his Ethel alone. Of course they all knew of last evening's occurrences, though he had not seen any of them. His Ethel had fled from him like a lapwing as she spoke her single, but to him all-powerful word, nor had he again seen her, or even her uncle.

Could he meet the gaze of that uncle, with the grave face but

mocking eye, whose every word would have its lurking inuendo, and who would be merciless to the victims for whom he had limed the twig. What pointed shafts, barbed with wicked wit, though veiled in seemingly innocent interrogatory, would he not have to parry.

And oh! the terrible ordeal of the formal interview to come with stern father—enquiring mother.

The sole ray of comfort he derived from his reflections lay in the remembrance of the curious psychological anomaly that a mother is never averse to marriage, with its consequent separation, for her tenderly loved daughter, yet cannot with equanimity look forward to the same for a son. But even this soothing idea was speedily dashed by the unpleasing recollection that a father's views are generally the reverse.

Radiant with happiness, yet shrinking from sight. Eager to meet his love, yet by no means eager to face her friends, he delayed his appearance before them until the very last possible minute.

When at last he had screwed up his courage to the sticking place and entered the breakfast room he found its only occupants to be his fair one's father and her uncle.

The former greeted him with his customary hand-shake and "good morning," uttered in his usual tone, and very like as if he, at any rate, had heard nothing of that—in Edwin's eyes—stupendous event, which seemed to him must occupy the undivided attention of a world.

Such, indeed, was the case. Mr. Mordaunt had not yet heard of it; though he, of course, could not know that. Ethel had flown from her lover into the house, to her own private chamber, and had remained there in the flush of her own happy emotion. Not until the morning, when she had heard her father safely down stairs, did she fly to her mother and reveal her tender confidence on that tender maternal breast.

So Edwin got present relief; but there remained another pre-

sent who knew a good deal more of the state of affairs ; who was by no means inclined to let slip his opportunity for a little harmless teasing of him he had so strangely benefitted, and this was Mr. Horton. He shook his hand warmly, an unusual custom with him, with a perceptible pressure, which was re-assuring enough, were it not that Edwin's instinct told him that something else lay behind. Mr. Horton was an outsider enough, and at the same time sufficiently closely related to them all to be a privileged person, while he was not so completely an outsider that he could not, nor yet so very closely related that he would not, take advantage of the somewhat open and unprotected position in which Edwin was placed, to amuse himself and indulge his humourously mischievous proclivities.

"Good morning, Edwin," he continued. "Why, what makes you look so unwell to-day? How pale and nervous you look, and your eyes so excited and wild. Whatever have you been doing? No bad news, I hope? Your heart's not out of order, is it? There's a prevalence about here of such complaints, I imagine, and I have perceived symptoms indicating such with you of late. Exciting yourself and staying out in the night air are to be avoided in such cases. I expect now that you were talking about the disease last night with your companion, and probably, too, seeking advice as to the best remedies. Very bad! Very bad, indeed. No wonder you're so excited and flabbergasted this morning. Now does not he look very much out of sorts, Mordaunt?" continued the mischievous Mr. Horton, peering anxiously into Edwin's vexed face as he called the other's attention to him.

"But there's nothing the matter with me, Mr. Horton. I'm as well as ever I was in my life, and better too," replied Edwin, loudly and earnestly, though he could not help laughing, at the innuendoes. "There's nothing the matter with me, at all, and you know it."

"I know there is something the matter, though. You must

have had a sharp attack of it. I wondered what detained you so long on your way home last night, and that's what's the matter. Now, don't you think you'd better stay in your room close for a day or two, and avoid the exciting cause of your malady. It's all right now, I suppose, and you'll soon calm down again."

"Well, I don't see anything wrong with him; one of your jokes, I suppose, Horton," said Mr. Mordaunt. "He's a little pale, and looks as if he had not slept well. But here are the ladies at last, and we'll have breakfast," he continued, as Mrs. Mordaunt and Ethel entered the room.

The former inclined her head courteously to our hero as she bid him "good morning." There was a kind light in her eye, though, as she looked at him that he found very pleasant.

Ethel raised her gleaming eyes with a sudden flash to her lover's face as she entered, and as suddenly dropped them again, noticing the amused smile with which her uncle regarded her. Her lips quivered as if she tried to form a word, but she would not trust herself to utter it, but went to her father, who kissed her with his usual tenderness, and passed to her seat.

"Good morning, Ethel," said her uncle. "As I see that you won't speak first this morning, I suppose I'd better commence myself. Are you ill, too, like Edwin here, who is as pale as a ghost, or are you only cross to-day? We hear so much from you as a rule that it makes a surprising change when you are silent."

Her mother raised her eyes to her brother's face and endeavoured to give him a warning sign, but he would not look at her, and her attempts were unavailing. Ethel looked up with an effort, and said—

"Thanks, uncle, I am quite well, and not cross with any person unless with yourself. I think, too, that you are very well able to talk for both of us, and generally do, into the bargain.

Well, it seems to me there is some by-play going on of which I am not in the secret," exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt. "Horton is in his element this morning, and consequently there must be some mischief on hand. Another cup of tea, if you please, Florence. Vance, you are eating nothing. I believe Horton is right after all, and that you are on the sick list. Try some of these brook trout—they are very good. You must pluck up your spirits and your good looks, or you'll have no chance with the charming Emily Dearborn, who comes here to-day.

"Yes, that's the whole root of the matter," interposed Mr. Horton. "Ethel assigned Emily to me to be her cavalier to-day, and he has had a sleepless night over it."

"Well, what shall be done to make a pleasant day for them," said Mrs. Mordaunt, to get the conversation into a new turn. "They will be here early and we must think of something to do. I wish Reginald was back from his shooting expedition. The week he promised himself has passed, and no sign of him. He would soon get up some amusement were he here. Cannot we have a picnic somewhere to pass a part of the day pleasantly?"

"That's a good idea, Florence," said her husband. "I am going this morning to the new fields at the outlet of the lake, where the hands are harvesting a field of wheat which I wish to see, and I shall remain a great part of the day. So when the girls come, you might get some prog ready and take the boats or the carriages down there and have your picnic."

"It is a very pretty place, and, if you bring your croquet with you, you will find some nice short grass, while there's some fishing for those who like it," he continued, as he hurried on with his breakfast.

"What do you say, Ethel? and you, also, gentlemen?" said Mrs. Mordaunt. "Will such a place suit your views for the day, or have you anything better to propose? If not, which way shall we go—by the lake or the road?"

"Oh! I think it will be very pleasant, mamma," answered Ethel. "But we had better take the boats, the last part of the road is very rough."

"We will go by the lake most decidedly. It has pleasing reminiscences for some of us, eh, Edwin?" said Mr. Horton, laughing.

"Well, that is decided then. I shall expect you all there this morning. Take care of the young ladies, you two gentlemen. Don't let them find you dull company. And now I must be off, so please excuse me," said Mr. Mordaunt, rising.

Mrs. Mordaunt also rose with her husband, followed him as she said—

"I wish to speak to you a moment before you go, if you please, Henry," and left the room.

"Important business on the *tapis*, that is evident," remarked Mr. Horton. "But as I have nothing important upon my hand, like some people I know, I betake myself for a stroll and try if I cannot extract some stray grains of amusement from the philosophical reflections of my friend Barney, whom I shall doubtless find with his 'bastes.'"

"Well, then, you will be disappointed, uncle; for Barney started early this morning for the station, to fetch Mr. Wolverton," answered Ethel, "and you must find your amusement in some other quarter at present."

"Indeed? That is a pity; and Barney might have been on a better errand," was the reply. "But I'll go for my stroll, nevertheless, for it would be a hopeless task to endeavour to obtain a spark of amusement from such a distracted looking pair as you two;" and with this parting salutation he left the room.

"Ethel, my darling, have you not a word for me this morning," said her lover, as they were left *tête-à-tête*.

"Plenty, Edwin, but not now. I must have leave before I speak with you again. As it was, I said more than I ought to

have done last night, when you behaved so—so—so very badly," replied Ethel

"More! Oh, Ethel! what did you say but one little word, and then ran away and left me. Yet it was a very sweet little word, and it has made me very happy. Say it again, Ethel—that little word. I am so happy that I cannot believe it real; and I long for the joyful assurance again. And, Ethel, I do not think I behaved so very badly; on the contrary, was it not very excellent conduct, since it received such great reward? Stay, Ethel—one moment—but one moment," as she rose and tried to leave the room.

"I must go, Edwin. Let me go; what will they—" He pressed his first kiss upon her brow, as she broke away and escaped.

Left to his own reflections, our hero felt that he yet had another trial before him; and that was "to speak to papa." A fearful ordeal! at the prospect of which many a fine young man had, ere this, quaked in his boots. He had, however, managed to get his nerves pretty well braced up, and his self-possession restored, by the not unpleasant meeting with the family that morning; and he felt himself a little better prepared for the somewhat trying ordeal. So he determined to keep watch for Mr. Mordaunt, and get the matter over at the first opportunity. He knew that he had not yet left the house, and he considered that it was highly probable that at the present moment his fate was being discussed by the parents of his Ethel. When he did broach the subject to her father, his answer would very likely be ready for him.

From the occurrences of the morning, he did not feel his cause to be at all hopeless—at least with Mrs. Mordaunt and her brother. Her manner towards him, when they had met at the breakfast table, had not been unfavorable; while he felt pretty sure—since last evening—of Mr. Horton's good-will and

sympathy. The sole person, therefore, from whom opposition was to be dreaded was from his fair one's father.

But with two such allies, he thought probable enough that the latter would not prove an enemy; that in the end, at any rate, his cause was tolerably safe. Yet still, he was in suspense: would have been very glad indeed were all over, and his position defined.

He paced the room up and down in a state of restlessness, waiting nervously for the appearance of Mr. Mordaunt, in order to open the attack; and he sincerely wished he would come. He did not know where to find him, and if he had, he did not consider it was yet the time to ask for him, for he might not be prepared for him. So he remained where he was, listening for his step and watching from the windows that he did not leave the house. He was determined to take the first opportunity to speak, and prove thus his sincerity by placing his suit himself before his Ethel's parents.

Their conference—if indeed they were conferring—seemed to him to be very protracted, and he wondered and pondered what caused the protraction.

‘In what light would they regard him and his suit? Would they consider him good enough for their lovely Ethel? Could it be possible that any malicious report could have been brought against his name?’ and yet he did not think he had an enemy in the world. ‘That could not be the case, for they would have shown it in their manner towards him.’

With his Ethel he felt safe—safe for all time; but opposition on her parents' part would be the cause of great unhappiness to him, at all events, for he felt certain that Ethel would be dutifully guided by their wishes. But why should there be opposition? He was young—very well off; he had a good profession and a good name, against which no evil report could stand. And he could not see how they should find fault with

his suit. Amid reflections such as these he passed away his time.

When an hour had passed—a very long hour to him—the door opened, and Mr. Mordaunt entered the apartment.

His aspect was (as it usually was) grave, and from that nothing was to be judged ; but he gave no time for forebodings, for he advanced straight before our hero, and without waiting for, or giving him the opportunity to speak—addressed him :

“ My wife has told me, Mr. Vance, of the occurrences between yourself and Ethel last evening ; and I must say, has surprised me not a little, as I had never imagined for a moment that there was anything between you ; and if I am not too well pleased, it is because I consider Ethel to be rather young for an engagement. However, as the event has occurred, she seems favorably inclined towards you, and we cannot well doubt the ardour of your affection for her—we have talked the matter over, and decided upon our course. I have come to tell you our views upon the subject, in order that there may be no misconception, and that the affair be placed at once upon a decided footing. We both consider Ethel to be too young yet to enter upon the duties of a married life : but, nevertheless, we both consent to approve the engagement between you, provided that it is understood that for a year at least the question of the marriage is to be deferred.”

“ That lapse of time is necessary to both of you,” he continued, “ that you may the more thoroughly know and understand each other—though, perhaps, you may not think it at all necessary. If, then, at the expiry of that time, you are both in the same mind, we shall have no further objections to offer.”

“ But, consider, Mr. Mordaunt. A year!—a whole year!—an immense period to wait !” exclaimed Edwin eagerly. “ I am sure that six——”

“ I have considered, Mr. Vance, and it must be as I say. A year is no very serious length of time. Had I acted solely on

my own views, I should have made the time of your probation longer ; but I have acceded to my wife's wishes in fixing upon the year's delay ; and it must be in this as I have said. In the meantime, Mrs. Mordaunt will tell you that we hope you will prolong your visit, and that we shall always be happy to see you whenever you choose to come to us. She may also have some few things to say to you which do not lie in my province ; and any other subject can well be deferred for the year. Now I must be off." So saying, he shook Edwin heartily by the hand, and prepared to leave the house.

"I must bow to your decision, Mr. Mordaunt," said Edwin. "since I cannot change it. At the same time I thank you very heartily for the kind manner in which my suit has been received, clearing all difficulties from the way of my very happy prospects."

"Well, if you are not both happy, it will be your own fault. I suppose I shall see you all down at the lake's end before noon. Good-bye until then, Vance."

And Mr. Mordaunt walked out of the room, mounted his horse, which awaited him at the door, and rode away.

CHAPTER VIII.

ENTER TWO—GREAT THINGS TO DO.

About ten o'clock of the same eventful morning, a rather handsome carriage drawn by two strong horses, who were driven by a smart looking boy, dashed up the gravelled road winding through the grounds of Lake Mordaunt, and was stopped by a sudden reining up of the animals, in the most showy manner possible, opposite the door. The boy jumped from his seat, ran up the steps and rang the bell—a most unnecessary proceeding as Ethel had already come forward to receive her visitors—and then had to make a bolt for the horses heads, the unceremonious

manner in which they had been pulled up having set them backing and turning in a very undignified, if not dangerous, manner, and effectually destroyed all the stylish dash of the approach.

Mr. Vance, who was not, as may be surmised, very far away from his Ethel, had to run up to assist Miss Dearborn and Miss Ada Dearborn to alight, amid the half-suppressed screams which the eccentric oscillations of their vehicle impelled them to utter.

Once safely on *terra firma* they rushed effusively into Ethel's arms and embraced her in the most affectionate manner. "Dearest Ethel, how glad I am to see you again." "It is an age since we met," and "so nice to be with you again," were exclaimed by the two young ladies, as they successively threw their arms around her neck.

Miss Ada then, turning to the boy, who by this had succeeded in quieting his horses, addressed him in very girlish anger—

"You stupid James, why did you not stop your horses properly, frightening them so? Why, we might have both been killed. I'm sure you ought to know better than that, you great stupid.

"It wasn't my fault," replied the boy. "Didn't Miss Emily tell me to drive up to the door quick and pull them up all at once, so as to make a great show, now didn't she? And that's what scared them. They don't know nothing about show them horses don't," added James, impudently.

"James, I shall report your conduct to my father when I return," exclaimed Miss Dearborn, angrily. "Making such ridiculous statements. I never told you any such thing, you impertinent boy. I will have you discharged."

"All right! I'm willing," retorted James. "But you did say so, and I knowed it would'n't answer with them horses."

"Not another word, James." Go home again immediately, and remember to come back again this evening for us. Papa wants the carriage this afternoon," she continued, to Ethel, "and so James will come back for us early in the evening."

"Oh! no, you are to remain with us a day or two, at any rate," returned Ethel. "We can send you to Ten Lakes at any time: but you are not going home to-night, so James need not come. Remember, James, that you need not return, and tell Mrs. Dearborn that the young ladies will not return before to-morrow or the next day."

"Very well, Miss Mordaunt, I'll deliver the message," replied James, pleasantly enough, as he jumped up to his seat. "Am I to tell the old gentleman you discharged me," he added to Emily, with a grin.

"Be off with you," was all the reply Emily vouchsafed to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Vance," she continued, turning to that gentleman. "I am very glad to meet you again, though not aware you were in our part of the country until this moment. Why have you not been over to Ten Lakes to see us? We should have been delighted. You find the country very dull, I should imagine, after the gaities of a town life? Do you contrive to amuse yourself?"

"Very well, indeed, Miss Dearborn. I certainly don't find the country dull," he answered, with an involuntary glance at Ethel, which Emily at once caught and understood. "I shall certainly call at Ten Lakes, but I need not think of that now, when I have the present pleasure of your society. That shall be reserved for a renewal of the pleasure," he replied gallantly. "Miss Ada, I am delighted to meet you again, although I should hardly have known you. You seem determined to charm your friends afresh each time they meet you, out of all knowledge of your fair self."

"Thanks for the compliment, Mr. Vance, which seems to imply that my appearance is gradually becoming passable," Ada replied. "I don't care, though. But I admire the coolness of you Toronto gentlemen, who think, I verily believe, that anything will pass current with us country girls."

"Now, Miss Ada, that's not fair. I meant no such thing, you know I didn't. I pay no dubious homage to your charms."

"Oh! a truce to your compliments," interrupted Ethel, "or we'll be here all day. We are intending to have a little picnic at the end of the lake for your sakes, Emily and Ada, that is, if you like it, and, I am sorry to say, just among ourselves. Had I known earlier that you were coming, I would have asked some other people, but for to-day we must enjoy ourselves as best we can."

"Nothing could be more delightful, I'm sure," said Emily, who having her own ideas to carry out, cared little whether there were five people or fifty present.

"Well, we'll get ready then," answered Ethel. "We'll take the croquet with us, too, although we're short of gentlemen. But we will inaugurate my uncle into its mysteries. My brother Reggie is unfortunately absent on a shooting and fishing excursion, but we'll make papa play, and there's lots of things we can do when we tire of croquet."

"Oh! that will be perfectly delightful. A good croquet fight is just the thing for our afternoon," exclaimed Ada, rapturously. "One can take some interest in that and have some fun. I wish I were a man that I could play cricket, and base ball, and lacrosse. I'd give anything to play in the cricket match at Ten Lakes on Saturday."

"Well, Ada, I'm sure," said her sister, "that's a nice speech for a young lady to make. Can you not remember that you are not a boy? But it's just like you to make so unladylike, so shocking a remark."

"Oh, yes! Emily, that's all very fine; but it's a shame that the men should have all the nice games to themselves, and we girls nothing but the stupid things. Croquet is the only game we have with a bit of excitement in it, and only then when there's enough to have sides and fight it out without mercy."

"I entirely concur in the spirit of the young lady's remarks,"

said Mr. Horton, who had strolled up to the portico on which they were still standing. "It is not entirely just that the fair sex should be debarred from the exciting sports of the open air. Reduced as they are to amuse themselves with croquet, flirting and kindred occupations of tame character."

"Oh! that's you, is it, Uncle Edward? Come, I want you," said Ethel. "Permit me to introduce my uncle, Mr. Horton, to you—Miss Dearborn—Miss Ada Dearborn. He is an American, ladies, with a profound contempt for us poor Canadians. But we will teach him better shortly. He is rather nice, though, and not so cross as he looks. We will begin this afternoon by initiating him into the sublime game of croquet."

"Thank you, Ethel," continued Mr. Horton, after the formalities of the introduction were over. "It is just like you to introduce me in such outrageous fashion, showing off my points as if I were a tame bear. I should be happy to play with you, ladies, but I know nothing whatever of croquet, beyond having often seen it."

"Oh, but you must, Mr. Horton. We cannot do without you, and I will teach you. You shall be my partner for standing up for me just now, and we will get along famously against them," said Ada, with eagerness.

"We must go in though and get ready; it will soon be time to start, and there are lots of things to do first," resumed Ethel, and the young ladies followed her into the house, while the two gentlemen betook themselves to the boat-house to get ready their fishing tackle and prepare the largest boat for the trip.

Where we will leave them for the present and follow the ladies.

Miss Emily Dearborn, the elder of the two sisters, and now in her twenty-second year, was a handsome and very stylish-looking girl, very clever and ambitious, who made the most of every advantage that she possessed, and was determined that her light should not, at any rate, be hid under a bushel. Her

eyes were bright, sparkling and unflinching, of an intermediate hue—neither gray nor brown—her features pretty and her figure very good. She dressed showily, yet with taste, and her exterior was very pleasing. In fact, she was a very pretty and dashing-looking girl. But she did not possess a single spark of generosity in her whole nature. It was all for self. If in pleasing herself she happened to please others, it may safely be averred the accident was not of her intention. Though she possessed plenty of tact and the capability of making herself agreeable when it suited her, yet she only used these powers *when* it suited her. Not from sympathy, or kindness of spirit, or the desire of pleasing.

She was vain of her beauty—jealous of that of others, and could not brook rivalry—even though she knew it to be unconscious rivalry—with any degree of complacency. To attain her objects she was capable of sacrificing every feeling, and every right of all those who stood in her way, or inflict without mercy the greatest pain.

She was a flirt, not so much from the love of flirting *per se*, as from the desire to outshine and rival every girl of her acquaintance.

And she possessed no scruple as to the appropriation, if possible, of other girls' property, in the shape of the masculine heart. That she and Ethel Mordaunt remained on friendly terms was more easily deducible from the fact that they had not been thrown sufficiently into each other's society to conflict with each other, than from the probability of such dissimilar temperaments being permanently drawn together. Ethel was not one to form great intimacies amongst girls of her own age—intimacies that so seldom last, while her own inclinations, with the somewhat retired position of Lake Mordaunt, and the retiring disposition of its owner, prevented her from mixing to any great extent with the surrounding society.

But if Ethel Mordaunt liked Emily Dearborn well enough, the

latter did not return the compliment. She did not like any person to any extraordinary extent, still less one of whose attractions she was superlatively jealous. Her acceptance of the present visit was more referable to the agreeable tidings that a young and eligible bachelor, whom she already knew, was staying at the lake, than to any desire for the society of her friend, or the passing of a day or two in a place she deemed very slow.

Her faults, partly those of disposition, were mainly due to an injudicious bringing up and a superficial education, the lack of a restraining hand, and the lack of necessary discipline which teaches self-restraint.

The daughter of the cashier of the branch bank at Ten Lakes, an honest and worthy man of business, who unfortunately was beset with that mania for keeping up appearances and living what is considered stylish life—the bane of so many—but whose income was not commensurate with his ideas of himself and family—her mental culture and rearing, consequent on such family influences, had been directed towards outside show—surface accomplishments and ambitious longings for high place in society. Home examples surrounding her from her earliest years had made these things a primary part of her mental education, the overshadowing idea that biased all the rest.

Her mother, a vain and feeble woman, whom ill-health had rendered selfish with an inert selfishness, was not the one to correct the faults and elevate the aspirations of her active and sprightly daughter, whose natural disposition so much needed the check of a wise restraining hand, and the example before her of a high and right thinking character. She possessed neither the capability nor the inclination to wisely lead the young mind opening before her eyes, and imbuing itself from her influence, towards that natural bent of life; those natural pursuits and objects; that sympathy and affection for fellow humanity; and last, but not least, the useful employments of daily existence which,

when they are combined with the chastening and elevating influences of the true Christian spirit, can best guide on the search for happiness.

On the contrary, the example of her vanity and love of ostentation had confirmed the same defects in her daughter.

While her constant bewailing the pressure for money which their irrational mode of life persistently forced upon them, and for which they themselves were solely to blame, had made her daughter to feel and to act on the idea that escape from the evils of poverty, to attain the possession of wealth for the gratification of an unhealthy ambition, was for her to be obtained by the employment of her talents and her beauty in securing for herself a good marriage, irrespective of all other considerations. And this was the great end that she sought—her pursuit of happiness. Through the evils of such home influence and training as hers had been, none but a rightly constituted mind, strengthened by firm principles, could, by any possibility, pass unscathed ; and these Emily Dearborn did not possess.

The character of Ada presented a striking contrast to that of her sister Emily, the more striking, perhaps, since they had been brought up together, subjected to the same influence. Though it cannot be said that her principles were solidly fixed, or her disposition a perfect one ; a better one it certainly was, and she had reached her seventeenth year a different being from her sister. Whether from an instinctive idea of what is right and proper, a fixed stability of mind which formed and acted on its own opinions, or an obtuseness which rejected and threw off, as a roof sheds the rain, the impressions of those around her, she had passed through the unhealthy examples of her home life with but little injury to her mind and heart.

A frank, joyous, outspoken girl, free from pretence or affectation and full of life and spirit, she accepted and enjoyed life as it came to her, interested and delighted with it, and not caring to trouble herself with things that seemed beyond her reach.

She had but little vanity to plague her or self-consciousness to oppress her. Her care for dress and finery was confined to the limit necessary to escape the reproaches of her mother and sister for neglect. If she wanted a new dress, it was as much that she might get out of the house, which she was not allowed to do if shabby, as for the love of it. She outraged the proprieties, in her mother's and sister's sense, a dozen times a day and was none the worse for it.

Essentially good-natured and generous-hearted, she would do anything that was asked of her and take an interest in it too. As clever and as active as her sister, she was better and more soundly educated, since she willingly undertook the tasks assigned her.

Her active spirit made idleness irksome, and it generally fell to her to perform the domestic duties and supervision which her mother could not, and her sister would not, perform.

Her bright young face gave promise of future beauty, a sore subject to her sister, who foresaw a very formidable rival, but her tall stature and slender build were at the present only relieved from awkwardness by her active naturalness, which gave her a hoydenish grace.

A beau meant chiefly to her a partner at croquet, to laugh with and exult with over a victory, or to volubly scold on defeat.

If she was not a very refined and cultivated young lady, she was clever enough. If she liked boisterous sports, she always did her duty.

If her faults had not been pruned they had not overshadowed her better qualities. She was a happy, contented girl—her naturalness and youth likely long to remain with her.

A romping stroll with her brothers, a gay gabbling walk with a lot of her school-girl companions, fishing, boating, skating, snow-shoeing, riding about the country on horseback, and the delight of her heart—croquet—were her pleasures; and she detested the formalities that reigned supreme at home.

Everybody liked Ada Dearborn. Her faults were caused by the neglect of others, while she had the ring of true metal about her.

"Well, girls, what news have you for me from Ten Lakes, to-day?" said Ethel, when the young ladies having paid the attention to toilette matters which a drive, however short, during a Canadian July day generally necessitates, had sauntered into the conservatory for a look at the flowers. "Is there anything occurring out of the ordinary? I have not been from home for a week and long to hear what is going on."

"Oh, yes, Ethel, there is going to be such a splendid match on Saturday between the Ten Lakes Cricket Club and the County. Only think! our little Ten Lakes against the whole County! Oh! I do hope they will beat them. I know I shall be on pins and needles the whole day. Our Tom is captain, and Harry plays too. Oh! how delightful it will be if they win. You'll come to see it, Ethel, won't you? Every one will be there," exclaimed Ada, rapturously.

"Well, if you call that news, its about all there is at present. There is really nothing going on worth telling," Emily rejoined. "One cannot get any sense out of the gentlemen at this season. Nothing but their ridiculous lacrosse and cricket, as if people cared to see a lot of men, in an unpleasant state of warmth, knock a ball about. If anything that affords a chance of a little amusement is proposed—a dance, a concert, or an evening's entertainment, it is 'pooh poohed' by them for their ridiculous practices, and they seem to have nothing else to think of. But you'll come over on Saturday, Ethel, and stay with us. We are going to get some good out of the match by giving the strange club a dinner, and having a ball afterwards in the evening."

"If we go at all, I am sure papa and mamma won't say for the evening," answered Ethel; "and, consequently, I cannot, and I cannot say whether they will even go for the match. Mr. Vance is going, however, as he was asked to play, or be umpire,

or something about it, when he was in Ten Lakes last week, and I forgot to tell you, Emily, an old admirer of yours—Sidney Wolverton—is coming here this evening, and remains for the match, I think. At least he said he was going to play in his letter to Edwin—Mr. Vance,” corrected Ethel, hastily.

“So Sidney Wolverton is coming here, is he? You seem to have plenty of gentlemen visitors, Ethel? It’s strange, as he generally comes to Ten Lakes,” replied Emily, acidly. “And Mr. Vance, too, might have called when he was there. It’s you we ought to look to for news, Ethel. Have not you anything to tell us about Mr. Vance and yourself, for instance. Something interesting, you know. He seems very devoted, and you seem to know all about him. It’s too bad to take my old admirers from me,” continued Emily.

“Now that’s a shame, I declare, Emily,” exclaimed Ada. “Of course Mr. Vance is Ethel’s beau; that is, if she wants him to be. She is pretty enough, and I don’t believe he was ever one of yours; though Sydney certainly was, or is, for that matter. It is not any of your business whether Ethel has a beau or not. Is he very good, Ethel?” continued she. “Can he play croquet and games well? I would not have a beau unless he was smart.”

“Oh, I think he is pretty fair in your sense of the word, Ada,” replied Ethel, laughing. “I suppose he can play games well.”

“Well, Ada, of all the rude speeches I have ever heard, yours is about the rudest,” rejoined Emily, in a by no means amiable accent, and looking at her sister as if she would have liked to annihilate her upon the spot. “Not to speak of the very unbecoming manner in which you addressed me just now—which, knowing you as I do, I could but expect; it is highly improper, and couched in the extremest depth of vulgarity, to use that low word ‘beau’ in connection with the name of a young lady. It is what we would look for from a servant girl, and not from one who, with the advantages she has had, and the example

set before her, ought to possess the manners and deportment of a lady. As it is, Ada, you will have to conduct yourself in a more becoming manner or remain at home in the nursery, which, it would appear, is the proper place for you. And then your horridly common application of the word 'smart.' It is simply dreadful."

"Oh, well, Emily dear, I did not mean to vex you. I only thought you should not tease Ethel. And if I did use the objectionable word 'beau' it was because I have heard you use it so often at home. You call Gus, Ferguson and Sydney Wolverton and lots of other fellows your 'beaux,' and I think that what one should not say before our friends should not be used at home. And where was the harm in using the word 'smart' in its Canadian sense? I was not reciting a piece at an examination," answered Ada, deprecatingly.

Ada's interruption and drawing down upon herself of her sister's wrath had come in very timeously for Ethel, as it saved her the necessity of replying to, or in some way taking notice of, Miss Dearborn's rather pointed and disagreeable insinuations as to herself and Mr. Vance. The few words that had been said on the subject had given her a feeling of repulsion towards that young lady, and had shown her plainly that, if not a declared enemy, she would not have a friend in that quarter.

She felt that she would not like to explain, nor yet was she going to deny her engagement to Mr. Vance to this girl, who, in the course of their few minutes' conversation, she had already learned to dislike. Though to the frank and natural Ada she would gladly have communicated her new happiness, and looked for answering sympathy.

Ada's interruption had come in very good time to her aid, and had, at any rate for the present, relieved her of the necessity of speaking on the matter.

CHAPTER IX.

I MUST HAVE SALMON.

Emily Dearborn in truth was very anxious to find out how matters really stood between Mr. Vance and Ethel Mordaunt. So soon as she had heard that he was on a visit to the lake—a long visit—she had scented danger. Mr. Vance stood very high on the short list of eligibles for one of whom she destined the honour of her fair hand. At the head of the possibilities of its graduated scale stood the name of Edwin Vance, and she was not the girl to let him slip through her fingers without an effort to save the prize.

Almost at the moment of her arrival—almost at a glance—she had perceived with feminine intuition, how matters stood with him; that he was in love, and that he did not look as if his love was an unhappy one—an unfortunate love. This was very galling to her, and she blamed herself severely for allowing so much time to slip on his undisturbed visit after she had heard of it.

She was very anxious to know Ethel's sentiments in regard to him. At the present she was very much in doubt. She thought she had a clue in the little slip of the tongue with which Ethel had nearly pronounced his Christian name, and afterwards corrected it to "Mr. Vance." But she would watch, and if things had come to the worst, and there was a private engagement between them, how many opportunities could she not find, or make, to produce discord between them—to break it off—and bring things back to where they were before? She did not love Edwin Vance—she did not love any one—but she thought him an excellent *parti*, and she was determined that Ethel Mordaunt should not marry him if she could help it.

But her reflections, and the silence which had continued for a few minutes while they sauntered about the cool conservatory,

were broken by the prattle of little feet, and Alida, the three-year-old daughter of the house, came rushing in, her brown eyes sparkling and opened to their widest extent, and her pretty little bright face all flushed and eager.

"Oh! Etel, Etel! mamma say Reggie tummin'. Yet's go and yook. Ally so vedy glad Reggie tummin'."

"Ally's so very glad that Reggie's coming, is she? So is Ethel, too," said that young lady, while Ada snatched up the eager little thing. "We'll go and see him then."

At the same moment a boisterous young voice was heard in the hall, and the sound of a loud kiss.

"Hallo! mamma, how are you? I've got back at last, you see. Had such a time. Where are they all? Where's Ethel and Ally? Oh! I've had such a jolly lark."

"Oh! I'm so glad to see you back safely again Reginald," Mrs. Mordaunt was heard to say. "You've been away, so long away, over the time you mentioned that I was getting uneasy about you. I'm very happy to see you back. You'll find them with Emily and Ada Dearborn in the conservatory, I think; but you are not very presentable, Reggie."

"Oh! bother the 'presentable;' my face is clean, at any rate," and he rushed off to find them, shouting—

"Ethel! Ethel! where are you? I want you."

"Hallo, Ally! give Reggie a kiss," he continued, seizing her out of Ada's arms, and smothering her with rough brotherly kisses.

"Ally's so vedy glad Reggie tum bat. Ally wanted Reggie," said the pretty little thing, clasping her little arms around his neck.

"Yes! and Reggie wanted Ally, too. He's glad to see his Ally. Oh! Ethel," he continued, "I've had such a jolly lark this morning. How do you do, Emily? How do you do, Ada? Ethel, old girl, how are you?" he exclaimed, kissing his sister, and shaking hands with the two young ladies in a vehement manner.

"Well, I declare! you ought to be ashamed of yourself to come before these young ladies in such a state as you are, Reggie," said Ethel, looking, however, lovingly upon her brother. "How in the world did you contrive to get yourself so ragged and tattered, and oh! how you do smell of fish. What *have* you been doing with yourself?"

"Why! my clothes got torn in the woods, I suppose. You should have seen all the places we have been through—rocks, woods, rivers, swamps, lakes, and all the rough places between here and Lake Nipissing. But we had a good time, though, and oh! the jolly lark I had this morning. So I smell of fish, do I, Ethel? I should think I do. Why, I have been occupied as a fishmonger to-day. Such a lark! See all this money, Ethel," said he, producing a four dollar bill from his pocket. "See the hard-gained earnings of your brother! I expect that it's about the first money he ever earned, and I fear, I very much fear, that it was not earned with that altogether strict and exact spirit of honesty that should enter into the mercantile dealings of a Mordaunt. But it was a great lark—fun, I can tell you. I shall relate the whole story for your edification."

"You see, all the chaps, except Gus. Ferguson and myself, got tired out and disgusted with the expedition at the end of the first week; they cleared out for home, leaving us with one canoe and the old Indian guide. We had a rough time of it, and piles of adventures—after they left us—up to Lake Nipissing, and back on our way home, until we struck the Manitou river two days ago, and followed it down to the settlements. We got lots of fish too, and yesterday-night in the woods, up at Missisquit falls, we got six whopping big salmon, as they rested before making the leap—and a few smaller ones also. There were piles of them. Well, we got out to Harmer's place—twenty miles from here—late yesterday evening, and tried to get him to drive us home at once. He wouldn't do it, though, until this morning; and he routed us up, I can tell you, bright

and early, for he wanted to get back early to his harvesting. His rig-out was not the most handsome in the world, though he had a bully horse. We piled the whole lot of fish we had caught yesterday—the six big salmon, a lot of pickerel, bass, maskinonge, two whopping sturgeons, and a lot of big suckers to swell out the pile—in the the back of the wagon ; and off we started. Gus' apparel was even in a more ragged and used up condition than mine, and as old Harmer is not very tasty as to his dress, we were three of about as tatterdemalion a set of beggars as you would meet on a day's journey. We jogged on splendidly, though, to Ten Lakes ; and when Gus got out at his place, and had loaded himself up with his share of the fish, his own mother didn't know him when she came our of the front door, and told him she 'did'nt want any to-day.' Gus laughed and told her she'd have to take them, whether she wanted them or not. And then he got a rating for daring to show himself in such a state of rags and dirt. He didn't look much like a mother's darling, certainly, in his rags, with a great pile of slimy fish in his arms ; and the Farquhar girls all looking out of the window and laughing. But very little Gus cared, as he stood, winking at the girls, and joking his mother, that she didn't know his own son. I had to laugh too, upon which the old lady gave me fits too. Then old Harmer laughed, and he got fits too—at which he but laughed the more. So the old lady finished up by ordering Gus into the house—a command he dutifully obeyed, for he and his mother are crazy about one another ; and old Harmer and I and the fish jogged on again.

“ Well ; just as we were going to turn in here from the main road, who should we meet but a couple of commercial travellers from Montreal, driving an express wagon, which was loaded up with their sample trunks. One of them was about half seas over, and the other about as comfortably tipsy as he could be and live, though it was not then more than ten o'clock. They had evidently

had a fine time of it the night before, and had commenced early again, for they were awfully-sleepy looking, and could hardly see out of their eyes.

“‘Hello! my honest agriculturalist,” called out the biggest and drunkest one. “Is this the road to Ten Lakes?”

“‘Yes it is. You’re all right,” I replied.

“‘And how many thousand miles have we to go before we get there?’ he enquired.”

“‘Three miles,” I replied.

“‘Tree mile!’ screamed the little one, a French-Canadian; ‘tree mile more? It was seex mile to Teen Lake when we did leave de hotel dis morning. an we journey, we have make more as twenty mile already.’

“‘Look’ee here! my dear young bullock-hastener,” continued the big one, ‘the fascinating outlines of thy bucolic lineaments shall be forever engraved upon our hearts, if you will tell us—though I misdoubt me much if thou art capable, from thy Arcadian simplicity, of judging—if they keep at the hotel there anything fit for gentlemen to eat?’

“‘Well,’ I said, ‘I don’t know whether they keep anything fit for gentlemen to eat; but they have plenty of ‘old rye’ and ‘Upper Canada whiskey,’ which will suit your complaint exactly—my affectionate old Tapes-and-Laces.’

“‘Vat you mean—buckwheat farmare?’ exclaimed the little Frenchman, with excited gesticulation; ‘who you call Tapes-and-Laces—hey? Vat you mean to insult de gentlemans as dis? You bettare go vid yourself and cut you grass, you hay. March, den, vid you dirty feesh.’

“‘Fish! has he got fish? Is my disrespectful and erratic husbandman piscator as well as orator? Latin, by Jove!’ said the big chap; ‘well, I must be slewed pretty comfortably when I get on Latin,’ continued he, muttering as he climbed down from the wagon with laborious effort: ‘We will inspect his mer-

chandise,' and he gazed upon my finny treasures with eyes as fishy as theirs.

"'Glorious prospect! How doth my longing soul gloat over the pleasant vision. Here is your true romance—your real poetry! How ravishing the thought that no vile tavern dinner shall desecrate to-day my gentlemanly interior. My youthful agricultural friend, how style you these noble creatures?'

"'I style these noble creatures salmon,' I replied; 'but you can give their Latin names if it suits you better. You seem fond of the language, though it is the first time I ever heard a bagman speak Latin.'

"'The lordly salmon! Peirre'—addressing his companion—'my soul hungers for salmon. I must have salmon. The look of salmon is disorganizing the very being of your friend. Lo! I will temporize with this rude child of the soil.'

"'I not know vat you say wid yourself,' answered the Frenchman; 'I tinks you better climb up vid de wagon, and leave alone de nasty feesh.'

"'Peirre, salmon I must have! Would'st thou abridge to further tenuity the interior of thy friend?' he replied solemnly. "Young man, your aspect is one of impecuniosity. Poverty, doubtless, has often seized thee with iron gripe. These tattered habiliments betray a pocket unwarmed by the comforting dollar. Young man, I will be thy benefactor—a friend to thy youthful simplicity. I will give you gold for your salmon. Gold, boy! the yellow glittering gold! What though my respected boss in Montreal is doubtless fretting his gizzard, worrying and fuming over his contracted discounts, his notes, his engagements and inflexible bank managers. Doubtless he thinks I am doing the same over lines of samples. Deluded man! Yet must I have salmon! Is money scarce? Yet must I have salmon! Salmon alone can soothe my outraged soul. I must have salmon. Let him fret a little harder, for I will have salmon, and I will give gold for salmon. I will e'en bargain with this corn-fed hind.

My friend," he continued to me, "my soul is moved to benevolence by thy piteous condition. I would fain provide you with the means of procuring for yourself a new pair of nether garments by purchasing of thy fish. Now, how much filthy lucre, current coin of the Dominion, will thou take for two of those lordly salmon?" and he pointed as he spoke to two great horrid looking suckers which ornamented the top of the pile.

"Most worthy bagman," I replied to him, "I may be, as you say, but a corn-fed hind, a buckwheat farmer, as your French friend says, yet I opine that I am as good as a couple of whisky-soaked Montreal drummers, and I will not sell you my fish."

"Not sell your fish—your salmon!" shouted he, in accents of mingled astonishment and despair. "Not sell your salmon! What means this? Have we lunatics here to do with? Behold!" he exclaimed, seizing me by the wrist, "just behold these rags and tatters. Look down at this disgraceful old coat, these shockingly dilapidated unmentionables, and pause ere you venture to utter so rash an assertion. Not sell your salmon and get the cash? What do I hear? Can these things be true? A farmer, an honest agriculturalist, refusing money? Impossible! My ears have deceived me. A farmer refusing cash down, and at his own price. What! have we Arcadia here? Has the millennium descended upon Central Ontario all at once? I will sit down and weep. Peirre, my worthy friend! Peirre, I say!" he added, in mournful tones to his companion, "hand me the little pocket pistol. I must e'en take something that I may die easy under this afflicting state of things."

"Oh! my friend, my worthy and excellent young friend," he went on to me, "I see a noble spirit framed in your interesting lineaments. Show mercy to us and revoke thy dire decision. Behold this withered and emaciated anatomy, this wreck of what was but a short week since, a robust and noble frame, brought down, by villianous fare of wretched country taverns, to the point of dissolution," and he patted, with melancholy

aspect, his rotund figure. "My whole nature lacks salmon—longs for salmon—cries out for salmon—salmon to snatch it from the jaws of death. Behold this four dollar bill—mark it—gaze upon it! It is yours, if those pretty creatures." indicating the two big suckers, "are mine."

"Why, you blamed old fool," shouted old Harmer, no longer able to contain himself, "are you so blind drunk that you can't see that those ain't salmon. Nothin' but great, dirty, bony, useless suckers."

"My venerable friend of the wooden countenance," he replied to Harmer, "I did not address my observations to you and do not require your advice. I am not blind drunk, my worthy old patriarch, for I can very easily perceive the villainous expression of your ancient and battered physiognomy. When I get drunk I pay for the liquor myself, and therefore request you will not shove your dirty oar in. I know what a fish is when I see it, my excellent sir. I have not fished for tommy-cods off the wharves for nothing, my good sir. These are salmon, sir! salmon, sir! salmon."

I broke in with as grave a face as I could command, and told him that, seeing he was so nearly starved to death, I would sell him two of my salmon for the four dollars, but not the two he wanted, as I required them as a present to a friend, and would give him two just as good. So I took a big salmon, weighing nearly twenty pounds, and a maskilonge as big, and put them into his wagon."

He handed me the money, and took his leave as follows:—

"Respected young member of the agricultural persuasion, our conference is now at an end. I part from thee with regret, but still with a sense of joy in my heart at having met with thee. I shall approach now the hostelry in Ten Lakes with singular equanimity, and I shall walk into the affections of these lordly salmon in a style to astonish you. Farewell, young hay-seed! Farewell, old wooden head! Drive on Peirre."

Well! said Old Harmer to them, as a parting salutation:—

“Of all the blamed fools that ever I see, you two drunken scamps are the hardest to beat. If you don’t know any more about your business than you do about fish, it must be pretty to see you at work. If I’d been him, I’m dogoned if I would’nt have let you take the two suckers, and sarved such blamed fools right too.”

“Vat dat you say, old man ugly,” screamed the excitable little Frenchman. “Begar! if I joomp off dis wagon, I make you see tunder, begar! Go vid yourself and feed your pig. *Va donc! cochon!* Old wood face, begar,” and he drove off in a rage.

“Now, wasn’t that a jolly lark, Ethel?”

“Well!” answered Ethel, “I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself. What business had you to talk with those drunken men? And you should not have cheated them by giving them only one salmon when they bought two. It was not right, Reginald, though I daresay you found it funny enough. And I don’t wonder at them taking you for a common laborer, for you are simply disgraceful in your present attire. But I cannot see that it was a ‘jolly lark,’ as you call it, at all, and you have nothing to boast of by your share in it.”

“I did not cheat them, Ethel; I gave them a twenty-pound salmon, which was worth the four dollars itself, and a maskilonge, worth half as much more,” answered Reggie; “and how do you suppose two men are going to eat twenty pounds of salmon while it is fresh? It can’t be done, even by bagmen with unlimited grog.”

“No matter; it was not right, Reggie,” said his sister. “But you had better go and get yourself into decent attire again. We are going for a pic-nic to the end of the lake to-day, and we want you for a game of croquet. Be quick! We will be off directly.”

“Ally doin’ too, Reggie,” broke in little Alida. “Ally dot

new hat on and new hoos (shoes) too. Oo det new hat too, Reggie, and yook pitty."

CHAPTER X.

A PIC-NIC BY THE LAKE

The large sail-boat, almost large enough to be dignified with the name of a yacht, were it not for its capacity and not speed had been the principal object in its construction, was warped up to the little landing-place with mast stepped, sail ready to hoist, a comfortable awning raised for the protection of the ladies, and all ready for a start.

The party, comprising Mrs. Mordaunt, Ethel, the two Misses Dearborn and little Ally; Uncle Edward, Vance and Reggie stood on the little wharf ready for their embarkation. The hampers containing the good things, which form so important a part of the programme of a pic-nic party, with the appliances for comfort and amusement which Mrs. Mordaunt's and Ethel's foresight had provided, were carted down already, and had but to be put on board. A gentle breeze was blowing down the lake, the day was fine, the cool western wind mitigating the sultry down-pour of a July sun and nothing remained but for the party to step on board to proceed to their destination.

But Reggie, however, upon seeing the boat raised the pertinent question that, although the breeze was very favorable for their present voyage, it would not be found so easy, without a change of wind, to effect their return, unless the gentlemen were willing to undertake the task of rowing so heavy a boat back again.

"I'll tell you what it is," said he. "We'll sail down this morning all right, as nice as ninepece, but if there's not a change of wind before evening, we fellows will have a pretty time of it rowing this concern four miles up again. She's big enough to

carry twenty-five people, and she's as heavy and clumsy as a St. Lawrence batteau. Even if we have to row both ways, wouldn't it be better to take two small boats? They'll carry us all and the plunder too. It's no joke to row that old tub up the lake, I can tell you. I know it by sad experience."

"There's something in that, Reggie," said Mr. Horton. "I never thought of it when Edwin Vance and I got her ready. It is too late now to change, and we'll have to get her back the best way we can. The small boats, too, are not comfortable for a warm day like this, and has not your father plenty of men working down there who can help us to row?"

"But she's rigged fore-and-aft, and is keeled enough to hold the water; we can tack her back this evening. It will be slower, but it will be a pleasant sail. I'll engage to get her back if the wind will only hold out until sunset, and if it does not we'll get the men to help us to row her up," said Edwin, who thought the larger boat would be more comfortable for his Ethel, to say nothing of the other ladies, and who did not wish to change.

"All right," said Reginald, "I'm willing. Anything for a quiet life, so jump aboard, ladies. Uncle, give me a hand with the plunder; it won't do to leave the eatables behind. Put the ladies on board, Mr. Vance, and make yourself useful. I hope you have provisioned the garrison well, mother. I had my breakfast at four o'clock this morning at Harmer's and I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"You will have no reason to complain, Reggie" said his mother.

"That's right, mother, the inner man has claims which are not to be neglected," replied Reginald.

"The inner boy you mean, Reggie," said Ethel laughing. "Isn't that the case, Ada?"

"Never mind, Reggie, you'll be a man some day, though you are not particular ancient yet, and sell suckers for salmon to tipsy people," answered Ada to him.

"Very well, Ada, just wait a bit, will you? See if I don't pay you off for this at croquet to-day. You're mighty saucy for a little girl."

"Now, Reggie, stop your talking and push her off," said his uncle. "We are ready at last. Up with the jib, Edwin, while I hoist the main sail, and we'll get her out."

Soon fairly on their way down the pleasant lake, they sat chatting and laughing over the interesting trifles that form so pleasing a part of every day conversation. A happy looking party enough, though doubtless to many of them there were deeper thoughts beneath than the light ripples of their surface talk would show. But these did not reveal themselves, and merry voices and happy laughter echoed from beneath the cool awning as they floated on over the sunny waters.

Mr. Horton and Edwin Vance, with little Ally a deeply interested spectator beside them, were busily engaged in getting out a trolling-line for the capture of such of the flmy tribe as might be induced to try a bite of the silvery spoon. But Edwin's thoughts were far less intent upon this occupation than upon what method he should adopt to induce his Ethel to separate herself from her companions, that he might get *himself* into an agreeable little *tete-a-tete*.

Reginald, unable to sit still a moment, was teasing his sister and the two Dearborn girls at one moment, and rambling about the boat the next. At length he got his inquisitive hand into a package among the supplies, and proceeded to an investigation of its contents.

"Hallo! got ice here. That's good this hot day. And what's this? Champagne, as I'm alive! Well done, Ethel! Now you are coming out grand to-day. But who is going to drink all this you have here? You girls, I suppose. Why, you'll all be as tipsy as the two drummers to whom I sold the fish," he cried out.

"Yes! I should'nt wonder, with that stuff here," ejaculated

Mr. Horton. "What made you bring it, Ethel? and who is there to drink it?"

"Not I, for one, uncle," replied that young lady, laughing. "Don't blame me for bringing it. I don't drink, thank you. Perhaps yourself, uncle, with Mr. Vance and papa, will get through it all. It's a tempting beverage, uncle."

"Yes! I dare say it is a very tempting beverage, but it will not tempt me," was the reply. "The temptation and the example to the young people are the great evils. And——"

"Oh! well, Edward," interrupted Mrs. Mordaunt, "I brought some champagne because I thought my husband would like it after his long morning in the woods, and for others, too, if they choose it. There will be some claret-cup, too, for those who prefer that, and tea for good teetotallers like yourself. I am very sure that but little of what is brought will be drank, and certainly claret-cup is a very mild beverage."

"It may be so; yet it is alcoholic, and therefore dangerous. All such may foster and confirm a habit of using the stronger forms of the poison, whose dreadful influence is the bane, not alone of our country, but of nearly the whole world," replied Mr. Horton, energetically, for he was upon his favorite hobby, and was very sincere on this question. "Could I but see the day when by the education of popular sentiment on the subject and stern legislative enactments, the evil is totally swept away from these countries, I should deem it the happiest of my life. The cause is advancing, making its way among the people, and it behooves us all by our own firm attitude, our consistent example, to aid and strengthen it, until the governing bodies, whom I believe to be the chief defaulters in the matter, are forced into action."

"I agree with you, Mr. Horton," said Edwin Vance, "that the vice of intemperance can be suppressed by a law of total prohibition, in the strictest sense of the words, alone, and from what I know of public sentiment on the question, I believe that

were it put to *plebiscite*—the vote of the entire population over fifteen years of age—to-morrow, it would be carried by a large majority in the whole Dominion. It is the duty of the Government of the country to take this step—its plain duty; but the abominable spirit of party that prevails, and the equally divided strength of the two contending factions, deter our present rulers, no matter how well inclined they possibly may be. A change of the party in power will, I fear, do but little good either, as the opposition leaders, even if sound on the question, could not at the present, at any rate, grapple with the financial question, which the loss of the revenues derived from alcohol would present for their solution. The bringing up of the sentiment of the country to a point which will force the government of the day to act, or dislodge it for one that will, is, in my opinion, the only means of affecting the object, and this requires time, unfortunately. I drink but little wine myself, and when the day of prohibition arrives—as arrive it will—I shall be only too glad to make the little sacrifice entailed by the deprivation of a needless and useless luxury.”

“But why not make that little sacrifice at once, and by joining actively in this good and patriotic movement, aid it with the influence of your name and position, instead of remaining passive until others effect the object. A declared enemy could do but little worse than you do now,” replied Mr. Horton, effectively.

“Because I hav’nt thought of the matter as yet,” answered Edwin.” Besides, like many other really temperate people, I have a strong objection to ally myself with any of the societies.”

“Yes! I am aware that many hold the same objection, but you can be a firm and consistent abstainer without uniting yourself to one of them. Remember that when once you become a total abstainer your sympathies will be with the temperance cause, and you become a declared enemy to King Alcohol. Otherwise you remain passive or neutral.”

"I will think of it and give you my ideas upon the matter later," replied Edwin.

"And you, also, Reginald; will you also consider the matter and join the noble cause?" added Mr. Horton.

"All right, uncle, I'll do so, said Reginald. "But seeing that all the alcohol, as you call it, that I have ever drank would'n't fill a teaspoon, I think I'm pretty safe."

"Yes! do so, Reggie," said his sister. "For my part, I could never again respect a person who ever became intoxicated, were it but for once only."

"Oh, untle!" screamed little Ally, who had been much more interested in watching the trolling-line than in listening to the temperance lecture. "Sometin' dot oo string. !'s pullin' it. Tum and see. Is it a big heesh?"

"Yes! Ally, it is a big 'heesh,' as you call it, and we'll have the fun of catching it instead of talking temperance any longer," said her uncle, running to the troller and hauling in the prize. "Bravo! Ally, you've caught a fish as big as yourself," he continued, as he lifted a splendid lake trout into the boat. Ally, however, who had watched its silvery struggles as it was splashingly drawn up, with great delight, screamed with terror at its energetic flouncings about in the bottom of the boat, and ran for protection to her mother's arms.

Reginald soon gave the poor lake trout his quietus, however.

"Come and see him now, Ally. He's dead enough and can't hurt you."

"He's a pitty heesh, Reggie," said Ally, who had ventured again near her object of terror.

"Yes! he's a very pretty fish, Ally, and we'll eat him for our picnic dinner. You and I will cook him ourselves, Ally, and he's a beauty, a regular fourteen-pounder. Ain't you proud of your fish?"

On nearing their destination, Reginald ran the boat towards a pretty bay, which, embowered between wooded and hilly

points, lay on the northern side of the lake, near its end or outlet.

"Here's the place!" said Ethel, springing up and pointing up the bay. "Isn't it pretty, girls? It is the prettiest spot, I think, on our lake or any lake. There, too, stands papa awaiting us."

It was, as Ethel had said, a very pretty scene. The high points which guarded either side of the bay ran back inland in rounded and somewhat steep ranges, covered with the primeval growth of the beautiful maple, the towering elm and the silvery birch, with an occasional pine rearing its dark foliage over all. The smooth, broad valley lying between, was cleared far back from the head of the bay, and lay smiling in its cultivated beauty and green luxuriance beneath the umbrageous shelter of its guardian hills. A clear and pebbly brook wandered, like a silver riband, through the fields and plashed at last its bright waters into the little bay. Occasional groves and patches of handsome trees of various and contrasted foliage were interspersed throughout the cleared valley for the double purpose of shade and ornament; their situations judiciously selected by the beauty loving eyes of the owner of Lake Moreaunt to modify yet not to break the view. Through these and the indented and wavy lines of the woody hill sides, charming glimpses, winding vistas of green fields and bright foliage were traced up the lovely valley as it gently rose from the waters of the bay.

Arched in with the blue Canadian sky—heightened by the warm, unclouded rays of a summer sun, and glowing in the varied riches of foliage and harvest—the valley and its bay presented a delightful effect as the boat ran in from the wide lake, contrasting, as it did, with the somewhat sombre, yet still beautiful, growth of pines and firs which here at all points shrouded the lake shore to the water's edge, and constituted, except on the hills and points, where the birch, beech and oth-

er deciduous woods glowed in their brighter green—the major part of the primeval forest.

To the Dearborn girls, Edwin Vance and Mr. Horton the scene was novel, and Ada, with the two latter, loudly expressed their admiration of its beauty. Emily, who though she saw the beauty felt no enthusiasm on the subject—contented herself with approaching Edwin, in order to secure his undivided services for the landing, and to get, if possible, the chance of a flirtation.

“Is not this most charming, Mr. Vance,” exclaimed she, rather affectedly. “To city gentlemen, like yourself, the dusty streets and uproar of the town must surely stand at a disadvantage with such a sweetly sylvan landscape as this which meets our view. I do so admire the quiet beauty of our country scenery.”

This from Emily, who infinitely preferred the dusty streets and uproar of the town, together with the gentlemen it contained, to all the natural beauty, was not altogether sincere; but Edwin accepted it as such, and replied:

“The scene is certainly very beautiful, Miss Dearborn, and worthy of your admiration. I am not an admirer of city life and would much prefer the quiet beauties of the country, with one’s chosen friends, to all the uproar and bustle of a city. I heartily agree with you in that. But permit me to assist you on shore,” he continued, as the boat slowly touched the bank, its sails cut off by the point from the impelling breeze of the lake. “Step on the side of the boat, Miss Dearborn—now jump,” and holding her hand, he lightly deposited her on terra firma.

Much to her disgust, however, he at once stepped back on board, to help his Ethel ashore.

Reggie and Mr. Horton had engaged themselves in securing the boat, while Mr. Mordaunt had—as in duty bound—helped ashore his wife and his little daughter. Ada, who needed no

cavalier, had, with the spring of a deer, placed herself comfortably on dry land, and was waiting for little Ally.

Edwin thus had his Ethel—who had remained a few moments to see after the unloading of the hampers—to himself for a word or two.

“Ethel, my darling, I have seen them both, and it is all right. You are my Ethel now ; but our engagement is to last a whole year. It's too long altogether to wait—still, I am very happy, Ethel, my dear.”

“Yes, Edwin ; but don't make too much love to me now ; they're looking at us. Never mind about the year ; it will not be very long, dear Edwin. But lift this out for me, and wait for a better opportunity to talk to me,” replied Ethel.”

“How do you do, Miss Dearborn ? and you, Ada ?” said Mr. Mordaunt, going up to the girls and shaking them by the hand in his hearty fashion ; “Come out for a day in the woods. eh ! and some fun, I hope. Ada, I foresee croquet this afternoon. Hallo ! Reggie ; where did you spring from, and where have you been all this time ?”

“Yes ; I am back safe and sound this morning, father. Gus Ferguson and I got to Lake Nipissing. but the other fellows left us the first week. We had fun and hard work enough—if not much sport. I got home this morning remarkably ragged,” replied Reggie, as he jumped from the boat with the last item of the ‘plunder,’ as he called it.

“Where shall we take it all to, mother ?” he inquired : “That grove is large enough for shade, and there's nice grass there for croquet. Shall we go there ?”

“That's the place, Reggie,” said his father. “I got one of the men to mow a piece of grass as short as possible on the shady side. We'll adjourn up, too, at once, as I am very hungry—you are all so late.”

In a few minutes they were all engaged in the pleasureable occupation of preparing their ‘al fresco’ meal, on the shaded

side of the little grove, Ethel and the two young ladies spreading the white cloth on the green table of grass, and hastily arranging the various substantials and delicacies that would require no appetiser after their breezy voyage. Reginald built the fire, and his uncle prepared the forked sticks, on which to suspend the tea-kettle, "without which," he declared, "dinner, and especially a pic-nic dinner, would be an unmitigated failure for a Yankee, or for a Canadian either."

"Took my big heesh, Reggie," said little Ally; "I want my heesh for my brikist. Took it, Reggie."

"All right, Ally; I'll cook it as soon as the fire's hot, and there's any coals. But you are not going to eat it all yourself, are you, Ally?"

Very well he cooked the trout too, backwoods fashion, on the hot embers.

"All right, mother," he answered to her objection, that they had not brought plates enough for so many different things. "We'll eat off basswood leaves."

And very well it tasted, too, eaten off its primitive trenches. Very well, too, the dinner passed off—altogether amid laughter and fun, and pleasant chatting; for a pic-nic dinner under the trees, unceremonious and free—eaten lounging on the grass, is a very pleasant, gustatory performance, after musquito time has passed—though hardly otherwise.

Mr. Mordaunt, Edwin and Emily drank their glass of champagne, which the others declined, and laughed at Mr. Horton's good-natured grumblings about it. But Ethel observed, with surprise, that Emily not only drank her's and enjoyed it, but had on two occasions during the meal asked Edwin Vance:—"Are you looking for the champagne, Mr. Vance?" when, in fact, he had neither been looking for it, nor had wholly emptied his glass, and had answered a 'No, thank you' each time she asked him.

"She surely could not have wished," Ethel thought, "to in-

duce him to drink too much champagne, knowing, as she does, my opinion on the subject. She could hardly have formed a motive so base ; yet it was strange, too," and Ethel did not like it. Yet as the attempt had been unsuccessful, the affair soon dropped from her thoughts.

Immediately after their open-air dinner had concluded, they adjourned to the croquet-ground, with the exception of Mr. Mordaunt, who strolled up the valley to his men—and Mrs. Mordaunt, who with Ally, settled beneath the trees.

"Reginald," said Ada, "you and I will choose sides. We play the best, you know."

"Very modest, Ada, in your ideas of yourself," laughed Mr. Horton. "You don't know what the rest can do yet."

"Oh ! yes I do," answered Ada ; "and I can play well enough to make up for you, so you are on my side, remember." Who do you choose, Reggie. I've taken Mr. Horton to show you I'm not afraid of you."

"Emily, play with me," he replied.

"Ethel, you are on my side," said Ada.

"Mr. Vance—last but not least," concluded Reginald.

The sides thus stood : Ada, Ethel, and Mr. Horton, against Emily, Reginald, and Mr. Vance."

"I claim to play last, as I know so little of the game, said Mr. Horton ; "and, Ada, you must direct me at first, until I see my way clear."

"Very well, Mr. Horton. Emily, you begin, as you have scarlet. And now to work."

Emily made the two first hoops, and got into position for the third. She was followed by Ethel, who on getting through the same missed a croquet upon Emily's ball, and went beyond. Edwin came next, got through his two first, missed both balls, and left his own close to Ethel's. Ada followed ; got her ball diagonally through the first hoop, went hard through the second, getting close to the others' balls, and croquetted Emily's ; split-

ting on it, she put her adversary's ball out of position, between the third and middle hoops; went through herself; croquetted Ethel's and sent it through; then on Edwin's and left him, to go with her two strokes back to Emily's; took it, placed it where she wanted it, went through the middle hoop, and so on. By her care and skill she struck the first post and back through the two hoops ere her play ceased. Reginald followed with his play, but upon getting through his two first hoops found that Ada had left him nothing to hit, and so had to play for a safe position, out of danger from Edwin. Mr. Horton came last, and as he was a good billiard player, and was co-aided too by Ada, he croquetted Reggie's ball, got through his third hoop, croquetted Ethel, went through the middle, and made some very good single shots and a good run.

So the game progressed, amid Ada's alternate rejoicings, scoldings and endless directions. Croquettings, roquetings, drivings out of positions and general excitement.

Emily played affectedly, requiring endless instructions from Edwin, whom she called to her side at every stroke she had to make, and went to him to advise on each of his. He was so polite and attentive to her requests; so apparently anxious to do anything she asked, that she almost began to think that she had made an impression, and that it was not as she had feared about Ethel. She was all smiles and sweetness, and worked a great deal harder at being smiling and sweet than she did at croquet, which was a subsidiary object. Edwin was very gallant towards her, with the natural courtesy and chivalry of feeling of a gentleman. Besides, was she not very pretty and stylish-looking? and then she made herself very pleasing when she chose to do so.

Edwin's attentions to his Ethel during the game consisted principally in croquetting her ball at every opportunity, and driving it away as far as possible--thereby spoiling his own

play, as tight-croquet had been voted old-fashioned by that very scientific player, Ada.

Wherever the battle raged the fiercest, there would Ada and Reggie be found, they delighting more in hindering their adversaries' play than in advancing their own, and laughing obstreperously whenever they succeeded in vexatiously sending an adversary far out of position.

Mr. Horton, made interested by his first success, and his eye skilled by long practice at his national billiards, had played himself ahead, and became the first rover. Seeing this, Ada commenced to coach Ethel, who was behind hand, and succeeding in getting her through to the two last hoops, she then made a diversion on the enemy, scattering them on the field; took Ethel's ball with her, and holding a good position with all rovers, won the game in a canter, amid exultant rejoicings over her crest-fallen antagonists.

Other games followed with varying success, though in the end victory perched upon the crest of the unconquerable Ada, who was, therefore, satisfied and happy.

A pleasant stroll through the pretty valley succeeded, during the course of which Edwin managed to get his fair one to himself for a few minutes, and doubtless many sweet things were said; of much greater interest to themselves than any other persons.

Ada and Mr. Horton went off together, and a very prosaic flirtation they would have of it. Nevertheless, they contrived to amuse each other very well, for every now and then a ringing laugh from Ada, or a bass chuckle from her companion, would arise on the air, as they negligently and unceremoniously strolled on in company.

Emily was thus left to the rather youthful cavaliership of Reginald. A very pleasing duty to him; for her formed and stylish good looks were to his young eyes very attractive. Like most very young men, his admiration was bestowed upon

a girl older than himself. Her handsome dress, finished appearance and fine figure impressed him very strongly—the more strongly, perhaps, that not having himself attained polish and finish, he, conscious of the lack, found the qualities admirable in another.

Even her somewhat overstrained manner and would-be dignity of demeanour were to him but additional charms. When in her society he was very much in love, and not being afflicted with bashfulness by any means, he pushed his bold love-making in a direct and straight-through-the-bush manner—no beating around it—that might not have been pleasing to many girls, but very well suited her taste, and met with no discouragement.

She doubtless would have preferred her walk to have been with Edwin, as he was an immediately eligible *parti*, and her cause was in danger from Ethel; but she had not obtained his company, and was contented to exercise her charms upon Reginald, who appreciated, and who—if not directly—would certainly become an “eligible ;” and she would hold her power over him as a *dernier resort*. Besides, there were many things which she very much wished to know which Reginald might know, and which she might easily discover from him.

So during their walk—Edwin and Ethel a little in advance, obliviously interested in each other—she interrupted the flow of Reggie's open compliment and direct fine speeches—which she had rewarded by a smile, a glance, or not displeasing reply—by remarking :

“Now, Reggie, you'll make me believe you're in love with me if you speak to me like that. You should'nt, you know, when, I dare say, you make the very same fine speeches to every girl you meet. But see, what a very interesting conversation Mr. Vance and Ethel are holding. They seem totally lost to all the world except themselves.”

“Oh! that's nothing,” said Reggie. “Vance was always soft

upon Ethel, because she talks rubbish about books and poetry with him; astronomy and travels, and stuff. I'll bet that its botany or some such nonsense they're talking about now. I never heard them at anything else but some scientific humbug or other, and I'm very glad of it, too, for I would not like him to come spooning around you, Emily. I'd rather do that myself."

"Oh, fie! Reginald," returned Emily; "and such an expression to use! But," she added, "you've been away, and young ladies see more quickly into these things than young gentlemen do, at any rate. I'm very sure that if those two are not engaged to each other, they soon will be—and then you'll lose your sister, Reggie."

"Well; if they're engaged, I know nothing of it. They hav'nt told me anything, but I'll find out, though. I'll ask my mother first chance I get; I don't care if it is true, either. I'll follow the example, and get engaged myself; and I know to whom," said Reggie, looking straight into her face as coolly and unabashedly as possible.

"You seem very confident, Master Reggie," replied Emily, who having discovered that her youthful admirer could tell her nothing, thought she might as well relapse into the pleasant flirtation again. "Pray who may the young lady be?—any I know? This, too, after all the sweet speeches you have made to me to-day, Reggie!"

"I've been telling you all day—and her name is——Emily," said the young reprobate, snatching a kiss with sudden adroitness and agility, avoiding with equal alertness her rather playful return-box of the ear of the by-no-means displeased Emily.

"Well, I'm sure!" she exclaimed with a laugh. "Take care that I don't take you at your word, you bold young—I don't know what to call you."

"That's right, Emily, do, and if you don't, I will," he said. And so on, and so on—neither of them very much in earnest;

neither of them troubling themselves with the reflection that there are such things as consequences.

At length the declining sun warned them of return. Mr. Mordaunt mounted his horse and went home by the road, while the rest of the party took to their boat again, which Edwin slowly and surely tacked up the lake against the head wind.

Their day had been a pleasant one, yet they were all glad enough to step out upon the little wharf, with its short distance to the house alone left them to traverse.

As Reginald and Emily walked up together, she asked him :

"Well, Reggie; what did your mother say? Are Ethel and Mr. Vance engaged? Did you ask yet?"

"No; I hav'nt as yet. But why do you wish to know about it so earnestly?" with some surprise and curiosity.

"Oh! young ladies always like to hear of engagements and love affairs," she answered lightly.

"Do they? How very odd! I'll remember that. And perhaps you would not dislike to take part in a love affair also," said Reggie, looking up into her face and laughing.

On entering the house, Edwin enquired if Mr. Wolverton had not come, and was answered in the negative, nor, at the time that the family retired to bed, had he or Barney put in an appearance.

CHAPTER XI.

A REVELATION; AN ARRIVAL AND A LECTURE.

When Mrs. Mordaunt—an early riser—descended the stairs on the following morning, she entered, as was her wont, the conservatory, for a few minutes' enjoyment of her beloved flowers—the charm of whose beauty and fragrance is the most keenly appreciated in the early hours of the day, when the eye and the sense—refreshed, invigorated and unsatiated, awaken

with renewed delight to the outspread and ever-new glories of the universe.

The first object that met her eye, however, on this occasion, was our friend Barney—by no means a beautiful flower—lounging in deeply reflective attitude up against the open door, through which the fresh morning breeze entered; and evidently knowing her custom, on the watch for her coming.

“Good mornin’ till ye, Misthress Mordaunt,” said he, doffing his hat, and advancing in from the door. “It’s mighty foine the harbs in yer conservathory are the day; and, faix! it’s yer-self is lookin’ as fresh and as purty, ma’am, as iver a flower av thim all, this blissid marn.”

“Good morning to you, Barney,” said Mrs. Mordaunt. “I know you have something to say to me, when you commence with your soft solder and blarney. Well, what is it, Barney?—But what in the world kept you so late last night; and did Mr. Wolverton come with you?”

“Late was it? Och! an it wur late enough or arly—wan av the two. Oh, yis! ma’am, he kem wid me—bad seran! or its home I’d a bin at a dacent hour av the night. I tought now as he niver intended to get hisself started,” replied Barney.

“But what kept him so late? Did he not come by the day train? You did not keep him waiting, did you, Barney?”

“Faix! the boot was on the udder fut, I’m thinking, ma’am; mebbe it wur bishness, ma’am, or mebbe he had raisons of his own fur not appearin’ before the family till he’d slep’ on it, and got hisself brightened up agin. And it’s right he was, more-be-token,” returned Barney, sarcastically.

“Why! whatever do you mean, Barney? I can’t understand you; don’t speak in riddles,” exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt.

“Troth! and indade, ma’am, it’s jist nuthin’ at all, at all, I’m manin’,” returned Barney. “Ye see, ma’am, av I wur to go out to spind the avenin’ wid a few friends, an’ it wur not a timperance meetin’ they wur houldin’, an’ it shud happen whin it

wur time to be makin' fur home, that I shud find meself a actin' strange an' talking quare, an' singin' and makin' to git a bit av shillalegh in me hands, like enough-more-be-token ; wouldnt I be fur waitin' awhile till the dacent foiks wor in their bids, an' thin I cud slip in onobsarved? Faix ! an' barrin' a quare feel av me hid it's all straight I'd be by mornin'." added he, with a comical twist of his eye.

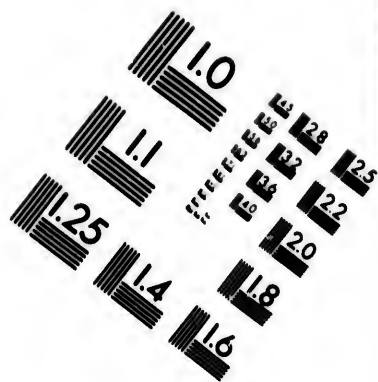
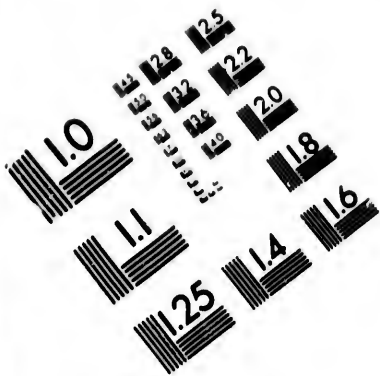
"Why you do not mean to say he had been drin——" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, impulsively, horrified at the idea. But she was hastily interrupted by the shrewd Barney at this dangerous point, which threatened to bring a close to the conversation.

"Och ! it was'nt alludin' to the gintleman I wor at all, ma'am." said the hypocritical Barney, conscious he had been trespassing on the sacred rights of guesthood. "It wur mysilf I wor a sphakin' av whin I wud do the like. Ye see, ma'am," continued he, "I wint to the stashin whin the train kem in, an' I seed Mистер Wolverton git aff av it, so I wint up till him an' tould him I had a baste riddy till fetch him up till the Lake, an' he tould me till wait awhile as he had some bishness till attind till, an' off he wint hot-fut till the bank. He stayed there a mortal while, an' whin he kem back till the hot-tel, he lukked as black as tunder. He called fur brandy intill a room there, where its two udder gintlemin wor wid him."

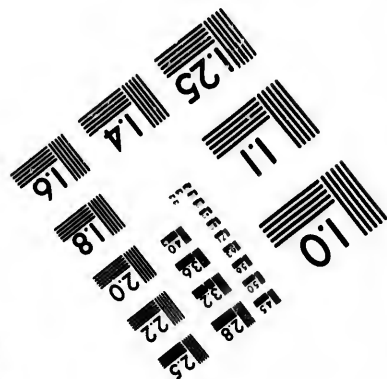
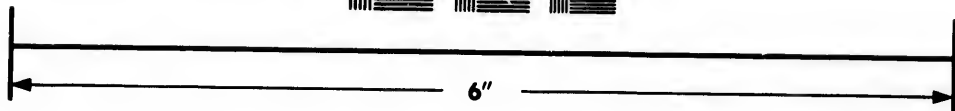
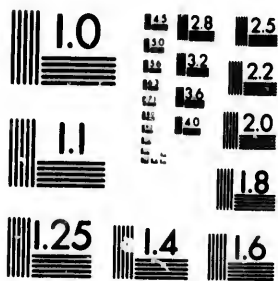
"I waited, an' I waited, an' I waited," continued Barney, "till it kem on six av the clock, whin I wint and axed him if it's put the baste in I wor to do, as it wor gettin' mortal late, an' we hid twinty mile afore us. Begorra ! but it's sound asleep they wor, an' it wor no timperance meeting they'd been houldin' av ather, so it wur'nt.

"Be me sowl ! but it med me as crass as a post-office clark, so it did, till see the sthate he wur in, an' if it had'nt been that he wor a gintleman fur the Lake, it's black an' blue I'd ha' bate





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him, so I wud, begorra ! fur disgracing us all that a-away, the dirty spalpeen."

"Stop, Barney!" warmly interrupted Mrs. Mordaunt. "I cannot listen longer to your impertinent stories. You presume too much in thus traducing the character of a gentleman visiting here. You mistake, also. Mr. Wolverton was probably fatigued with his journey and needed some rest," added poor Mrs. Mordaunt, horrified at the character of the guest she had beneath her roof, yet knowing that she ought to protect him, while unable to disbelieve Barney's very graphic and evidently veracious statement.

"Faix ! then, ma'am, an' ye don't wish till hear more av it, the divil a wurrud more has Barney got to say agin it," replied that individual, carefully plucking a dead leaf from a geranium, but nevertheless proceeding with a great many other words, unrestrained too.

"Fur the mather av that, ma'am, ye can as will affoord till hear anything consarnin the family as Barney can. And its me duthy, too, so it is, be the powers ! till tell yes all I know av it, gintleman or no gintleman. The ind av the mather wor that I let them slape on till it kem to be nine at night, and thin I wint and put the baste intill the vahicle—poor ill used craythur, that had her day's wur-ruk afore her yit, whin it wur home she shud be—and tould the waither till mek out his bill, an' we wint in, wan wid another, an' wekkened him. Troth ! an' the waither wor mighty short wid him, and poked the paper intill his neb an' toul't him till pay it an' be aff wid him. Faix ! he wekkened up quite an' sober-like, an' dhrank some brandy till straighten himsilf up wid, an' I got him intill the vahicle aisy an' plisint, an' its glad I wor till get aff wid him. We driv on, nately enough, an' niver a wur-rud he said, goodor bad, till we'd med a couple av miles av the road."

"'Barney,' says he, 'What's Misther Vance doing up at the

take these days. He's been there tin days or more, hasn't he?"

"Och!" says I, "the divil a know I knows what he's doin' av. He's a quite gentleman an' amuses hisself as a gentleman shud."

"But how does he spend his time? He must find it rather dull up there, one would think, unless he has some strong attraction. Eh! Barney?" says he.

"Dull is it? An' what for is it dull he'd be?" says I. "Begorra! if it's dull he finds himself, I'm thinkin' he likes it, an' he'll be afther takin' wan av the family aff wid him to kape him dull for iver. An' its how does he spend his time is it?" Faix, its mighty agrable his way of spendin' it, so it is. It's a mortal hand he is for plazin' the ladies," says I. "A ridin' on horse back troo the fields wid thim. A sailin' on the little lough, a talkin' poetry an' jommethry wid thim. Playin' crokey wid thim—a quare furrin game they have, where the ginteimin can be coortin' the ladies, while they're pretindin' to knock quare little wood balls troo wires up agin little barber's posts. An' standin' in the consarvathory wid Miss Ethel fur hours together, tillin' av her the names av her herbs in Latin an' Grake, an' pullin' laves an' blossoms to bits—as a choild wud a fly—an' talkin' about it as grand as ye plaze in the haythin' tongues. Och! it's a mighty plisint way he has av bein' dull, an' it agraes wid more nor him up there, more-be-token," says I.

"Oh! that's the way of it, is it, Barney," says he. "I suppose now he and Miss Ethel agree very well together?"

"Troth! it's lookin' in the upholstheres shop he'll be afore long," says I, an' he looked as black as tunder, so he did, when he heard it. He swore till himself, and muttered away somethin' about 'forestalled,' though what he mint the divil a bit av me knows. An' it's quite and silent he sat till we arruv home.

"Good marnin' till ye, Misthress Mordaunt. I must be aff till me wur-ruk," exclaimed Barney at the conclusion of his long story, and shuffling off as fast as he could. "It's mighty purty

her harbs are lookin' the day, and a fine day it is, so it is, thank the Lord."

Poor Mrs. Morlaunt had but little enjoyment left for her flowers on this morning. That was all taken away by Barney's revelation. She blamed herself severely, now he had gone, for having listened to it, though not a little shocked at its tenor, while she could not but wonder at the tact and shrewdness with which the man, apparently rude, ignorant and uneducated, had carried out his statement, really compelling her to hear it by sheer management and address, and who, when his tale was told, had so adroitly scuttled off, without giving her the opportunity for a word.

She felt humiliated in her character of hostess that she had had to listen to such a tale from a servant, reflecting in such a manner upon her guest, while she could not but recognize the honesty of purpose and faithfulness of the man who had thus given himself a dangerous and disagreeable task.

"How could Edwin Vance—her son-in-law that was to be—have for a friend such a man as this Mr. Wolverton," she asked herself. "Ought he to be warned? Ought not his eyes to be opened to this precious friend's character and habits?"

No! that would not only be a violation of the hospitality of the rules of the house in which the man was a guest, but she had nothing more than the story of an ignorant Irishman to support her charges; and, again, she felt that she could not bring herself to repeat the details, some of them so humiliatingly personal.

No! she would do nothing at present, save to keep watch and ward upon Mr. Wolverton and his schemes while he was in her house; while to save Ethel from any possible annoyance her engagement should be made patent to the world.

So this Wolverton had come with designs to make himself agreeable to her daughter, had he? That man who had come under her roof yet stupefied from his debauch. But he was too

late ; he was ' forestalled,' as Barney had said, though the latter knew not the meaning of the word his very unpleasant hints had brought out.

After all, Barney had done her a service, she thought, and he needed not to have scuttled off so fast when he had completed his tale ; and he was forgiven.

Mrs. Mordaunt, with a bare look at her blossoming favourites, departed thoughtfully from the conservatory, and went about her morning avocations.

* * * * *

Mr. Sydney Wolverton, on entering the breakfast room an hour later, presented by no means an unfavourable appearance either in dress, manner or look, and Mrs. Mordaunt, fresh from her early conversation with Barney, thought, at the first glance, " how well he has got over his night's dissipation."

He approached her with ease and self-possession as one already known to her, and though her salutation, sufficiently polite, was involuntary cool and even a little distant, he addressed a few words to her and Ethel before going through the formalities with the rest of the party, with the quiet and assured air of a gentleman.

Edwin Vance's greeting to him was warm and hearty, on his part, at least, the meeting with a friend.

" I hardly expected to see you this morning, Sydney, old fellow," he said. " We gave you up for the night at eleven o'clock, supposing you had been detained."

" Yes !" replied Sydney, turning at the same time to Mrs. Mordaunt. " I must beg pardon for detaining the conveyance and its driver, which you so kindly sent for me, until an hour so late.

" On arrival at Cascades I found there was some bank business to which I had to attend, which kept me longer than I expected. Afterwards some gentlemen connected with me in business arrived at the hotel, and with various matters claimed

my time until very late. I trust that I did not cause much inconvenience by my delay."

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Mordaunt, answering for his wife. "Further than that you would not meet with a very warm reception on arrival, as we had all retired. You must make up now with a good breakfast which, I am happy to say, is ready."

"You should have been here yesterday, Mr. Wolverton," said Emily. "We had a delightful sail and a pic-nic, which I know you would have much enjoyed; and there have been lots of things going on here and at Ten Lakes lately. You don't know how much you have lost by not making your appearance amongst us sooner."

"Oh, yes, Miss Dearborn! I am sure there has been much of interest going forward with you all, and a visit to this part is always a bright era to me. But, unfortunately, my arrangements do not often permit them. No one can be better aware than I am myself how much I have missed," he replied, with a smile, though his eye unconsciously rested for a moment upon Ethel's face, and his thoughts returned to Barney's hints during their drive. He had couched his phrase in words conveying more than he otherwise would have expressed had he suspected that either of those present were partially initiated into an idea of his views, and could construe them very differently from his intention. Emily, who knew him best of all, was very certain that the motives of his visit was not alone the enjoyment of such quiet pleasures as a country house afforded, and who intuitively suspected one of them, at least—smiled mischievously at the success of the bait she had thrown out, and resolved to make him repent his meditated treason to herself.

Mrs. Mordaunt looked him fixedly in the face for a moment—an ominous light in her eye, which he noticed, but could not comprehend; but she made no remark, and the conversation became general.

Sidney Wolverton, as he sat easily and composedly among

them, presented the appearance of a fine-looking and rather distinguished, if not a handsome, man, with an air of ability and force about him. Tall and well-built, carefully and effectively dressed, he had the appearance and manners of a gentleman. His features were good, though very marked; he might have been called handsome were it not that a somewhat saturnine and lowering expression sat upon his face in his usual moods, which was not pleasing. Only when some conscious effort or other occasion brought out a smile, would the dark expression change and brighten. But he was quite able to produce the change when it suited him to do so. The aquiline and pointed nose, with its large, thin and drawn nostrils; the bright dark eyes and black hair, determined mouth, the lips set tight against the gleaming teeth, told of a forceful will—dark and fierce as it was forceful, and of the strong executiveness to carry out its decrees—a striking, if not a dangerous mentality.

And although the general expression of the dark face—when, as under the present circumstances, it was smoothed down to society appearance—would hardly be called fierce or tigerish, yet it was very easy to imagine that the man himself, if impelled by necessity, the gratification of his passions, or his desired ends—would become so, and spare nothing that stood in his course.

From the advantages and opportunities which had been liberally bestowed upon him, Sidney Wolverton ought to have been a wealthy—a prosperous man.

The Hopetown mills—an extensive and heretofore profitable establishment—had been bequeathed, at the death of a bachelor uncle, unencumbered and free from debt, although somewhat in need of renovation and repair. His father, a well-to-do merchant of Nova Scotia, had put him in possession of sufficient capital for this purpose, and for an untrammelled and unembarrassed carrying on of the business; had advised him to be careful and judicious; that his property was a good one,

and by prudence and foresight, should lead him to fortune—at the same time warning him that he had now to depend upon himself alone, without further assistance, as his other children must also be advanced in life.

Instead, however, of profiting by this wise advice, or probably too young for his position—he had sunk a great part of his capital in additions and extensions to his establishment, some of them, too, altogether out of the legitimate course of the business, and had of late purchased, for speculative purposes, a large tract of land totally unconnected with the establishment, for which he had only been as yet enabled to pay a small portion of the purchase money.

Naturally extravagant, and inclined to dissipation, he had in the pursuit of his pleasures, entrusted too much to foremen and overseers, that to which he should himself have attended ; and as a consequence he had for some time found himself not in an easy or prosperous condition, but continually harrassed and embarrassed. As we know, he had endeavoured to alleviate this position by the attempt—unsuccessful, however—to induce Mr. Horton and his friend, Vance, to enter the business with him.

Since these attempts he had carried on the business as best he could—day to day—a regular hand-to-mouth system. But what chance could there be left for a concern to stand under a chronic state of hand-to-mouth administration ? At the time of his visit to the Lake, things had arrived at a desperate pitch with him. Aid he must have, by whatever means it might be obtained.

“I say, Mr. Wolverton, how did you and the other fellows get home ?” asked Reginald—“when, in our late expedition, you basely deserted Gus Ferguson and myself in the woods ?”

“We reached home next day easily enough. Reginald,” he replied : “but as to deserting you, I imagine it is the other way, and you deserted us. That is my impression.”

"How do you make that out? I can't see it in that light. Did you not all of you turn back before we had got half-way to our proposed point?" exclaimed Reggie defensively.

"Yes; I'll admit we did not fulfil our whole intention; but how very often does not poor human nature fail to complete all that it designs? We had been gone a week, you must admit, Reggie, and provisions were expended. Again, there was much more hard work than pleasure upon that expedition into the wilds. But how did you two go?" asked Wolverton in return.

"Oh! we got to Lake Nipissing before we turned—as we said we would; and a rough time we had of it. You fellows used up all the eatables and drinkables before you left, and we had to depend upon our rifles and fishing-tackle for a living. We only got back yesterday morning, but after all we had a good time, and saw lots of country. Adventures enough, too."

"Well; I'm glad you found it rough. You deserved it for your pains. A week in the woods is enough for any reasonable Christian," answered Sidney, laughing. "Beyond that the hard work gets monotonous."

"All right!" exclaimed Reggie. "We'll give you county fellows some hard work on Saturday, too—see if we don't. You'll find it harder than a day in the garden, much more a day in the woods—you bet! I suppose you fellows think you have a soft thing on Ten Lakes in the match, don't you? You'll have to work for it, though."

"Oh, yes, Reggie! we must beat them, or I'll never be able to show my face again!" said Ada energetically, clasping her hands together. "I'd die before I'd let that boasting county club beat us all! If they win, I'm ruined! The pairs of gloves that I'll lose, I'll never be able to pay for them all."

"Ada," said her sister, severely. "One would imagine, from the tenor of your conversation, that you belonged to the Ten Lakes Club and were going to take your innings, as they call it.

in the match to-morrow. Do try to remember that you are a young lady."

"I wish I wasn't sometimes," Ada answered, in piteous tones that made her hearers laugh. "And I only wish I was going to play to-morrow. I do belong to the Club, and so ought every girl in 'Ten Lakes who has any spiri' in her," she added, energetically.

"Well! if all the young ladies show the same interest as you do, Miss Ada, in the Cricket Club, the 'County' will have to look to its laurels against an opponent so inspired," said Mr. Wolverton with a gallantry wholly unappreciated by her to whom it was addressed. "I must say though that I think it to be a little over-confident in challenging so strong a Club as the 'County,' and I fear it will have to record a sound drubbing on Saturday," continued Sydney to Reginald.

"Not a bit of it!"

"I'd like to see them do it!" exclaimed Reggie and Ada together in emphatic denial.

"That's right, Ada. I like to see you stand up for the honour of your 'Ten Lakes, the place where you were born and where you live, though it is but a village," said Mr. Horton, warmly, to her. "Were your spirit diffused throughout the extent of the country, and did it animate all its inhabitants, it would be the better for it—very greatly the better for it. Not that I mean thus to infer the encouragement of local or sectional jealousies as a benefit, far from it, such is but an evil outgrowth. The love of one's home, the place of one's birth or residence, the strong personal interest in them is, when one possesses it, the outspring of ardent sentiment, of which true patriotism, the love of one's country—one's own country—is the extended growth, and one of the purest, most unselfish sentiments that can animate the human breast. Of this patriotic feeling, in its true sense, I cannot but perceive a lamentable deficiency in this Canada of yours. A deficiency the more conspicuous and the more inex-

cusable in the inhabitants of such a land as this—a land whose very vastness, grandeur and capabilities should arouse the sentiment in its highest degree. A deficiency which is one of the great rocks ahead in its progress towards the status of a great nation. There exists, too generally, I regret to say, a lack of confidence, even of interest, in the future of the country. A deplorable lack, which of necessity must exercise a paralyzing effect upon its advancement."

"The patriotism of the French-Canadian, for instance," he continued, "seems to be mainly directed towards the language, the laws and customs of the race from which he sprang, and I very much doubt if the sentiment as towards his own country—Canada—the land of his birth, is felt in any but a very slight degree. And this same tone, with native born Canadians of other races, holds true also. They look with greater pride towards the country from which they are descended than to the land to which they are native. The confederation of the separate provinces, now the great 'Dominion of Canada,' by binding them together into a solid unit, by the gradual obliteration of narrow provincial views and prejudices, and the aspect of power which territory and population gives, will probably in the course of time conduce to a change in this respect that is so desirable. But a great deal depends upon the population itself. The history of the country though a short, is certainly not an inglorious one, and its study—laid in proper form and colouring—before the rising generation, should be used as powerful means to that end. But I have observed with astonishment in my various rambles throughout the provinces the great number of American 'text books' and 'readers,' highly objectionable from a Canadian point of view, which are used in the Common Schools. To thus permit the impressionable minds of the youth of the country to be imbued and tinged with the ideas, hostile and prejudiced, of any foreign country, especially the case with those advanced by our American School books, is simply a suicidal policy. As it should

be the aim of the government to foster a national, a patriotic spirit, without which a state never became great, it is its primary duty to unhesitatingly stamp out so glaring a source of danger, and enforcedly substitute, constitutionally or unconstitutionally, whether agreeable to sectional feeling or disagreeable, a nationally conceived course of their own in all the public schools.

“What can be a more despicable object than the man in whom the spirit of patriotism, the natural love of his native country is a dead sentiment? He cannot but think meanly of himself, who thinks meanly of the land from which he sprang,” continued Mr. Horton, warming up to a favourite subject of his, and he went on—

“Place in contradistinction the intense patriotism of the Briton, for instance. With what pride, quiet and dignified, arrogant and supercilious, as the case may be, he carries the love of his country about him, and bears himself as if its honours, its renown, reflected themselves upon him. He feels himself a sharer of them—that he and his ancestors achieved them, and he glories in the name of a Briton. He may look with interest and admiration, it is true, and accord the due praise to the great works of a rival nation, but would laugh at an assertion of that nation's superiority. From the fact of his being a Briton, and not from physical or mental peculiarity, arises his proud confidence in himself and his native land. His country may be hated for its power and success, he knows it, and rather likes the idea, for it is, in his eyes, the world's tribute, its sweetest praise to his beloved land. What might be considered of the arrogant confidence of a power that would venture to take up arms and wage war against the whole world combined in assurance of success? Yet who would affirm that Britain would hesitate a moment in defence of her rights to enter upon such a tremendous conflict. She did urge that war once, and did not emerge from it second best either. That is where patriotism comes in! And nowhere, Miss Ada, is the love of home, of one's own place, one's own roof-tree, more exemplified

than in England, and nowhere does there exist a people more patriotic."

"Well done! Uncle Edward," said Reginald, impudently. "We'll run you in for member next election, certain. But I think you are rather hard on us Canadians. We younger ones, at any rate, are proud of our country, and believe in it, and if we do look with affection and pride to the country from which we are descended, we do not love our own any the less on that account. I do not deny, though, that there is more truth than poetry in a good deal of that you have told us."

"That's right, Reggie," replied his uncle. "Stand up always for the land of your birth. You won't run me for a member, though," he added, as they rose from the table. "I'm too good a Yankee for that."

"Oh! are you though," returned Reggie. "An M. P. of Canada is just as good as a Yankee Senator any day. Come now! senators and generals and colonels are as plentiful in the States as leaves in Valambrosa."

"Yes!" and M. P.'s are plentiful enough in the Dominion also, under the present condition of things. Why! how many parliaments are you running now? when one is ample for all there is to do. Cut off your ridiculous little Provincial Houses, with their parish politics and your country will be all the better for it. I am free to confess my own country would be none the worse for doing the same," replied Mr. Horton.

"Mrs. Mordaunt," asked Ada, as they entered the drawing-room, "Have you anything for me to do this morning? I don't like to be idle, and to commence amusing one's self at half past eight is rather early. I'd be tired out before night."

"No! Ada, I have not," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "I think you'll have to try to amuse yourself. There's lots of things you can do. Try billiards, or a book, or a ride on horseback, or get the gentlemen out to croquet. I have nothing to do myself particularly, or Ethel either. Mr. Mordaunt will keep so many ser-

vants about that they hav'nt enough to do. I think I have heard of the servant question certainly, and the difficulty people experience in getting the assistance they require. For my part I have never had any difficulty in getting the assistance I require. Yet I pay the wages only that are customary in this district. And certainly not nearly so high as they pay in the cities."

"Well! I'm sure you're very lucky, Mrs. Mordaunt," exclaimed Emily, "for of all the pests and nuisances we have to endure at home the servant question is the most vexatious. We never can get the creatures to stay more than a month with us, no matter what wages we pay. With two we can get along, but most of the time we have but one, and generally when we manage to get another, the first one has left us. I'm sure I don't understand how it is that some people seem to have no trouble with their girls."

"I think the matter can be easily enough accounted for in our case, Emily," said Ada. "With such a large family as ours, it is as much as two servants can do to get through, even with some little help from us; but they get very little of that generally. And it is very much the same when we have only one. We don't help her enough. The girl cannot do the work, and won't stay with us. Besides, as a general thing, they are not treated properly in our house, or spoken kindly to, and have no time left for recreation. I don't wonder that we find trouble with our servants."

"Oh! that's Ada all over," rejoined Emily. "She likes to do housework and place herself on a level with the servants. It's only the other day that one of our girls gave her month's warning just because I scolded her for not having my breakfast ready, for I'd been out the night before at a party and had come down late, and told me that she would leave the house instantly, were it not that she knew Miss Ada would have to do all the work herself. For my part, I would not curry favor with such creatures. As it is, Ada does half the girls' work for them, speaks

to them as if they were ladies, and that's why they like her."

"Well! I think Ada is right," said Mrs. Mordaunt, quietly. "A word of kindness goes a great way with them. But, Emily and Ada, I have some news for you which I think you will find interesting, and as we are alone I will tell you. Edwin Vance and Ethel have taken it into their heads to fall in love with each other, and they are engaged to be married. What do you think of that? It was, I must say, rather a surprise to Mr. Mordaunt and myself. We had not expected such a thing, though I could see that Edwin liked Ethel. However, the match will be suitable enough in all respects, and, I think, will be for their happiness. You must congratulate me upon the new and unexpected *role* which I am to enter upon—the unenviable one of a mother-in-law. I do trust that my dear Ethel may be happy."

"Oh! I am so glad, Mrs. Mordaunt, so glad to hear such good news of Ethel. I always knew that she would marry some nice fellow. So Ethel's going to marry Mr. Vance. Dear Ethel, I'm so glad. I do congratulate you, dear Mrs. Mordaunt. He is a nice fellow, and Ethel is just perfection. Oh! I know they'll be so happy," exclaimed Ada warmly, springing from her seat and kissing Mrs. Mordaunt in the impulsive good nature of her heart.

"Then they are engaged. Well! I thought as much the minute I arrived," said Emily, almost unwittingly, for though she had been half expecting such, the news came to her with something of a shock. It was not utter dismay, for it was not her heart that was touched. Her vanity and her jealousy were the feelings that were outraged. It was not agreeable to her that Ethel Mordaunt, whom she disliked, and of whom she was envious, should have come between her and a prize, which, in her eyes, was well worth having. Still less did she like it that Edwin Vance should have preferred that detested rival to herself. Besides, was it not another "eligible" gone—a direct loss, for she held imaginary rights over all that admired but limited class. And it was no

wonder that she did not respond to the news with the joyous unselfishness of her sister. She managed to say at last, "Well! I wish them joy, and hope they will be as happy as they doubtless are at present. But when is it to be, Mrs. Mordaunt? and where is Ethel's engagement ring? I'm sure she has not got it on, for I looked," added she, unconsciously.

"There is time enough for the ring yet, Emily," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, "seeing their engagement is but two days old. I don't suppose either of them have as yet thought of such a detail. The marriage will not take place for a year, at any rate," she continued, a little restively, to these enquiries.

"Only two days ago!" exclaimed Emily, emphatically. With self-reproach in her heart she thought: "Had I come but a day sooner I could have prevented this." And then her spitefulness overcoming her, "And they are not to be married for a year. Don't you think it is rather a long engagement to allow to a person so yielding and changeable as Mr. Vance?" she added.

"I have never observed such traits in his character, Miss Dearborn, nor I think have you," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, indignantly, with displeasure and anger in her tone. "I am astonished at the remark from you. Pray what do you mean?"

"Now! Emily, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are vexed because Ethel is engaged to be married before you are, and you show it. I would not be so mean if I were you," interrupted Ada, vehemently, yet putting the least unfavourable construction to her sister's impertinence.

Nevertheless, Emily's words left an unpleasant impression on Mrs. Mordaunt's mind.

"I'm sure I did not mean to offend, Mrs. Mordaunt," said Emily, a little ashamed at what she had done. "I only meant that—that—that Mr. Vance was inclined to be very attentive to young ladies," she added, lamely enough.

"As all young men are! You would find it very dull were

they not so, Emily," answered Mrs. Mordaunt, pointedly. "With Mr. Vance the case is now a different thing."

"As if butter would not melt in his mouth," said Emily to herself, but, wisely, she did not give the thought utterance.

 CHAPTER XII.

DIDN'T KNOW WHEN SHE WAS WELL OFF.

On the morning of the twenty-first day of July, A.D. 1871, Mr. John Hatchitfess, of the old and highly reputable firm of John Hatchitfess & Son, Notaries, Conveyancers and House and Land Agents, of the City of Toronto, sat in his comfortable room, one of the suite of three which constituted the firm's offices, busily engaged in reading the morning papers, and keeping a sharp eye on the three middle-aged and respectable-looking clerks in the main office, as busily engaged at their respective desks, and in casting regretful glances into the third apartment, the most handsomely furnished of all, which was the sanctum of, and ought to have been graced by the presence of Albert Maximus Montague Hatchitfess, Esquire, junior member of the firm and only son and heir of the said Mr. John Hatchitfess. But as business was not the forte of that young gentleman; while spending his share of the profits about Her Majesty's goodly city of Toronto in the most agreeable manner possible—most decidedly was; the regretful glances of his worthy progenitor continued to meet but dull vacancy, and he had to content his paternal eye by looking still sharper after the three middle-aged clerks, who, well aware of the supervision, wrote away for dear life, as if it were a certain nameless personage, sulphurously odorate, bifurcate of extremity, and of comate aspect, who so enthusiastically drove them.

The firm was wealthy, and bore the odour of being very honest, quite to be depended upon, though perhaps a little hard in its

dealings. The offices, upon a flight of stairs in King street, were very well known to a goodly proportion of the inhabitants of Toronto, and to a goodly number of people outside of Toronto also. A very large business was done in those offices, and a great deal of money was made by the firm, not so much by its legitimate notarial business, as by the more general line of the House and Land Agency.

It might be a very hard, but it was a very honest firm, and numerous gentlemen who liked to have their rents paid them the day they were due, and who did not wish to have their charitable souls agonized by appeals for delay from poor tenants, found it very convenient to place their business in the hands of John Hatchitfess & Son, who had no soul, and they got their rents to the day.

Gentlemen who wished to dispose of property, repaired thither also, and they shortly had the pleasure of handling the price. Even were there great necessity for the transactions being very hurriedly got through with, it was all the same. The seller may not have got so much money, but he got it promptly.

Gentlemen who wished to purchase property, or invest money or effect a mortgage, or do almost anything in the way of real estate, did the same; and they got what they wanted. Should a nice young man, with property behind him, have been spending rather too freely, and his pocket needed replenishment, he went to John Hatchitfess & Son, and got the needful cash, on giving his written promise to pay the advance, with a good deal more added to it; which promise, too, the young gentleman generally found that he kept, whether it were agreeable or not to him to do so.

These processes going on for long years, resulted in the accumulation of dollars, and Mr. John Hatchitfess, at the period of our story, was regarded in the light of a very wealthy man.

'Honesty' had been so persistently the battle-cry of the

firm, that they had built up a solid reputation for it, and in their dealings *for* or *between* other parties, not directly with them, they had been honest. After the transaction of some piece of business, Mr. John Hatchitfess would severely remark : " We are very honest, but we are not charitable," in the words, and probably in the paradoxical sense of the manager of the steamboat company, who, one of his moribund tubs having broken down on the journey, thoroughly cleaned out the pockets of the poor passengers, already depleted by their expensive delay, for bringing them back to their *starting point*, in another of his old machines.

Mr. John Hatchitfess could not certainly be regarded as a handsome man ; but as beauty is at a discount in business matters, and is wholly overlooked in the person to whom one pays one's rent, the deficiency was but of little moment to the principal party concerned.

In person, though largely built, he was spare, angular and ungainly ; his face was angular, his cheek-bones were angular, his nose was angular, his large mouth was angular, and dried-up looking ; and his prominent eyes would have been angular also, had there been anything else about them save the amiable expression of the cuttle-fish.

His visage was capable, certainly, of producing a smile ; but the effect was so ghastly, and reminded the beholder so forcibly of the hideous contortions produced by the galvanizing of a corpse, that his physiognomy was a pleasanter sight in a state of repose. The movements of the dried-up mouth and the baleful aspect presented by the wrinkling up of the fishy eyes during the fearsome operation, was rather horrifying to nervous people, and would freeze up the smile that might happen to be playing on their countenances with instantaneous suddenness.

But if his personal appearance was peculiar, it was his own, and he could not change it had he desired to do so. With his manners, though, it was a very different affair ; and he graded

them with infinite variety. Delicately shaded they were not to the virtues or merits of those with whom he came in contact, but to the amount of cash which their pockets contained.

With a wealthy client he was, oh ! so greasily nice ; so oily polite, and full of obsequious bowings and compliments, and the fearful smile convulsed his countenance like the approach of epilepsy. To one from whom he had nothing to expect or gain, he was cuttingly brief and contemptuously indifferent. But the unfortunate who ought to pay him money, and had it not wherewith to pay, came in for savage wrath and roused in full measure the natural wild-beast ferocity of his nature. Vehement were the denunciations—outrageous the insults, and bloodthirsty the threats hurled at the poor delinquent, who, if he had expected—if not mercy—at least the politeness of a gentleman—speedily found himself undeceived, and got neither the one nor the other. Not a very agreeable character, on the whole, was that of Mr. John Hatchitfess.

However, he sat in his office very comfortably, and did not trouble himself about the estimate people might put on his social qualities, so long as they did their business with his firm ; and as the morning wore on plenty of people came in and transacted business with him.

Some entered with a confident bearing, and proceeded to pay their rents, interests, instalments, or whatever it might be—received civility and a receipt, and departed, breathing the freer that they were over it, and out again in the bright air. Others anxiously, and with a deprecatory air, to ask, mayhaps, timidly, for a few days grace for some payment. Stern refusal, couched in insulting terms, was what they got, together with the pleasing promise that a paper, of a wholly different nature from a receipt, would very shortly be presented to them, commencing with the ominous words :

“ Canada, Province of Ontario. Victoria, by the Grace of

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God, &c.," and very well might the unfortunate depend that the promise would be kept before the day was out.

Has it not become high time, here let us observe in parenthesis, that the honored name of our gracious Sovereign—a name dear to every heart; a name associated with all that is good, fine and womanly; a name blended into and almost representative of the sentiments of loyalty and patriotism that animates our breasts—be removed from its present unworthy appearance on the harrassing processes of the law, which, necessary though they be, but too generally carry in their train the evils of distress, anxiety, ruin, want and misery—and with such evils that august name cannot be said to be in keeping. The fiction is not only wholly unnecessary and absurd, but is also ridiculous.

As if it were necessary for Her Gracious Majesty to send "Greeting"—Heaven save the mark!—to every dirty officer or bailiff, when authorized to pounce upon the wretched traps of some miserable delinquent. With the unhonorable precepts, uncleanly scriptures, and unholy procedures of law—the high and honorable name of "Victoria" is degraded. Placed in very bad company, in fact.

Some less august name—that of the judge, for instance, or some other officer—would surely as well answer the purpose, if a name is necessary, and would be more fitting for appearance on such unnecessary documents.

Business was brisk in Mr. Hatchitfess' office this morning, and his hands were kept pretty full in attending to it. He had numerous and well-improved opportunities of displaying the various phases of his character and disposition, from the fawning civility and obsequious bowings with which he cringed to the wealthy, down to the obstreperous bullyings with which he regaled impecunious humanity; and a very varied assortment of the *genus homo* in the course of an hour or two had passed through the office, and had their business done for them, or

themselves done for. The ordinary run, however, of the business was at length agreeably diversified by the entrance of a young lady, who in tasty summer dress and jaunty-hat, looking as fresh and cool as the morning, and as bright as its earliest sunbeams, stepped up to one of the clerk's desks, and asked for Mr. John Hatchitfess.

She was very pretty, with a bright and spirited look about her; and as she stood in the dirty, hard and sordid office, she appeared all the more charming and all the more out of keeping with the scene.

The clerk addressed jumped down from his stool, with a deferential "Good morning, Miss Seaforth. I'm sure Mr. Hatchitfess will see you at once," and she was at once bowed into that gentleman's room. He arose and bowed as she entered, and as he placed a chair for her, smiled the sweetest smile of which his countenance was capable, sufficiently grotesque and horrible, however, and seeming as though it would twist his unlucky jaw from its sockets ere the ghastly convulsion was over.

"How do you do! my dear Miss Agnes Seaforth," he said. "I am very glad to see you again. You are very late in paying your semi-annual visit to our poor office this time. First of January and first of July are your days, and now it is the twenty-first—three weeks behindhand. I generally find, too, that people who have money to receive are prompt, to the day. I am surprised to find you an exception."

"Well, Mr. Hatchitfess," was the reply; "my aunt has been so very unwell lately that I could not leave her, even for the few minutes necessary to come here. I did not need the money very particularly before, and knew it was useless to send for it."

"Ah! yes, Miss Agnes, quite useless. My instructions are to pay the money each half year to yourself, personally; and take your receipt for it—so that it is necessary that you honour us at these times with your personal visits."

"In so far as that I have to come to your office twice a year

I have but little of which to complain, Mr. Hatchitfess. My visits are probably more troublesome to yourself than they are to me," replied the young lady. "But there is one thing which I wish to mention to you, and if possible have altered. Since my mother's death, when I have had to attend here to obtain my annuity myself, it has been invariably paid me in the form of Mr. Edwin Vance's cheque, payable to myself, to my own name, so that I am compelled to present it in person at the bank for payment. Why should I have to take Mr. Vance's cheque? It is my own money, and not his, and I wish that a different and more pleasant arrangement be made."

"You cannot mean to be serious in objecting to such a very trifling matter as that, Miss Seaforth," said Mr. Hatchitfess, surprisedly. "Surely your six hundred dollars per annum is just as available through Mr. Vance's cheque as from any other source. I cannot see the force of your objection,"

"That is not the question, Mr. Hatchitfess," Miss Seaforth answered decidedly. "Were the cheques yours, or those of any other business firm, I would have nothing to say. But it is inexpressibly painful to me to have to present these cheques, of a young man like Mr. Vance, personally for payment; to answer the questions and bear the gaze of impudent bank clerks. I feel myself put in a position liable to misconstruction by reason of it, and I shall bear it no longer. Why cannot you pay me the money yourself, Mr. Hatchitfess?"

"For the very good reason, my dear young lady," he answered drily, "that I hold no funds of Mr. Edwin Vance's for the purpose."

"Why of Mr. Vance's? What have I to do with Mr. Vance? It is of my own annuity I am speaking," she replied hotly.

"Certainly, Miss Seaforth! of that I was aware. I can only repeat to you that I have no power to alter existing ar-

rangements; and can only follow the instructions we have received from Mr. Vance in the matter."

"Mr. Vance again! What has Mr. Vance or his instructions to do with the matter—I repeat again? Are not the six hundred dollars a year to which I am entitled, the income of the property on Yonge Street?—which belonged to my poor dead father?" she exclaimed with excitement.

"In a measure, it arises from that source. I see, however, that you do not understand the circumstances of the case, and I do not perceive that it is any part of my duty to explain them you. I would advise you to 'leave well alone'; take your money, and ask no more questions about it. Please to sign the receipt," he continued, placing it and a pen before her.

"Then you are going to pay me in money this time, Mr. Hatchitfess. I am so much obliged to you for saving me the annoyance of presenting the cheque," she exclaimed, as she signed the receipt, but mistaking the tenor of his words, which she had understood literally.

"Why this is a cheque of Mr. Vance's again," she continued, as she glanced at it. "You told me you would give me the money, Mr. Hatchitfess. Why have you deceived me thus?" looking for the receipt, which, however, he had already taken into his possession, and rising from her chair in excitement.

"I did not deceive you, Miss Seaforth. You deceived yourself," he replied, coldly. "I have already had the honour of telling you I could not alter the arrangements. That cheque you hold in your hand is as much money as though I counted it down dollar by dollar to you. If you will but think for a moment of what I said to you, you will perceive nothing more than our usual course. Did I not advise you," he continued, "to let what was well alone, and trouble yourself no more about the matter?"

"You did, Mr. Hatchitfess, and I ask your pardon for what I said in my anger and disappointment. You must impute it to

the want of business knowledge of a woman. But there is something else which you said to me of which I must demand an explanation. What did you mean by telling me there were circumstances connected with my annuity which I did not understand and that I had better leave well alone? These circumstances and Mr. Vance's seeming connection with my affairs I must have emphatically settled, or I shall be compelled to resort to legal advice."

"That you had much better not do, young lady," shortly answered Mr. Hatchitfess. "For your own sake, such a measure can but distress yourself and your warm friend, Mr. Vance, also. I warn you again, for your own sake, to leave matters as they are, and seek to know nothing further of matters which certainly are, or ought to be, if you would not give way to a ridiculous whim, very satisfactory to you. You are but seeking unpleasantness."

"What you say, Mr. Hatchitfess, but the more determines me. If there are circumstances connected with me or my affairs, which have been hidden from me, I feel that I have a right to know, neither do I perceive how their elucidation can cause distress to those who are not concerned in them," replied Miss Seaforth, with spirit.

"Very well! Miss Seaforth. Since you are determined to hear, you shall hear. For my own interest, as I do not choose to risk the loss of a good client like Mr. Vance, who being—as you will shortly know—a very warm personal friend of you and yours, would not be too well pleased if I allowed you to procure yourself a greater annoyance than you have now brought on yourself by the course you propose of seeking legal aid. For my own interest, I repeat, I will tell you the circumstances you find so mysterious, and shall preface the story by remarking that were the firm of John Hatchitfess & Son in the position of Edwin Vance in this matter, you would neither be in this office at this

moment or holding that cheque for three hundred dollars in your hand.

"We are honest but not charitable," exclaimed the amiable Mr. Hatchitfess, relapsing into formula, and shewing a touch of his tigerish nature towards the spirited young lady, who, in defence of her rights, had so infringed upon his precious time.

"What do you mean by that, sir?" exclaimed Miss Seaforth, as she sprang from her seat, her eyes blazing.

"Never mind! You'll hear all in a few moments now, young lady. "Pray delay me as little as possible, for I have many affairs to attend to. It was a mere business expression that I used, which almost unconsciously escaped me," he replied, apologetically, waving her back to her seat again.

"Then, permit me to say that it is a very strange and unpleasant expression, and the sooner you learn to use more judgment and discretion in the use of such the better, sir," she said, and then a little maliciously added—

"Though your honesty might possibly be disputed, I think but few would be disposed to deny the truth of the latter part of your aphorism, especially in regard to your charity towards the feelings of others."

"Very true, young lady, I am a business man, and probably know but little of sentimental things. But allow me to proceed. "Many years ago before you could remember, nay! before you were born," he continued, "your late father, during a season of commercial disaster, met with some heavy losses, and found himself in pressing need of a considerable sum of money. After vainly endeavoring to sell the property on Yonge street—to which you referred but now—he went to Mr. Vance—the father of the present young gentleman—and offered it to him at a price much under its value, being in fact the amount he actually needed for his business affairs. His friend, as he showed himself to be—instead of the sharp business man he ought to have been—declined to take the property at a sacrifice, but offered

to advance your father the money he required. To this your father, entertaining the same romantic notions about friendship and such stuff—suitable enough for women, I dare say, demurred—stating the money was needed to carry on his business; that he could not see his way clear as to its repayment, and that the property had to go at any rate. In the end, Mr. Vance purchased the property actually for what he called friendship's sake, paying the then full market value for it, when it was offered him for a great deal less, merely stipulating that the difference should be invested by your father in the purchase of an annuity on his and your mother's lives. Mark this! The annuity was on the lives of your father and mother alone. Of these facts I happen to be aware, as the annuity was purchased from our firm, and a very good bargain we made of it."

"If what you are telling me is true, Mr. Hatchitfess, how does it happen then that I have been paid the six hundred dollars a year since my mother's death?" asked Miss Seaforth, showing a little agitation.

"The few words I have to tell will explain all to you, Miss Seaforth. The purchase of the Yonge street property turned out to be a very profitable speculation for Mr. Vance. Its value in the course of a few years doubled, then trebled and quadrupled, and the sale of a small portion of it, as I know, recouped him the entire purchase money. On the other hand, your father was not successful in his business matters, and when he died left absolutely nothing behind him save the annuity on your mother's life, and the little house with its furniture, in which you now reside—no very great fortune—when, if he'd held on to his lands, he would have died a rich man. At your mother's death, two years ago, the annuity, of course, ceased. Had her life not lasted so long by two days it would have saved me three hundred dollars. It fell due just that time before she died. Think of that! 'We are very honest, but we are not charitable.' Three hundred dollars lost by just two days. We are very honest, but

it is very hard to think about that," and Mr. Hatchitfess' feelings almost overcame him at the harrowing reflection.

"Shortly after this Mr. Vance came to me and actually had the folly to propose buying an annuity on your life for your benefit, and offered me a certain sum of money for it. Of course, as you were a very young life, I had many enquires to make about health and probability of life, and to find out if you had any tendency to diseases which might make the bargain a more desirable one."

"But during our negotiations, Mr. Vance was overtaken with his last illness. Well do I remember the haste with which I was summoned to his bedside to make his will, which, like too many men of property, he had postponed until the supreme moment had almost arrived for him. So near was he to dissolution, that it was in the briefest words I prepared the documents leaving a handsome income to his widow for her life, and the remainder of his property to his son Edwin. It was not until after all was executed, that he suddenly—almost at his last gasp—remembered you, and, turning to his son, asked his promise that, so long as you lived, he would cause you to be paid the same sum as your mother's annuity amounted to, from the proceeds of the Yonge Street property. The promise was freely given, and has been faithfully kept. You see now, Miss Seaforth, that I was right when I advised you to 'leave well alone.' You see now that you have no legal right to it, though Mr. Vance really bequeathed you six hundred dollars a year, with his dying breath. While you are perfectly justified in taking the money, you will perceive the propriety of moving no further in the matter. When Mr. Vance, in tender and loyal consideration for you, caused the payments to you to be made from this office—where your mother's annuity was paid by his cheque, payable to yourself, both for your protection and to cause you to think the money justly your own,—you will per-

ceive the propriety of no longer objecting to the mode of payment ; and I trust you agree with me in this."

Agnes rose from her seat, as Mr. Hatchitfess concluded—pale, and evidently greatly agitated, though striving hard for calmness.

"What you have told me, Mr. Hatchitfess, is so strange—so utterly new and unexpected—that I can hardly believe it possible. How is it, that my mother never told me a word of this? She must have known it, were it true."

"Of that I can tell you nothing, Miss Seaforth," he replied. "Probably she did not know it. It would not be the first instance of a wife being kept in ignorance of her husband's affairs. Nevertheless, the story is true ; of that I can assure you. It is to my own interest that what I have told you should be the truth—no more, no less,—and that is the best guarantee I could give you. Mr. Vance will not be too well pleased that you have heard the story ; but he would have been still less satisfied had I deceived you when the explanation became a necessity—as you have made it to-day. If you do not believe me, you can obtain copies of the deed-of-sale, and the deed-of-annuity from the Registry Office in this city ; or you can write to Mr. Vance, whom I suppose you know well enough to consider worthy of belief."

"That I shall do, at any rate," replied Miss Seaforth. "I thank you, Mr. Hatchitfess, for having told me to-day what I ought to have been told before. I am not sorry to hear what I have heard ; but it would have been better for me to have heard it two years ago. No matter how pure the motive, deception never aids in good. I take this money to-day because I need it ;—I must have time to think of the position in which, so unexpectedly, I find myself and my poor aunt placed, and to form my plans. Otherwise, I should not take it."

"Not take the money !—not take six hundred dollars a year ! Pray why should you not take it? Not take the money, when

all you have to do is to come and get it ! I know something of human nature, and its folly ; but of all the arrant humbugs and stupid folly that ever I heard of, this—Faugh !—it is enough to sicken one !” exclaimed, with genuine indignation, that guileless son of nature, Mr. Hatchitfess, who would have taken money from the glowing hands of Apollyon himself, provided he could have gotten it to the Bank before it turned into slate-stones ; and there was not too great consideration to be paid therefore.

“ I shall take it to-day, at any rate,” said Miss Seaforth ; and with “ Good morning, Mr. Hatchitfess !” the interview closed.

The young lady departed from the office, where a throng of impatient visitors were awaiting Mr. Hatchitfess’ leisure, and walked sadly and thoughtfully up the street in the direction of her home.

She was a proud and high-spirited girl, and the story she had so newly heard was very galling to her. It was not with her—as with Mr. Hatchitfess—a matter of course, that she should come to that office twice a year, and take this money, to which she now knew she possessed no right.

Had old Mr. Vance left her this money directly by his will, instead of extorting a promise—willingly or unwillingly—from his son, that he would pay it to her, there would have been a difference ; and she felt that she would willingly have taken it, from the surplus wealth which her father’s property had given him. As the case stood—although it was morally the same thing, whether effected by a few words signed by the dying man’s hand, or his dying command—the sense of pecuniary obligation was revolting to her. She longed to be at home in the quietude of her chamber, to think over and ponder her position, which, if this story was true, she knew was a changed one for her. The first thing she would do, at any rate, would be to write to Mr. Vance, for corroboration or disapproval of Mr. Hatchitfess’ narration : and, pending his answer, she could

make up her mind as to the course left open to her, in the event of that narration being a true one, and prepare for the battle of life on her own unassisted resources—a solution which her proud heart indicated as the only solution of the position.

She had reached the corner where she expected to meet the street-car, which would convey her close to her residence, and was watching its slow progress towards her, when she was accosted by a young gentleman, who, hurriedly advancing in the direction from which she had come, had stopped suddenly in his career on perceiving her; and taking off his very loud-looking and extremely glossy beaver with elaborate profundity, laboured grace, and extensiveness of sweep—aired his scented and anointed locks in the calorific street breeze—and performed a deep and conceitedly affected bow, as he addressed her.

Georgeously arrayed in the very height and agonizing extremity of the fashion; be-ringed, be-chained, be-studded, be-pinned, and diamond-locked—with the utmost possible profusion of expensive and massive jewelry—booted, gloved, tied, collared and cuffed, with painfully demonstrative spruciness, this magnificent and interesting individual actually sparkled in the sun, as he perpetuated his polite gyrations, amid the rattling of chains, the scintillation of gems, the flashing of gold and the creasings of shining clothes.

But his personal appearance did not consort with the beaming glory of his garments; for except that he was younger and not so wrinkled, Albert-Maximus-Montague Hatchitfess, Esquire, was the very counterpart of his worthy and amiable progenitor. He possessed the same angular and long features—the same cheese-paring expression—the same fishily-lurid eye—even the same harrowing smile. The son—it were almost needless to remark—resembled in disposition, as in feature, almost to the last trait, his father; save that one liked to spend the money that the other liked to make. One

led an evil, dissipated, idly-bad life, while the other led a hard, avaricious and grasping one.

The father's one human weakness—as he would probably in his own eyes view it—was his love for his son, whom he indulged, allowed to have his own way, and to give free vent to his idle and depraved tastes, when he had better have been kept in check and restrained by persistent occupation.

To leave him the wealthiest man in Toronto was the father's great ambition, but his son was unfitting himself for that end faster than his father was accomplishing it.

“Good morning !—Miss Agnes”—he said, “delighted to meet you so very unexpectedly ; I'm sure. Such a lovely morning—almost as lovely as yourself ; “the loveliest flower of Toronto.”

“When you wish to address me, Sir, please to do so properly. It is a fine morning, Mr. Hatchitfess, pray do not let me detain you from your business,” was replied coldly.

“Oh ! no hurry at all ; only too delighted if I can be of service to the ladies. Been to the office, I suppose, this morning ?—Miss Seaforth. You look very gloomy over it too. Vance has not thought better of it, and cut off the supplies ; has he ? Or forgotten to send a cheque ; Eh ? Not much hope from the Governor in that case. If you'll walk back to the office with me I'll use my influence for you. No one can work on the old boy's feelings as I can.”

“Mr. Hatchitfess, if you do not at once free me from your impertinence, and attend to your own concerns, I will call on the passers-by—or the police for protection,” said Agnes, indignantly, as she walked on and left him.

But he was at her side again immediately.

“I'm sure I did not mean to offend you, Miss Seaforth, I only thought you looked sad, and wanted cheering up with a joke. Were you looking for the car ? Now if you would wait a moment—I left my turn-out standing up the street a little

way, while I ran into the Governor's place for a minute— I'll take you for a drive, behind a pair of spankers that you ain't accustomed to every day, and we'll have some nice talk, before I leave you at home. Come now—will you? Miss Seaforth."

"I prefer the street car, and I decline your escort. It is not the first time I have told you so, and I should think that any person possessing the faintest spark of a gentlemanly spirit, would have taken the hint, which I now convert into plain speaking. Your attentions and your company are disagreeable to me, and I will no longer be persecuted by you. Good morning, Mr. Hatchitfess."

Turning abruptly she walked back to the corner, where the street-car had just driven up, and entered it.

Looking after her, his eyes glaring, and his mouth distorted with rage. "Oh! very well, Miss Agness Seaforth, but it's not the last of it, as you'll find to your cost. You're very high and mighty with the beggarly six hundred dollars a year that Vance pays you. I'll pay you for this. Take care I don't make it hot for you, my young lady," he muttered savagely between his teeth, and with a scowl he went on his way.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARCADIAN LOVERS TRULY.

"Well! Ethel, I think you might have told me the news yourself, and before this too, when I have heard it from another person," said Emily Dearborn, as the two girls putting on their sun-hats, stepped into the garden in search of the other young people.

"What news?—Emily. I'm sure I've heard nothing new or strange this morning."

"Not this morning perhaps; for I don't suppose you find

the tender little love-scene in the conservatory, at which I surprised you and Mr. Vance erewhile, anything new by this time ; but I referred to your engagement with that gentleman, Ethel, which you have kept to yourself so shyly," returned Emily.

" Oh ! that's it, is it ? Well ! I did not think it would be of interest to any but ourselves. But who told you of it ?—Emily."

" Mrs. Mordaunt told Ada and me half an hour ago,"—was the reply. " You are wrong if you think it is not of interest to any but you two lovers. If I am not very much mistaken, the gentleman who made his appearance among us this morning, is so much interested that he will be dreadfully disappointed when he hears of it. I feel very certain the main object of his visit here was to make you a proposal."

" To make me a proposal—Mr. Wolverton ? you mean—not very likely, Emily. Why I have'nt spoken a dozen words to the man in my life, or he to me. It's much more probable that he would propose to you ; judging from all I have heard ;" replied Ethel with a laugh.

" That might be—Ethel—were I an heiress like yourself, or were my father as wealthy a man as yours. But, Sidney wants money so much ; I know, that he is quite ready to throw love and all other considerations over-board to get it, even if he had to take a wife whom he did not want with it. I feel quite certain that he came here for the purpose of honouring you by a proposal for your hand and your dollars," said Emily, who was determined to punish her recreant lover.

" Then he is a very contemptible person, and I wonder that Edwin is such a friend of his," returned Ethel indignantly. " You will be much better without his love, Emily. But I cannot conceive it possible this which you tell me. In the first place the man is almost an utter stranger to us here, and,

besides, I have heard Edwin say that he was coming here on business with him."

"Some trifle as an excuse for his visit, probably. But you can rest assured, that he will ask you, before the week is out too, and this is Thursday, unless he is told of your engagement ;" said Emily laughing.

"Well ! I hope some one will tell him then. I do not feel convinced that what you say may not be an error on your part, but were he to confirm it—by daring to hint at such a thing, even ; he would speedily repent it, by as unceremonious a dismissal as ever such a contemptible wretch received," replied Ethel with warmth.

"Well ! it would serve him right," said Emily laughing. "I don't think you need fear it though. Ada will soon blurt your engagement out. You might do worse though than marry Sidney Wolverton, who to my mind, is a far finer fellow than your rather yielding and confiding Edwin Vance, with a little more life about him," continued she, giving Ethel a hit for herself safely enough—as they came up with Ada and Reginald—knowing that she would not reply before others.

Ada was sitting—croquet mallet in hand—very comfortably in one arm of a rustic bench, with Reginald facing her at the other, engaged in an apparently very earnest colloquy. Edwin Vance and Mr. Wolverton a little in advance were strolling along a shady path, the latter enjoying a cigar and neither appearing very much interested with each other.

Ada, on perceiving the approach of the two young ladies, jumped up, and unceremoniously closed her conversation with Reginald, by running forward to meet them.

"Oh ! Ethel," she said. "I've been dying to see you for the last half hour. I unfortunately told that tiresome Reggie that I had some news and, when his curiosity was excited, I remembered I had not got leave to tell it. He has been teasing my life out ever since to find out what it is, and I would

not tell him. I suppose I may though, as he is your brother, and does not know it yet. It was about your engagement. "Oh! Ethel, I was so glad to hear it, and I know you'll be happy, he is such a nice fellow, so quiet and gentlemanly, and not like that hateful Mr. Wolverton, who stared at me so rudely when he passed just now, although he is Emily's lover, and he knows I hate him."

"But here's Mr. Vance coming," continued she, "Shall I leave you alone with him, Ethel?"

"Oh! No. You need not, Ada," replied Ethel laughing.

"One does not want one's lover all the time, even though we are engaged. You can tell Reggie, if you like, though he will tease me awfully, I suppose. But you want some croquet; don't you? Ada. It looks like it with that mallet in your hand. Well! we had better have a game. We have but little else to amuse ourselves. Where is Emily off to?"

"Oh! she's off for a talk with her sweetheart; I suppose," answered Ada scornfully. "We don't want either of them. There are four of us here. Come on! Reggie. You'll play Mr. Vance; won't you? Ethel's going to play; you know?"

"I suppose I must, Ada, for your sake. Though it is a little early in the day for croquet is it not?" said Edwin. "Come along then! let us get to work at once."

Emily, when Ada had run up to meet them coming, had moved on to where Reginald had been left sitting alone, and, as he rose to allow her to seat herself, as he too willingly supposed, she said,

"I cannot stay with you just now, Reggie, as I wish to speak with Mr. Wolverton there. I won't be long though. Did you find that out yet; of which we were speaking yesterday? You've forgotten it, I suppose, as usual."

"Well! It is too bad; I declare. But I have forgotten it again. Look here! Emily, I'll find it out from mother as

soon as we go back to the house, as you're so anxious to know."

"You need not trouble yourself now, Reggie, for I have found it out without your help. It is true what I told you. Your sister and Mr. Vance are engaged to be married. Your mother told me this morning," answered Emily.

"Is that so," said Reginaid drawlingly; "Well! they'll be a quiet enough couple; at any rate. They kept it pretty well to themselves, though. But, I say, Emily, you know what I told you yesterday when we were talking about it. One has come off, and so will the other. Don't let that Wolverton make love to you; or there will be a row in the camp." "I'll watch you both," continued he as Emily walked over to join Mr. Wolverton.

"Well! Sidney, you look as if solitude would suit you this morning. Your appearance is anything but bright and cheerful. Have you found things on your arrival not altogether as you could wish them, or what is the matter?" said Emily as she overtook him on his slow stroll alone.

Mr. Sidney Wolverton was not feeling too well on this morning. The dissipation and late drive of the preceding night had had the effect as Miss Dearborn had said of leaving him anything but bright and cheerful. His head ached, and that with the disagreeable thoughts and plans that occupied him, gave him a more gloomy and saturnine air than usual. For all that his brain was busily occupied. He had been trying since he arose to discover if the hint given him by Barney on their drive, concerning Ethel Mordaunt and Mr. Vance was correct, or the mere gossip of a servant.

He had walked and talked with Edwin for an hour and by hints, inuendoes and enquiries, had striven to obtain a glimpse into the state of affairs; but, having heard or discovered nothing to confirm or disprove the matter, he had begun to think that there was not anything between them, and a revival

of his idea of Ethel Mordaunt which he had been inclined to give up as hopeless, had taken form again in his plans.

He was not as pleased as he should have been when so charming a young lady as Emily Dearborn appeared beside him, nor were the words with which she addressed him more pleasing either. He did not wish, under the circumstances, a renewal of their intimacy, and he did wish, as his time was brief, to be alone, to arrange the order of his campaign.

"I am a little fatigued and out of sorts to-day, after my late drive last night, and I fear you will not find me amusing company, Emily, for the present at any rate. Where is Vance and the rest of them? Don't let me detain you, if you are in search of them."

"Oh! that is it, is it?" replied Emily laughing, and looking amusedly up at him. "But you need not fear. My presence with you can no more injure your cause than it can advance it; for it is a lost cause. You may as well continue your stroll with me, for my dangerous companionship cannot compromise you, and I have interesting news for you."

"I cannot even conjecture what you mean: my dear Emily, by your 'lost cause,' and I doubt the interest of news current in this dull place," replied Sidney, as carelessly as he could, but evidently pricking up his ears.

"Oh! you are not so innocent as you would have it appear as to my meaning, Mr. Sidney Wolverton;" retorted Emily.

"And I happen to know that you have been prying about and striving all the morning for the bit of news that I am generous enough to come and give to you to save you from ridicule."

"Pray be more explicit. I am quite at a loss to understand your rather mysterious expressions. I am unaware that I was going to render myself an object of ridicule, and feel anxious to know how I was to do it," quietly replied Sydney, though probably he was feeling uneasy.

"Well! I will both explain the mystery, which, however, is

no mystery to you, and relieve your very great curiosity by simply telling you, that which I came to tell you, Ethel Mordaunt is engaged to be married to Edwin Vance. Is it not a great pity, Sidney, that you should have had all the trouble and annoyance of a visit to a dull place, and the perfecting of a nice little scheme to find that your main object is defeated, and that you will not depart strengthened by an engagement or probable engagement to an heiress. It is very mortifying, is it not?" said the cool Emily, stooping to gather a rosebud.

"You are certainly very agreeable this morning, my dear Emily," replied Sidney. "Permit me to tell you that I half expected to hear of this engagement on my arrival."

"Permit me to tell you, my dear Sidney, that you came here to propose for Ethel Mordaunt, and Ethel Mordaunt's money. That was your primary object, and this engagement is a great disappointment to you, or at least to your pocket. You may as well admit it at once."

"It is my opinion, Emily, that you do not like this engagement any more than I do," returned he, "and that you are just a little bit jealous about it. I admit all you require; to please you. So you can admit also."

"Oh! with pleasure. I frankly confess that I am as much forestalled as you are. I fully intended to have married Edwin Vance myself if I could. Not that I like the man. He is not my style. But then he is wealthy. Had you been—as you ought with your opportunities to have been—a wealthy man, I should probably have married you, as you know. The best thing that could have happened to you. I would have wasted a small portion of your wealth on my personal adornment and in making a show; but I would certainly have prevented you from wasting the greater portion in your absurd speculations and your expensive vices. I would have made a man of you."

"I believe you would, Emily, I believe you would, and perhaps a better man than I am now. But you are not such a very

unsophisticated creature yourself. It is not yet too late to try." he said, looking interestedly at the pretty face near him.

"I don't know about that. From what I can understand I fear you are pretty hard run. You have plenty of property, but you are in debt, and need money pressingly," she replied, as coolly as possible to his rather odd speech.

"I may as well tell you," she continued, "that having an idea that your subsidiary object is an attack on Vance's purse to tide over your difficulties, you may as well prepare yourself, if not for defeat in that also, but for greater difficulty than you at present imagine. I do not know what your plans may be, but I warn you that you will have to be careful in the matter. You will have to look for and assail him on a weak point—at a weak moment—when he is not himself, if you desire success. I have heard enough to know that he has been warned against you, in so far as to have no money dealings with you, and I believe also that he does not intend to have any such."

"I have no farther intentions with regard to him than to induce him to join me in the Hoptown concern, and advance some capital. If that were managed, I should be on my feet again. To effect it was a principal part of my business here."

"Well then! in my opinion you will not effect it. You can but try though, and his refusal will pain him so much more than it will you, that his heart will in all probability be more open to a subsequent attack in some other form. Make as little delay as possible, as your visit will not be so pleasant to you as to make you desire its prolongation. Keep good friends with Vance at any rate. It is very necessary. You and I may as well be friends also. We can help each other. And now I will leave you to your meditations. *Au revoir*, Sidney."

"For the present, Emily. Yes! we'll be friends at any rate, and oh! I wish that you and I Emily, were better than we are, and a pair of innocent young lovers," he said, looking tenderly in the charming face and pressing her hand.

"Not at present," she replied, laughing. "It depends on yourself though," and Emily walked away to rejoin the croqueters.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST DISAGREEMENT.

That a pair of lovers, in the first bright halcyon days of their engagement ; very happy in each other's society ; very much in love with one another ; very anxious to show their affection in all possible demonstrativeness, and all unselfish and tender, would be very likely to agree with each other in all entirety on every possible subject that could be raised between them is highly probable ; though differing in a marked degree from the later and duller days.

The most tenaciously held opinions ; the most obstinately hugged theories ; the best loved dogmas or panaceas for the ills of the world ; all the pet monsters of the imagination and the brain, which the owners regard with joyful and admiring eyes as their products of all beauty and perfection, would probably at once give way at the first dicta of the loved one during the flow of these golden hours, and it would augur badly for them and their future happiness if, in the budding spring time of their love, such tender agreement one with the other should not exist. Yet it is possible for instances to occur even during those bright periods of human existence, in which the principles of those to whom principle is all in all, to whom the right, as they conceive and feel it, is plain duty, might be involved ; that cases might arise in which both parties, feeling themselves to be in their views the same as being right, might conscientiously differ on some such question, and it could not properly be maintained that either could give way in such event.

That such an unfortunate question should not arise would be

their best fortune, for the dim little cloud that such a difference would show on their clear and spotless horizon, minute, trifling and unimportant as it might appear, remains there, a hurricane spot, to swell and augment, until its overcasting masses overshadow the darkened sky of their lives.

For such instances to occur is possible enough, but in general the blissful opening days of an engagement are too entirely devoted to tender rhapsodies, sweet inconsequential nothings of imbecile yet rapturous converse and delightful egotisms and truisms, for any really serious question to arise where discussion might create difference. And very happy it is that the rhapsodical nonsense which permeate the brains of declared lovers from the moment of declaration precludes the danger of such. Tremendously important in their own eyes are their ecstatic imbecilities, while absurdly ridiculous in the eyes of every one else. An original idea, profound reflection or thoughtful remark from people during the first week of their engagement are remarkably scarce articles. It is all sugar-and-water, custard, cream and candy and such like sweetmeats.

Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt were very happy in those new, bright days of their love. The delicious little *tetes-a-tete* that opportunity gave them, if not so numerous as they could wish, were all the more delightful when they did occur, and when they did not, they were happy in being near to each other, in speaking to each other, in looking at each other, and in loving each other.

They were very much in love with each other, and many and ingenious were Edwin's little schemes to get his Ethel to himself for a few delightful moments.

It was with dismay he looked forward to the new week approaching, which for a time would separate them, as he was obliged for a few days to return to Toronto, and here was Thursday of the old week. Ethel herself was not at all averse to enjoying the pleasure of her lover's society, and she had, with

great meekness, obeyed his request, during the afternoon, to put on her hat and go for a walk with him, the more willingly since, in addition to the delights of lover's converse, she had something to tell him.

She had not forgotten the morning's conversation with Emily Dearborn in reference to Mr. Wolverton, or Ada's single but confirmatory remark, and had gone to her never failing source of comfort and counsel, her mother, to repeat what had passed. To her surprise she received both confirmation and warning from that quarter, and in addition her uncle, who had entered the room during their conference and had been taken into their confidence, not only strongly agreed in Mrs. Mordaunt's views, but related to her what he knew of Mr. Wolverton's character and plans with all that had passed between them and between Edwin Vance and himself. Sidney was therefore at a great discount in her estimation. She had made up her mind, at the first opportunity, to warn her affianced, without, however, going into particulars, that his friend was not the friend that he ought to be, or was looked upon to be.

Therefore, after the usual quantum of sugared and honied raptures of a lover's *tete-a-tete* had passed with distinguished brilliance and interest to themselves, but probably to no other living creature, she broached the subject to Edwin, hesitatingly and timidly, as she knew that with him friendship was a reality, not a name, and that it would be a difficult thing to convince him of his friend's unworthiness.

"Edwin! there is a subject on which I wish to speak to you, on which I feel that I ought to speak, yet do not know that I have the right to do. But I think that you ought to know that which I wish to tell you, and trust you will not feel it as an interference on my part."

"My darling Ethel," he replied, "if you have not the right to speak to me on any subject you choose, I would like to know who could have. As if it would be an interference? You need

not have said that to me. I am only too happy to hear every word that falls from your dear lips. You need not have said that, Ethel!

"I do not know about that, Edwin. Perhaps you may think differently when you have heard what I have to say," answered Ethel, looking lovingly at him for his words. "It is he whom you consider your friend, Mr. Wolverton, of whom I would speak."

"Of Sidney! Why! what in the world has he done to you, Ethel?" he replied, laughing.

"It is what I have been told by others—Emily and Ada Dearborn, my mother and my uncle, that I wish to tell you. If you do not know what is said of your friend, it is only right that you should be informed, while you can judge for yourself as to its probability," answered Ethel.

Now that she had commenced her subject, Ethel began to find it more difficult than she had anticipated. The accumulated charges which had seemed so heinous to her as they were freshly brought against him, now that they had to be formulated and marshalled before his friend, seemed to vanish into airy nothingness, unsupported by proof, and Ethel almost wished she had left the matter alone.

"Your uncle," said Edwin, "two days ago spoke to me about Wolverton's visit here; warning me in a general way to have no business transactions with him, and telling me that in his opinion he was not straightforward. This may be so, though Mr. Horton's proof was not of the strongest kind, and I told him then that I had no intention of engaging in any of Sidney's speculations. If then what you have to tell me is of the same kind, Ethel, you see I know it already."

"I will simply tell you what I can of that which for the first time I heard to-day concerning Mr. Wolverton. This morning Emily Dearborn told me something of him and of the object of his visit here, which I could not believe and which seemed very improbable, but its truth was so earnestly asseverated by her, that

I thought it better to relate the matter to my mother. To my surprise, the probability of the story was confirmed by her, with some other particulars, no more to Mr. Wolverton's credit than the other. These had only come to her ears from another source, trustworthy sufficiently, my mother considered, though perhaps liable to mistake. I was advised for that reason to think no more of the matter, but my mother added that she did not consider Mr. Wolverton was a person fit to be your friend. My uncle came in and was told what had occurred, and he told us that he had not a good opinion of Mr. Wolverton's character, and that it was but too likely that all was true which was averred against him.

"It made me feel so alarmed for you, that you were on such friendly terms with one who was unworthy, that it has prompted me to speak to you. I know I ought not to have done so as I can give you no proofs. All I can say is, that under no circumstances could I ever look upon Mr. Wolverton as a friend, and I ask you, dear Edwin, not to place too much reliance on him in any way."

"To tell the truth, Ethel, when I heard that Sidney was coming to Lake Mordaunt, I was not too well pleased, for the good reason, I must honestly confess, that he might be as much in love with my Ethel as I am, and he is a handsome fellow. I did not then know that I was to be as happy as I am to-day, assured of her dear love. I certainly am not afraid of him now. In fact, I can afford to feel very good-natured towards him. Sidney has his peccadilloes, I suppose, though I have never seen anything wrong in him, and I have known him now for years. Don't you think, Ethel, that you are all a little hard on him?" replied Edwin, with a smile, and a pressure on her hand.

"Certainly not my mother or Mr. Horton. I never knew them to be unjust, whatever I may be myself or you deem me, and I do not think you should have said so, Edwin," answered Ethel quickly, and with warmth. "Emily, I admit, showed a

little rancour in speaking of him, but he has been, or is, her lover, and he has not, it appears, been a very true one to her. But, however, I see that the subject is not a very pleasing one to you, and I will say no more, especially as Mr. Wolverton is at present a guest in my father's house. It was for your sake alone that I spoke at all, and I am now sorry that I did so."

"My darling Ethel!" replied Edwin, anxiously, "I hope that I have not offended you by anything that I have said. Such was very far from my intention. Forgive me, if I have done so. Sidney Wolverton is a friend, nothing more, and I shall most certainly regard with all attention that which you have told me. Tell me, Ethel, that you are not offended."

"Oh! not at all! only I can see that you do not like the subject," said Ethel.

But she did not like the way in which he had received her warning, so kindly meant, and a first slight coolness, almost imperceptible, yet still existing, the first little difference of opinion had arisen between them.

Their walk home was not so pleasant as it had been, though both strove to throw off the incubus, and it was some hours before they were the same Ethel and Edwin they had been to each other.

The conversation, short as it was, while it had the effect of grieving Ethel, her lover not having taken it in the good part she thought that, under the circumstances, he ought to have done—had equally grieved him, and he thought over it with a touch of bitterness towards Sidney that he had contrived to bring down on himself so much dislike. He scanned over such details of his friend's life with which he was acquainted, to discover if from thence any grounds could be deduced to justify the verdict of so many at Lake Mordaunt against him. Not, however, being of a suspicious nature, and Wolverton having been quite able to present only those points of character to his friend's view which he thought would be acceptable, the process was not very

successful, and he could bring very little to remembrance of discredit against him. Yet it was strange, he considered, that people like Mr. Horton, Mrs. Mordaunt and Ethel should, in so short a time, have found so much, and so very evidently regarded his friend with dislike.

The result of the conversation was that Edwin did not feel so well disposed towards his friend, and though, without condemning him, he resolved to watch for himself, his conduct, and learn the source of so much, to him, inexplicable ill-will.

He noticed during the day that Emily Dearborn and Sidney seemed very friendly—in fact, rather lover-like towards each other—and this was to him the more unaccountable since his Ethel had told him that Sidney had not been “true lover” to her, and he also noticed that Ada either took no notice of him or was markedly cold; that Reginald did not either look upon him with favourable eyes; that Mrs. Mordaunt, though polite, was not gracious towards him; while Mr. Horton talked and laughed with him in all ease and absence of restraint. He, however, found himself much more pleasantly occupied in devoting himself to his fair Ethel, and in endeavouring with a lover's assiduity to remove the unpleasing impression of their afternoon's conversation. But the day had not been a pleasant day for Ethel, and though she was happy enough, while Edwin strove so hard to be agreeable to her, yet the little clouds could not at once be entirely removed from her sky. A certain restraint was visible over all the party, with the exception of Mr. Mordaunt and Mr. Horton, the former of whom, knowing nothing of the by-play, was quite at ease, and the latter, had there been a great deal more of it going forward, would not have lost his.

Edwin was, however, the happiest of the party, for he found the society of his Ethel, despite all little “disagreements,” so very delightful, that when during the evening, Sidney came up to him and asked him if “he would not like a walk and a cigar, as he had something to say to him,” he assented with visible reluc-

tance, and rose to follow his friend out with a look that very plainly expressed that he would rather have remained by Ethel's side. Sidney had not been opportune in his choice of a moment for his communication, if he expected that any success to attend it lay in the present good nature of his friend, Edwin Vance.

CHAPTER XV.

ASKING FOR WHAT HE MEANT TO TAKE.

"Well! what can I do for you, Sidney?" said Edwin, as they left the house and sauntered down the leafy-arched avenue of the carriage-way together.

The soft evening breezes murmured through the foliage above them with quiet and slumberous rustling. The golden wealth of stars of the blue Canadian skies shone down on them with peaceful stillness through the branchy openings of the trees. Long gleams of silver moonlight pierced through the leaves and lay like waving ribands on the soft sward. The cool air of the darkening evening, laden with the perfume of flower and of field, moved with freshening touch around them, and brushed past their faces like the cool hand of woman over the fever-heated brow of the invalid.

The low chirp of some bird, awakened in its umbrageous resting place by their tread on the gravel, harmonized with the sleepy rustle of the leaves, and these, the sole sounds of the night, spoke of a world gone to rest. Nature in its night beauty—wrapped in the soft silvery mantle of the moonlight; watched by the silent stars; resting in the shadowy sleep—lay spread out before them in calm and quiet peace, inviting man, with influence sweet and all delighting, to cast aside the cares and passions of the day, with the glare and the turmoil, and take to their hearts and soften their thoughts with the still loveliness, the

beautiful quietude and majestic silence of the velvet-robed Night.

But to these two men the lesson so conveyed was read, if read by both, with very different view.

To the one, his thoughts full of the sweet object of his love, whose side he had so unwillingly quitted, the romance and the beauty before him seemed the fitting scene, the delighting moment for the whispering of a love tale, the tender out-pouring of sweet phrases into the willing ear that would find them sweet, and he thought—longingly thought—how much more to him would the romance and the beauty be, were it her step that sounded beside him and for her that the charming softness of the night inspired him. The step that did sound beside him might be that of a friend, it is true, yet, nevertheless, he heartily wished the absence of his friend, and his replacement by the dearer presence of his Ethel, so much more agreeable to romance, silver moonlight and soft evening shades. The discordance of the male presence, redolent of cigar smoke and the world, amid the perfumed air, and in that witching hour, fretted him. It was sulkily enough that he accepted the situation and walked on with his friend.

To the other it was the fittest opportunity for the opening to his plans, for rehearsing a story that was necessary for him should be told, the telling of which was not too pleasant for him, and which was easier for him to tell beneath the favouring shadows of night, than in the open light of the day.

"Well! what can I do for you, Sidney?" Edwin had said. Now, though this seemed, on its face, to be the opening, the very proffer of service to Sidney, which he wished to obtain and very ardently desired, yet he did not appear with any eagerness to seize on the opportunity thus presented to him. He paused, hesitated—the hurried puffing of his cigar and the nervous clenching of his hands showing that he was in a state of incertitude and perhaps of mental excitement at the prospect of the

task before him ; which, from a previous experience, he could but anticipate would be an unpleasing one.

Sidney Wolverton had contrived to get his affairs into such a state that only the immediate aid of a very considerable sum of money could extricate him from the embarrassment and prevent him from going to the wall. The need was urgent, immediate, and had to be met at once. Within a week he must have command of the money, or he might leave the country. Nay ! would have to do so, for some transactions would then come to light, unless covered up by settlement, that would carry disgrace with them, at the least.

Could he have gone back from Lake Mordaunt the accepted suitor of an heiress, he would have staved off the evil day, and all would have gone on well again, but that was now out of the question altogether, while all other resources for aid were so far dried up that he had to look to Edwin Vance for extrication, and to him alone. Nothing else was left him. Yet he paused, and hesitated, even when the ice had been broken, and the, to him, momentous conversation, had been commenced. The sentiment of self-respect inherent, in some measure at least in every man, held a deterrent effect against the renewal of a subject that had once before been discussed between them, and had been closed with an unfavourable result to him. Perhaps there lingered in his breast some little spark of conscientiousness, some little ember, still warm amid the dust and ashes which a wasted life had left of the generous fire of good intent and of right, which, in common with most men, had been nurtured in his heart during his better, earlier days, whose momentary sparkle told him that it was not right to lead him, whom he called his friend, into a risk which might as easily result in the sacrifice of that friend's fortune as it had done with his own. It may have been so. Perhaps within the seething depths of his mind lay the thought that it were better, manlier and nobler for him to suffer his shipwreck alone, to buffet manfully against the waves

which threatened to overwhelm him, and if he should rise over them, to begin his life anew, a better man, purified by trial and better prepared to bend his energies on the right road of existence.

His thoughts during the three or four moments of his hesitation ranged backwards over the whole varied range of the years he had passed with regretful glance at their misspent hours, and the impulse was strong within him to draw back from that on which he had resolved, and face his misfortunes boldly, instead of seeking to draw another into the vortex. But, when suddenly the remembrance of the coming week, with its dangers, flashed back on his mind, his good resolves fled before the prospect and his hesitation vanished. No longer was he dubious, uncertain or unreserved. He was himself again. The bold, coolly-resolved, skillful of address, and calculating Sidney Wolverton.

"As I wrote you Vance, the business on which I came to this place was principally to see you on a matter of importance to myself. As it refers to a subject concerning which we have already held some conversation, and on which I wish you to reconsider your then expressed determination; may I ask you to listen patiently to what I have to say," answered he, to the remark that heads the present chapter.

"All right, Sidney! go ahead with your story. Though if it concerns the Hopetown business, I may as well tell you now that my position and my ideas of the matter are the same as when we spoke of the matter before, and I fear it will be useless to discuss that affair," replied Edwin, his irritation giving way under the apparently frank manner of his friend, and his usual good nature struggling for its ascendancy.

"Well! I will tell my story in as few words as possible, and leave the affair to your judgment," said Sidney, who was bright enough to perceive the improvement in his friend's manner, and ready enough to take advantage of it. "You may remember,

when I asked you to join me in a partnership, advancing some capital, it was for the purpose of extending the works and increasing the business of the Hopetown factories. These extensions I have since myself completed and with satisfactory results, except that my available capital is all absorbed, and I find it still necessary to take another into the business who can provide the means requisite to its proper conduct. In addition, I have made, wisely or unwisely, as the event may prove, the purchase of a large and valuable tract of land in the same county, and no great distance from Hopetown. On the purchase money of this property I have paid a considerable part—nearly one-half; but the balance is falling due, and, unaided, I cannot meet it. Under this contingency I should not only have to bear the heavy loss of the money paid up on it—neglect to meet the balance, by the terms of purchase, carrying forfeiture—but would suffer a heavy blow to my credit, which the great expense of the additions to the Hopetown works has already somewhat strained.

“Now, I will give you one-half interest in the whole property, mills, lands, stock on hand and all, if you will put forty thousand dollars into the business. Its value may be very fairly estimated at five times the amount, so that really by assisting a friend out of a difficulty, you will do so much to your own advantage. The sum I have named will clear off every liability to the last dollar, and leave a sufficient amount available as working capital. The lands have so increased in value since my purchase of them that that part of the property will more than doubly recoup you the money you are asked to put into the affair. It is the increase that is taking place in the value that makes the former owner so merciless as to payment of the balance due him. ‘Pay on the day, or you forfeit,’ is his ultimatum. They can be rendered immediately productive on the rest of the purchase money being paid. We can sell a part, sell the cut of timber, or make the timber ourselves, and in either case large profits will result. The factories at Hopetown are also in a prosperous condition,

and would be more so, were I not so hampered for want of capital, as you can easily imagine. It would be useless for me to enter into details in this conversation, but if you entertain the idea of accepting my offer, I will prove to you the truth of my asseverations. The offer I make you is a most liberal one, such as I would only offer to a friend, and will, if you accept it, in a few years, treble your fortune. At the same time, by assisting me, make mine also."

"That may be all very true, Sidney," replied Edwin. "But the fact remains that I do not possess in ready money the amount you name, or anything like it. My property, as you know, wholly consists of real estate in the City of Toronto, and there are many reasons—cogent reasons—to prevent me from disposing of even a part of it, were I inclined to do so. From the offer you have made me, and the facts you state as to your property, I should imagine you would have no difficulty in finding some person able and willing to join you, who could assist you in the business, which I cannot do."

"Yes! doubtless there are people who would be ready enough to go in, but so far as I have made enquiry, they are not such as I would care to associate with me. Rather I would prefer to meet my losses. Besides, I must have command of the money to complete the purchase of the lands next week, or the certainty of it, and what time is left to me to look out for a suitable person to join me in a partnership?"

"If you will not do it, Vance, I will have to leave affairs to take their course. Neither would there be the immediate necessity for the disposal of any of your city property. Your name alone would command the money. Come! make up your mind to that which will be so much to the advantage of both. I engage to convince you of the truth of my statements as to the condition of the Hopetown property, before I ask your name on paper. It is a good thing that I offer you. An opportunity not occurring every day of the year. An opportunity of enriching

yourself in a legitimate business, without interference with your profession, and at the same time materially assisting me in a strait."

Sidney Wolverton had not laid his position before his friend in the way that he would have laid it before a man of business. In that case he would have found it an eminently useless proceeding to appeal to the feelings which he rightly supposed could be engaged when addressing a friend on the subject. Under the stern examination of figures and of facts, which would have been required of him, he could not have stated his case in such a rose-tinted aspect as he did to Edwin, and so far removed from the real condition of things. His knowledge of the world and of his friend had served him in good stead, for Edwin was evidently wavering in his decision, and he paused in thought before referring to his friend's remarks.

"I would do a great deal to serve you, Sidney, as you well know," he commenced. "To assist you in your difficulty, though entering on a pursuit of which I am wholly ignorant is very repugnant to me, and the hope of gain you picture would not be my object, yet if ——"

Suddenly the conversation upon this very subject which he had held with Mr. Horton, and, that very day with Ethel, flashed upon him, with the remembrance of the promise made to the former, and he stopped barely in time to save himself from committal to Sidney's views.

"However much, for your sake, I might wish to help you in this affair, Sidney, I unfortunately cannot enter into the arrangement proposed, for I am under a promise not to undertake any speculations whatever for the present. There are, however, a few days left to you, and I will think over the matter before you leave. What little ready money I have at command, which, however, does not exceed a couple of thousands, is at your service, if it will help you. I am sorry that I cannot do more at this present, and meanwhile I will endeavour to find some way of extri-

cation for you. Let me know the name of the creditor from whom you purchased these lands, and I can probably get you time, at any rate, in which to get your affairs into a better state."

To do this latter would not, however, by any means have suited Mr. Wolverton, for the very good reason that the lands had already been paid for in paper that would not bear scrutiny or the light of day, and which if not met when due, would consign him to flight, or to durance if he remained. He therefore replied coldly and haughtily, wishing the other to feel as if he had committed an injury against him.

"Thank you! no! Vance; since you will not do that which is easy enough to you, and would be salvation to me, I must take my chance alone. You are right enough, I suppose, to keep your promise sacred. As to the two thousand dollars you so kindly offer me, I cannot take it, as it would not be of service in clearing me and would probably be lost. Perhaps you are right in keeping yourself clear from connection with such an unlucky dog as I seem to be."

Then, walking on rapidly a few steps, he turned and continued:—

"Forgive me, Vance, for any hasty expression I have used. I feel vexed and disappointed, and almost at my wit's end. We will say nothing further of this. Let us go back to them in the drawing-room."

"I am always your friend, Sidney Wolverton, and would help you if I could. Yes! do anything to help you," said Edwin, feeling as if he had in reality outraged his friendship and acted as a traitor to his friend. His generous, confiding and unsuspecting nature had been moved thoroughly towards him who had asked his friendly aid, and whom he had refused.

Sidney felt almost with triumph that, if he had not gained his point, he had at any rate achieved a victory, and as they walked

back together, his brain was busy with new schemes by whose aid he trusted to reap its fruits.

Nothing further passed between them, and they re-entered the drawing-room where they left the party, Edwin flying back to the side of his Ethel.

In her sweet society to seek renewed solace to the feelings so perturbed in his interview with his friend, and Sidney joined in the general conversation around him as unmoved, and apparently as joyous, as if all his prospects lay before him bright and unclouded as a summer morn.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WAY TO DO IT.

“What a pretty dress you are wearing this morning, Ethel, both in style and pattern. May I enquire of what material it is composed,” said her uncle, as the next morning after their early breakfast the ladies and gentlemen staying at Lake Mordaunt had gathered on the wide verandah for what remained of the freshness of the morning air before the July sun ran the thermometer up into the nineties.

“My dress! Why whatever have you got to do with ladies’ dresses, uncle? Are you going into millinery, or is it the insatiable curiosity of a Yankee which prompts your question?” replied Ethel, looking down at the garment referred to.

“Yes! and like an Irishman you reply to one question by asking another. I said your dress was pretty, and asked of what it was made.”

“So you find it pretty, uncle. Well! it possesses another virtue—that of cheapness. It is only a French print. But whatever do you want to know about it for?” answered his niece.

“Curiosity, Ethel. So it’s a print, is it? But you need not not have told me it was French. I fully supposed that, like

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everything else you Canadians use, it was of foreign manufacture. You are not so smart as we Yankees nor have you sense enough to employ your own people, and keep your money in the country by producing your own requirements, but must remain tributary to and build up the wealth and power of foreign nations, by employing their laborers to do it for you. I doubt the cheapness of your dress also, Ethel. Did you ever reflect how much freight, commission, insurance—how many profits, etc., you paid out of the wheat, butter or other raw produce which you sent to France to pay for that dress—to say nothing of the same charges, with duties added, you paid also for sending the dress out to you. Come now, think of that!"

"Such nonsense, uncle! Why I paid for that dress in cash. Do you suppose I go to the stores trucking wheat and butter for my dresses?" replied Ethel, laughing.

"Your answer shows that political economy is not your forte, at any rate, Ethel. Why, you would do for a Finance Minister! It's of no use talking with you on the subject longer. I'll tackle your father and Vance and Wolverton there, and see if I cannot hammer a little of the science into their benighted Canadian understandings," returned her uncle.

"And a good riddance of you with your prosy talk, uncle. I wish the gentlemen joy of their bargain," she answered.

"So you want an argument, Mr. Horton, this morning. Well! we are resigned to our fate, and ready for the onslaught. But if protection is the branch you are going to inflict upon us, I range myself on your side at once by admitting its absolute necessity to build up the industries of a new country like this of ours," said Vance, who had listened to the conversation with Ethel.

"I should think there was an absolute necessity for it in this country," exclaimed Mr. Horton, who had mounted a favourite hobby. "Could a more suicidal policy be devised than that now adopted by your wise rulers, and I suppose acquiesced in by

your people, who, however, probably know no better ; a policy which drives thousands of the bone and sinew of the land to the States and other countries in search of the work they cannot find at home, while you are paying thousands of labourers in foreign countries to manufacture the goods you use every day of your lives, which you might manufacture as well and as cheaply in your own country, thereby keeping your population in the land of its birth. You complain of its exodus, and talk insanely of Reciprocity as a remedy. A powerful remedy, forsooth ! And do you suppose the Yankees are so blind to their own interests as to give it you? No ! you are just in the position they like best to have you. You are compelled to take the goods they want to sell you, because you do not manufacture them for yourselves, and they don't want and will not have your raw produce to enter into competition with their own producers.

“ From his cradle to his grave, the Canadian is the tribute-paying slave to foreign manufacturers. Arriving on this sub-lunary sphere, the screaming little stranger is swathed in English flannel to begin with. Departing from it, after a long life of consumption of foreign goods, the silver-headed nails that stud his very coffin are English too. He eats his dinner off English plates, with English knives, forks and spoons. He drinks his tea out of English cups and saucers. He looks out of the window through English glass. If he wishes to nail up a board—one of his few native manufactures—does he use Canadian nails? Not he ! they are made of English iron, driven with an English hammer, and the holes bored with an English gimlet. And yet Canada contains mountains of the best iron in the world. The vast amounts of hardware and the manufactures of metals he uses are wholly English and American, while his country teems with mineral wealth. He goes to church in a suit of English cloths, and his wife and daughters in French silks or English dress goods. With the exception of a little grey cotton and a few tweeds, every yard of the vast quantity of cloths of all de-

scriptions used in Canada are imported. Imported into a country whose natural manufacturing facilities are unrivalled, which, had it but a pronounced and stable policy of encouragement to its home industries to inspire the confidence of capitalists, would become an exporter of most of the articles of which it is at present an importer, and would at all events produce all of its requirements that are possible to its situation and climate. A state of things which is the true desideratum of a nation's life and progress—the true savings bank and increaser of its wealth and consolidator of its power. The markets of a country thrown open and exposed as yours naturally are to the assaults of all the world, lie at the mercy of every change or passing event and are never stable, equable or sound.

“A purely agricultural country such as Canada at the present time is, and seems to aim at remaining, never becomes rich or powerful. It is of necessity poor, thinly settled and non-progressive. Poor in material wealth and equally poor in intellectual and scientific advancement. Manufactures, mines, the thousand industries by which a nation produces, ready for use, every possible article of its consumption—in short, by which it does all its own work—conserve that nation's wealth, retaining it within itself, employs its population, no matter how fast its increase may be, and gives that limitless capability for expansion of growth to which even territorial area is not a bound. A new country, as this is, cannot inaugurate and establish on a firm basis these industries without a wise and stable policy of protection against the competition of the old, firmly-rooted and strong manufacturing nations. Without such aid any attempt to establish manufactures in a new country is met by the natural strength and firm determination of old manufacturing countries to crush out the rivalry in its infancy, in a market they have come to regard as their own. Your fiscal regulations are unstatesmanlike and vacillating, framed with no higher view than the wants of the hour—as changeable and variable as the winds,

and apparently devised better to suit the unhappy spirit of party which pervades the community or the thirst for office of politicians—than for the general good of the country. From such an uncertain, shifting and unsound state of affairs can progress be expected?

“Experience would prove the contrary! From a country whose commercial matters are exposed to such continual and dangerous interference, capital and enterprise must fly. They must erect their foundation upon something more enduring than such a shifting sand, or they will not build at all. A fixed and declared policy of protection to all industries that can be made home industries, of keeping your Canadian market for your Canadian producers, will build mills on your idle water powers; will erect and keep open the factories which you now keep open in foreign countries; will work your mines and employ your surplus population, which now drifts away to swell the wealth and power of the States. Will bring the operatives you employ in Manchester, Bradford, Birmingham; in France, Germany and elsewhere, to do your work, over to your own country to do it for you at home; to spend the money you pay them amongst yourselves and keep it in your own country, instead of augmenting the wealth of foreign nations; will advance your wealth, power and progress; will teach you dependence on yourselves—a real independence and patriotism. That is the true policy for your country! A regime of life and vigour. No more of your truckling to Yankædom under the illusory hope of obtaining the *ignis fatuus* of Reciprocity, which they have no intention of giving you, being very well pleased and entirely satisfied with you as you are!!!!

“As it is at present, any fixed fiscal policy, so long as it is a fixed one, is better than the meddlesome child’s play—the vacillating feebleness and cowardly fence-straddling that distinguishes the labours of your church-door politicians and amateur statesmen. Even a policy of so-called ‘Free Trade,’ which is tantamount

to a declaration of 'No further progress here,' would be better than that," and Mr. Horton looked around him with the virtuous glance of one who has done his duty.

"Admitting that a great part of what you say is very applicable to this country, Horton, yet you surely must admit that free and unrestricted trade is the most just and perfect principle of political economy," said Mr. Mordaunt, who, being English, felt inclined patriotically to defend the Free Trade principles of his native land.

"Yes! I will grant it, with the proviso that all nations be first on an equal position with one another. That all have their manufactures, arts and industries equally established and firmly-rooted—each producing all the products of civilization that it is capable of producing, and consequently fairly capable of an equal race with its compeers. Then Free Trade is the natural and rational order of things. But in the case of a new country, whose first industries lie mainly in the raw products of the field, the forest, and the sea alone; whose arts, manufactures, completing and refining of their products, have not been established, it is unequally matched against those countries who have had centuries for their consolidation and building up, and must, if she would fit herself for equality with them, shut them out from her markets until she has built herself up and become strong enough to bear their competition. Otherwise it would be the infant trying conclusions with the matured and full-grown man," replied Mr. Horton, enthusiastically, and, warmed with his subject, he drew nearer to Mr. Mordaunt and Vance, and recommenced in full force his arguments.

Sidney Wolverton, who had probably become tired of it, moved towards the young ladies, who were conversing together, and as he approached them, Emily Dearborn, advancing towards him, apparently to gather a morning glory that had attracted her attention on the trellis, whispered as he passed her—

"Meet me in a few minutes in the walk towards the lake near

the end of the garden ; I would like to speak to you," and then, plucking her flower, she continued aloud—

"Ethel ! let us go for a walk in the grounds, the gentlemen are talking their tiresome politics. Let us leave them to their enjoyment and go and amuse ourselves."

"Very well !" replied Ethel. "Come along, Ada. We'll go and get some flowers."

"Won't you join us, Mr. Wolverton?" said Emily, looking at him, as Ethel and Ada moved away arm-and-arm together.

"Should like it above all things," replied he, and, as the others had got out of ear-shot, he added : "I will join you there in a minute or two."

Emily followed her sister and Ethel until they reached the flower garden, and occupied herself in gathering a boquet until the others had become interested over theirs, when, watching her opportunity, she strolled away slowly towards the place indicated to Sidney, which was well out of sight of her companions, and where, on arriving, she found Wolverton, sauntering about waiting for her.

"Ah ! you are here before me," she said, as she came up. "I did not suppose you were gallant enough for that. However, as it is not for love-making I am come, it does not matter whether gallantry induced your promptitude or curiosity. How did you get along with your spooney young friend last night? Did you attain your object or had the warnings of officious friends closed his heart against the appeal of friendship?" continued she, looking up sarcastically in his face. "Of such a friend as Mr. Sidney Wolverton."

"Is that all you have to say to me, Emily?" he replied, gazing at the charming face turned to him. "I had hoped it was for something more than a sarcastic enquiry you had for me when I came to meet you. I was not vain enough to suppose it was as a favoured lover, though that thought would have been very pleasant to me."

"Would it indeed! I should hardly have imagined it, seeing that you came to this place with the intention of becoming the lover of Miss Mordaunt. Your affections seem to be conveniently adapted to quick and easy transition from one object to another. There are disadvantages, however, for there are those—your humble servant included—who are not apt to appreciate the facile honours accorded them," replied Emily, laughing.

"But," continued she, "if it is not as a lover I meet you to-day, it is as a friend; and in that capacity I wish to know what passed between yourself and Vance last evening. You may find it to your advantage to accept my assistance and advice in the matter."

"I shall be only too happy to obtain it, Emily, again, for it has already been of use to me. As you had forewarned me, I found there would be great difficulty in managing him about the partnership—in fact, that appears to be hopeless, as he claims to be bound by promise not to enter into any business relations with me. I placed the matter in a very attractive and tempting light before him, and urged his acceptance—both as a question of advantage to himself, and of salvation to me—appealing to his friendship strongly. Although I did not tell him the whole urgent and pressing facts of the case, I showed him that without instant aid, I would meet with very heavy, almost irreparable loss. My appeal would have been successful had it not been for his promise, which I saw he regretted bitterly, and was very nearly on the point of breaking. I must say this for him, that his heart was generously moved. He did not, however, break his promise; he offered me what ready money he had at disposal, but as it was not sufficient to be of use, I declined it—he telling me at the same time, he would think over matters, and would assist me to the extent of his ability. The interview was on the whole successful on my part. The sum, however, which I need to clear me of danger is so large that I do not know how to proceed towards him with hope of

success. I have little doubt that with careful management I could get his name on paper for ten thousand dollars ; but, at the least, thirty thousand dollars is requisite to wipe out pressing debts, and another ten thousand to place the Hometown business in a prosperous state again. To ask such sums would, to a certainty, startle him, and I feel at a loss how to act. Have the money I must, or else all goes to pieces, and I leave the country."

"Leave the country!" exclaimed Emily; "why leave the country—even if things come to the worst? You surely cannot have run through the whole property. There must be more than sufficient to pay what you owe—unless you have gone very fast indeed."

"Unfortunately," returned he, "there is some paper afloat on which the names are not genuine—his amongst the number."

"Oh! that's it, is it? Well! you are bold," replied Emily, laughing, and apparently more amused than disgusted at the unblushing avowal of the descent into crime, of him who had been—and might really still be—considered, her favored lover. "However, this puts a different face on the matter, and you *must* now become successful. Vance must be brought to aid you by fair means or by foul."

"The worst of it is, there is so little time left me. The most of this paper falls due next week," said Sidney, gloomily.

"Well you must procure his endorsement in time, then, and for the full amount you require; you may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, Sidney,—but you must act energetically and promptly. I'll tell you what it is," said Emily, walking on rapidly a few steps, as of thinking out a decisive idea; then turning again towards him, she continued: "There will be a cricketing dinner to-morrow afternoon, when the game is finished, and if Ten Lakes is what it used to be, champagne, etc., will be abundant at it. Vance will be at the match, and you will not find it difficult to persuade him to stay at the dinner.

You must play your cards well with him during the day, and keep his friendly sentiments, towards you, alive. At the dinner you must try by all possible means to induce him to drink champagne—speechify him, flatter him, cajole and persuade. He will have to return thanks—to propose others, in his turn. His nature is such that, unless bound by a promise not to do a thing, he cannot bear pressure. He is yielding, and will acquiesce in what he regards as a trifle, rather than dispute them. Not being a total abstainer, he will look upon an extra glass of wine as a trifle. If you contrive to get him somewhat excited with wine, you will have the game pretty well in your own hands, if you act with caution. He will see things in a very different light than in a calmer moment; and probably will not scrutinize very closely any paper you ask him to sign.”

“I am afraid he will have to be very tipsy before he will endorse for thirty thousand dollars,” said Sidney. “It will not be so easy to get him to drink to intoxication, Emily, I have never known him to take enough wine to be in the least affected by it.”

“I could have told you that myself,” replied Emily, impatiently; “but because he never drank, is that any reason that he will not do so on this occasion? It is what I am telling you to induce him to do so. And it does not need that he is made intoxicated. That would probably spoil all, by rendering him perverse and obstinate. Get him to take some extra champagne, sufficient to pleasantly excite him—to raise his spirits to a jovial, free and careless pitch—and if you seize the opportunity, and adroitly introduce your subject, he will probably do what you ask him, without even looking at what he puts his name to, but will accept your word that it is what you represent. Why should he know that he endorsed for thirty thousand? Why not ask him for three thousand?—hand him the note, and in all likelihood he’ll write his name across it without looking at its face.”

"I don't see your drift, Emily. Of what use will his endorsement for three thousand be to me?" interrupted Sidney.

"Why! cannot you see? It appears to me that you are very stupid to-day, Mr. Wolverton, and that I am the man of business. Ask him to endorse for three thousand—hand him the note, with the three thousand in figures at the top; but the space for the written amount left blank. He'll probably take it to be as you say, and sign without once glancing at the face. Or, better still, make out a note for three thousand—show it him before he endorses, and while you are signing it yourself, spoil it by a blot. You can then make out another for the higher figure; hand it him to endorse, and you may feel assured he will not trouble himself to scrutinize it. You will get your money, and will have three months clear before Vance hears a word further. Plenty of time to arrange your plans; and then Vance, to save himself, will be forced to go into the business with you, whether he likes it or not."

"Why, Emily!—you are a genius. The idea is a splendid one, and if I can only manage the matter as well as you have mapped it out for me, success is assured. You are the man of business—that's certain," said Wolverton. "I shall most certainly act upon your suggestion. I should never have originated so feasible a solution of the difficulty. You have rendered me a great service, Emily, and one that I will not easily forget," continued he, gazing with admiration, and yet some astonishment, at the girl beside him, who, so outwardly fair, had not hesitated to propound so atrocious a thing. His astonishment though, could not be said to be raised by the atrocity, but rather by the knowledge of human nature displayed, and the clever adaptation of her scheme.

"I do not feel so sure that you would not forget it," she said, "but I do not intend to allow you to do so. In return for my assistance, I may shortly require yours in a little project of

my own, not yet developed ; and I shall not hesitate to demand it."

"Or I to render it, Emily. Anything I can do—no matter what it may be—you have only to ask, and I shall be ready to perform to the utmost extent of my ability. Oh, Emily!—if, when things become better with me, you would but permit me to assume a tenderer relation towards you, it would make me very happy."

"Thank you, no, Mr. Wolverton—not at the present, at all events. You can hardly be considered now—and, unless you change much, it is to be doubted if you will ever become—that safe person to whom I would care to entrust my future. I will make no promises. If you desire my love, you must deserve it by success.

"I must return now ; our interview has been long enough, and I do not wish to be surprised in a *lôte-a-lôte* with you. You had better give your thoughts to your affairs for to-morrow. Ada and I return to Ten Lakes then. You had better call at our house during the evening, and let me hear of your success with Vance. And now I must go,—Good-morning, Sidney ; we will remain friends and allies, at any rate," she said, extending her hand.

"Good morning, Emily," he answered, taking her offered hand ; then drawing her towards him, before she was aware of his intention, kissed her on the lips—"To inspire me for success to-morrow, and for a yet sweeter success to come."

She freed herself instantly.

"I do not desire your kisses, Mr. Wolverton, and shall take care in future !" she exclaimed, and turning away, walked back to the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MY ROSE?

During the afternoon, Ethel Mordaunt and her lover, esca-

ping from the others of the party—to whom the fervour of the summer sun, made the coolness of the house preferable—had wandered off into the gardens, to enjoy the delights of each other's society, and some sweet lovers' talk together. Any amount of caloric was to them but a secondary consideration, compared with the privilege of being alone. Old Sol might have run the thermometer up to any point he liked, and his fervid beams would have been complacently endured by them—provided that all others were kept thereby to the house. What were a few degrees of Fahrenheit to them when thrown into the balance against the inestimable pleasures of wandering aimlessly about the garden with each other, and being ridiculously happy together. Cacouna, without Ethel, would have been voted a fraud by Edwin. A hundred and ten in the shade, with Ethel—a state of bliss. And Ethel herself would probably have shared the opinion.

So they strolled on, and laughed and talked—apparently vastly interested in the smallest trifles—and really vastly interested in each other.

“How beautiful the world is!—Ethel,” he said, though the beautiful world looked as if it were very hot, indeed, and might fairly be supposed to wonder if he would be able to stand this thing out until sunset, without melting.

“It seems so much more beautiful since I am so happy. It is my love for you, perhaps, that gives the added beauty to all I see.”

“It is still a beautiful world, whether we are happy or unhappy, Edwin. But happiness, however, is a wonderful charmer to our eyes. I am happy that you love me, and the world is very beautiful to me,” replied Ethel. “Oh! that our love may be as lasting as it is great.”

“Why should it not last, my darling? Our love will last life-long, and while that exists, happiness is with us—will never fail us,” he replied.

"Yes ; but it must be based on a higher—holier ground than our earthly love. For true happiness, there must be the Divine love. That is the rock on which our lifelong structure must be founded ; and then we shall find happiness, indeed," she said, with earnestness.

"My good little Ethel!" he exclaimed, looking with loving admiration into the beautiful eyes turned towards him ; "you deserve all happiness and all love. If it is not always yours—darling—it will be because this world is not right, and that its best treasures are those to whom its buffets are the hardest to bear. Oh !—Ethel, how I pray that never through me shall any misery flow to your angelic spirit. The very thought of such possibility would be torture."

"Then don't think of it, Edwin. I hardly think it is probable that you are going to cause me any misery," answered she laughing. "It is getting rather warm, though ; let us go into the shade. There is a rustic seat yonder under the trees. It is too warm to walk," and together they went towards it. Hardly had they seated themselves and resumed their conversation than our friend Barney was seen making his way from the house towards them. He approached them, and after performing an original, complicated and in his own eyes, very graceful bow, said—

"It's a foine war-rum day, so it is, Miss Ethel. The poor craythurs that are short o' firing this blissid weather won't know how bad they're off, thank the Lard ! It does a bhoy's heart good till see the sun shinin' down ontill us so swate and peaceful and so sthrong, as if he knowed the cowld winther was a comin', whin it's no good, at all at all, he is, wid his bames all friz up wid the cowld blasts of Bore-us. Faix ! it's a har-rud sowl to plaze he'd be that 'ud say he's not doing his best the day."

"I think so, too, Barney," said Ethel. "I'm sure that I am quite satisfied with his exertions, and would have no objection to a few of the rude blasts of Boreas at this moment."

"Troth ! We do be mostly havin' some sort of wedder or

anoder, the Lard be praised for it. But in convarsin' so plissint I kem near forghetting me missage. Mither Vance, the mather tould me he'd be plazed to sphake wid ye for a minnit, av it wud not be too much throuble till ye. It's in the library he wor."

"Wishes to speak to me, Barney? Well! I'll go at once, though I cannot imagine what he wants with me just now. Will you return to the house or wait for me here, Ethel?" replied Edwin, rising from his seat.

"Begorra! and phat's the matter now wid that purty rose tree av yourn, Miss Ethel. Bedad, it's mighty sick it's looking," interrupted Barney, suddenly looking towards a plant of that species a few yards off.

"Oh! my poor rose! I'll await your return here, Edwin," exclaimed Ethel, springing up, and running to her favourite, whilst Edwin proceeded towards the house.

"Why! What's the matter with my rose, Barney? I see nothing wrong with it. It looks as well as ever," she continued, turning to that individual who was following her.

"Bedad! 'To see the like of that now," was the surprised remark of the hypocrite, who was perfectly well aware that there was nothing wrong with the plant. "Me ould eyes desaved me purty nate now, by the power of Moses' feet. Yer flower's as sound as iver it's wor, Miss Ethel. I thought thin that it lukked moighty bad, so I did. But I'm wantin' till sphake till ye a minnit, Miss Ethel, honey, whin there's no wan by."

"To speak to me, Barney? Well, what is it? Oh! *that* was the matter with the rose. I see now," said Ethel laughing.

"Well! go on with your story. You deserve that I should listen for having managed the interview so well. Did you serve Mr. Vance with the same trick also, Barney?"

But Barney, save by a comical twist of the eye, took no notice of the latter question, and proceeded with his tale.

"Yer see, Miss Ethel, after me marnin's wur-ruk was redd

up this marnin', I tought I'd go down till the long walk at the tother ind of the gardin, and shear the little cedar hidge there that ye're so fond o' havin' sheared, the same as if it wor a sheep, though it's little wool ye git aff av it for all the shearin', begorra ! But, nevertheless, I sheared away, an' sheared away, an' faix ! it's a moighty nate job I made av it, as smooth an' as round as the back of a young pig, be the powers. But the sun kem out that powerful, so it did, that whin I wor troo wid the job, it's war-rum I wor, and no mistake about it eder, so I tought I'd get acrass intill the shade av the hidge, an' lie down unther it fur a dhraw of me pipe, an' it was'nt long I wor there afore I see ould Sidney Wolverton and the banker's daughther over till Tin Lakes a comin' along togeder, and me smhoking away undher the hidge l ke a house afire. But it's no notice they tuk av me, they were conversing so arnest, an' I lay quite and said noting at all to thim. They walked up an' down past where I wor a power av times, bedad ! an' I heard some av their conversation thin, so I did, an' moighiy quare talk it wor what I heerd av it, consarnin' Mishter Vance an' a schame of Ould Sidney's wid false papers, they have agin him, an' so I tought I'd come and tell yerself av it, Miss Ethel, seeing that I knowed ye better nor I did him, an' ye'd betther have them lukked out fur, fur it's at the crickety dinner at Tin Lakes the morrow they're goin' te thry it ontill him, so it is."

"But I have nothing to do with Mr. Vance's affairs, Barney, and I must not listen to your stories. Why don't you go and tell Mr. Vance himself everything that he ought to know?" answered Ethel, who hated eavesdropping, and had besides a lively recollection of an already unsatisfactory interview with her lover, connected with Sidney Wolverton, and who moreover deemed it derogatory to herself and the guests of her father's house to listen to idle stories concerning them.

"Och ! thin, Miss Ethel, wud ye be afther purtindin' the like of that to an ould craythur like meself, that's knowed ye

since ye cudden crape over a sthraw. Sure! an' doesn't the whole country side know that yersilf and Mither Vance are as thick as two paas in a pod, an' that it's marrit ye'll be till wan another afore the year's done. It is'nt afeared I am till sphake till him, an' it's tell't he ought to be, but for the likes av mesilf till tell him wud be av no sarvice, fur it's his friend he consithers ould Sidney to be, an' it's blackguard me he wud, more-be-like, than listen. But till a swate young lady like yersilf, Miss Ethel, that he's going till be marrit till, he'll listen fast enough, be japers, wid his ears open, an' it's know it he ought, fur I heerd the banker's daughter, that wor there wid that baste Wolverton, not the dacent little girl, but the tall flashy one, telling him to thry to git Mither Vance dhrunk wid shampain at the crickety dinner the morrow, and whin that he'd got him hot wid liquor, and him not caring for man, baste or divil, savin' yer prisince, to soother him intill writin' his name on a paper wid tree tousand ontill it and thin he wor to splatther it up wid ink a purpose an' spile it, and thin till ax Mither Vance to do it over agin wid anoder wan like it, but wid tirty tousand ontill it, an' thin she tould him that if he'd git him dhrunk enough, he'd nivir bother his hid to luk at it to see av it wor like the first wan, an' thin in tree months Mither Vance wud have to go in pardner wid Wolverton in his ould rotten mill at Hopetown beyant, wedder he wud or — Och! murther alive! Here he is himsilf now, and me here yit. Howly vargin! but the fat's in the fire now. Begorra! an' it's out av this I wish I wor," continued Barney, suddenly startled by the appearance of Edwin Vance, who, unnoticed in the excitement of his story, had walked up unperceived, while Barney endeavoured quietly to take himself off.

"I say, Barney," exclaimed Edwin, as he came up, "how came you to send me on such a fool's errand? Who gave you the message? Your master never sent it, nor had he asked for me."

"The masther nivir sint me fur ye, Mither Vance!" replied

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Barney, apparently astonished. "Faix! an' that's quare thin. Degorra! it's sould I am. Bad scran till her, it wor that desateful jade of a housemaid sint me fur yiz. By the tousand pipers, it's aven I'll be wid her before it's dark the night. Belike it wor to redd me out av the kitchen she tould me fur, bad cess till her. But sure now, Mистер Vance, honey, there's no grate har-rum done is there by me little mishtake?"

"Well! not a great deal, Barney. I'll forgive you this time."

"But it was laughable, too," turning to Ethel. "Your father looked so astounded when I went in and announced myself as awaiting his commands, and I was confounded and looked foolish enough in explaining that I had received a message from him that he wished to speak to me. When, however, he found out who had brought the message, he burst out laughing and said, 'Oh! it was that blarneying old rascal was it?'"

"There's for you, Barney!" put in Ethel, laughing.

"Most likely, Mr. Mordaunt said," continued Edwin, "the old Villain got you out of the way, Vance, in order to humbug Ethel into saving him from the consequences of some of his scrapes, or to get something or other. She likes the old humbug, and he knows it, and in consequence does pretty well as he likes, sure that she will befriend him. Ten to one he trumped up the message to get rid of you while he related some pitiable story to her."

"And how about the sick rose bush, Barney?" added Ethel, mischievously.

"Faix! ye may laugh, Miss Ethel, it's wid yiz this time, and it's a nice c'racter the mather's after givin' of a bhoys that's been wid him this twenty year an' more. 'Blarneying old humbug I am, am I, begorra!'" grumbled Barney, walking off apparently highly offended, but in reality accepting the uncomplimentary terms as a gratifying tribute to his diplomatic powers.

Ethel, left again with her lover, had to decide whether or not she would communicate Barney's extraordinary and somewhat

incoherent story to him or any part of it. As she had not previously held a very high opinion of Mr. Wolverton or of Miss Dearborn either, for that matter, she could very readily believe that Barney, whom she knew to be faithfulness itself to her father's family, and especially her friend, had really overheard some part of a plot between the two concerning her lover, very much she could easily suppose to his detriment than to his advantage. A great part of the disjointed and incomprehensible history she could not understand, though it appeared to her tolerably evident that the papers "wid tree tousand ontill it and tirty tousand ontill it," had reference to valuable securities that were to be obtained from him for Wolverton's behoof. There was, however, one part of the story that was very plain, and that was that there was to be an attempt at the cricketer's dinner on the morrow to produce her lover's intoxication, and that the success or failure of the entire scheme hinged on the success of that attempt.

To prevent that danger was to nullify the whole plot.

Ethel however could not and would not believe that her Edwin, her hero, her prince of men, was or could be in any possible danger of so dreadful a degradation. She would as easily have imagined that he would steal the spoons at her father's table, as become, by any means whatsoever, intoxicated. But she had heard of drugged wines; she remembered also that Edwin at the pic-nic had drunk a glass of champagne, and was not therefore a total abstainer. Might he not at the dinner partake of a single glass, and might not that glass be drugged. She could easily believe any depth of evil possible to Sidney Wolverton; and that this supposition was therefore not outside the range of possibility.

The unpleasant nature of her previous interview with Edwin on the subject of Mr. Wolverton whose very name she now thoroughly detested, had determined her never again to enter directly into a conversation regarding him; and again, though

Barney's incomprehensible story was fully believed by her to have a sound basis of truth, it would in all likelihood be totally rejected by him, as ridiculous and absurd. He had already been fully warned as to Wolverton's character ; and so long as his senses were clear, he ought to be perfectly able to take due care of himself and his interests. While her lover retained the full possession of his faculties, she felt she had no right to interfere further in his affairs.

Could she obtain from him, however, a promise that he would drink no wine, at the dinner on the morrow, she could feel safe, as regarded him. It would not need then for her to tell him of what she had heard from Barney ; and she felt that this was the best way open to her to discharge the duty that seemed incumbent upon her. She resolved therefore that this should be her course.

Accordingly as they returned from their walk and were nearing the house, she plucked up her courage, turned towards him and said,

"Edwin, I have a great favor to ask of you ; a favor that I do not feel that I ought to ask, but which I hope you will forgive me that I do ask."

"My darling Ethel it is granted, if within my possibility. As anything you could ask of me could be a favor for me to grant. What is it ? Ethel."

"I don't like to ask it, Edwin, it really seems to be an interference with you, but if you could grant it to me it would make me very happy. You will probably have to remain for the dinner after the match to-morrow at Ten Lakes. From what I have heard of such dinners there, I fear there will be a great deal of wine. There are many young men who will be present to-morrow, who are not particular with respect to how much they use, and you will be pressed—very much pressed—to follow their example with regard to it."

"I wish to warn you against these young men, and to ask you

to be careful, as they will try to induce you if possible to drink too much wine. Forgive me for mentioning such a subject to you, but please promise me ; I know there is no danger of such a thing as that you will take too much wine ; but I know that you will be very much pressed to do so," and Ethel's lovely eyes looked appealingly up into his face.

" My dearest Ethel, you may rest assured that if I remain for dinner at all, I will be very careful as to what wine I take. Most probably none at all. No amount of pressure will succeed in inducing me to exceed, at all events. That I promise you. I have never exceeded yet, and most certainly will not do now that I have my sweet Ethel ; my beacon of light and purity and all beauty ;" he replied earnestly, but not so satisfactorily as under the circumstances of which she was aware, she could have wished.

In her earnestness and fear for him, she continued the subject.

" And, Edwin, promise me that if you do take any wine at all, you won't drink champagne. I have a reason for asking. And don't sit near Sidney Wolverton. He has a design against you. I would so like to ask you, as a personal favor to myself to take no wine at all to-morrow."

Edwin as well as Ethel retained an unpleasant impression of that interview between them concerning Sidney Wolverton and he had a lively feeling that the subject would be better avoided. Therefore, though a little interested and somewhat more annoyed by Ethel's reference to him, he forebore to notice it. It was however an unfortunate remark.

" My darling," he replied, not quite so cordially, " I have already told you that in all probability I shall take no wine—and I promise you, since you wish it, that I will not drink champagne to-morrow, at any rate and that I will not sit near Sidney Wolverton, since you also wish that.

Satisfied with this almost direct promise and very glad that

Edwin had not seemed to notice her unfortunate 'lapsus linguae, with regard to Mr. Wolverton, Ethel changed the subject, and they proceeded homeward.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EMILY BEGINS TO PLOT.

His long anticipated Saturday morning at length greeted the expectant eyes of Reggie Mordaunt ; and greeted him as he could have wished it.

A clear blue sky ; a brilliant sun, and a cool breeze to temper the fervor of his rays, made it a cricketer's day. To Reggie a day of delights, for its exciting hours would test the prowess and crown the victory—as he fondly hoped—of his dear Ten Lakes Club over the formidable county.

Early was he astir ; unwontedly early, and as he hastened down stairs he held the vain impression that every one was equally enthusiastic with him and would be down stairs also. It *was* a vain impression, for he found himself alone ; the breakfast-room ready for occupancy but without occupants, and it was very evident that he was the only one of the Lake Mordaunt party, who had as yet come to the conclusion that the early freshness of the morn, with a cricket match in prospect, could outweigh the lingering charms of somnolency.

Half an hour of impatient waiting and it was still the same. No one, with the consciousness of virtuous early rising shivering over him, but looking as if it was yet the middle of the night, had put in an appearance down stairs. Half an hour in the early morning, alone down stairs, in a great house, the rooms all done up ready, and wearing an intolerable air of waiting, with breakfast not at hand, is a very quiet, very lonely, very hungry, very long period of time. It was too much for Reggie's equanimity. In another minute his feet were boisterously

ascending the stairs, and he was thundering at Vance's and Wolverton's respective doors.

"I say! you fellows—this is getting just a little too thin. Here it is, as late as it can be, and you lazy wretches sleeping away as if you had nothing to do but get up for an evening party. If you sleep on much longer you'd be too late for that even. Try and get down—do now—before sunset," he shouted loud enough to wake up a pyramid of mummies.

"Hallo! what's the matter? Reggie," exclaimed Edwin drowsily. "Is it time to get up? Why! it isn't seven o'clock yet, if my time is correct. You don't call that late, do you?"

"I guess you'll find it late enough before you're through. There's a pile of things to do, and no one up yet.

"You've got to get down stairs; have breakfast; write your letters, get ready, and drive out to Ten Lakes, and wickets to be pitched at eleven o'clock" replied Reggie in an injured tone of voice.

"All right! I'll be on hand. Plenty of time yet," was all the satisfaction he got from Edwin.

"I say! Uncle," cried Reggie, saluting that gentleman's door. "A pretty specimen of a moral philosopher you are to be sure. Here you are in bed in the middle of the day. Why don't you do as that old humbug of a countryman of yours, Ben Franklin says. I'll bet you never heard of him though."

"Be off! you young scamp," replied his uncle, from within. "It's little enough you know about Ben. Franklin. If it was not for that stupid cricket match, you would not have been out of bed so early this morning yourself. I'm always down before you are, at any rate. What are you making all that noise for?" he continued, as Reggie kept shouting along the passages.

"Get up! Ethel. I want my breakfast." Get up Allie, and come to the cricket match. "Get up, Emily and Ada; you'll be too late for the fun;" were boisterously vociferated,

until he was satisfied that no one could by any possibility be left longer asleep.

"Oh! yes, Reggie. I'se tummin' to see the tittet," exclaimed the small voice of Ally, as he retreated down stairs again to another impatient wait for breakfast.

* * * * *

"Well! I suppose you are all going to the cricket match," said Reggie, who having satiated tolerably his hunger, found leisure to make a remark to the party assembled at the breakfast table. "I've told Barney to have round every trap about the place at ten o'clock sharp, so everybody must be ready to start then. "You are going, are you not, mother? with Allie and father. Mr. Vance, Mr. Wolverton and I ought to start earlier, as there will be lots to do before eleven, and so uncle you'll have to drive Ethel, and Emily, and Ada. Oh! my, what a time you'll have driving three girls. I would not be you, I know. Don't you feel delighted at the prospect, uncle?"

"Never mind, Reggie. I'll stand it for the chance of seeing pride taken down before night. Perhaps you won't make such a fuss coming home this evening as you have this morning. If all your Ten Lakes Club are such boasters as one young gentleman I know, I'll probably have the pleasure of seeing them well beaten to-day. Don't you hope so now, Miss Ada? for I suppose you will be on the grounds to-day," replied Mr. Horton, addressing his last remark to Ada, with mischief in his eyes.

"I'll see every over of this match played, if I stay there until dark; I'll count every run, too, and I'll never speak to one of the Ten Lakes Club again if they let themselves be beaten. No! not to my own brother, I won't," answered Ada, with vehement decision in her voice.

"Why! Ada, you seem to think it would be a disgrace for Ten Lakes to be beaten. Don't you think now it would be a greater disgrace for the County Club to be beaten by a small affair like Ten Lakes?" said Mr. Horton, teasingly.

"Oh! who cares for the old fogy County Club, anyway; and let me tell you, Mr. Horton, that our Ten Lakes Club is no small affair. If it does not beat the County to-day, I'm a Dutchman," replied Ada, too excited to be elegant in her language.

"Ada, you perfectly shock me," said her sister. "Your ideas and expressions are those of a common street boy. When are you going to adopt the manners of a lady? I am inclined to ask mamma not to let you go to the match at all. You will be much better at home where you cannot commit yourself."

"Oh! no, you won't, Emily," exclaimed Reginald. "Ada's all right, and she's a jolly girl for sticking up for the club."

A tap at the door at this point of the conversation turned all eyes towards it as it opened a short distance and the comical physiognomy of our friend Barney appeared behind it.

"May I come in, sorr?" he enquired of Mr. Mordaunt.

"Certainly! Barney. What's the matter now? Are the horses all sick this morning as usual when they are wanted? or have you found out some new excuse for them to-day? Eh! Barney," said Mr. Mordaunt. "Don't you think now your 'poor bastes' will be 'kilt intoirely' taking us all out to Ten Lakes, four long miles, such a day as this."

"Troth! thin, Mr. Mordaunt, ye na'adent be afther bantherin' me the like av that about me harses. It's well enough the poor crathers are the day, but it's going to folly yiz I am, to see they're put up dacent; nivir a fut wud I thrust thim divils at the hot-tel wid a fut av thim," replied Barney.

"And look out for a little whiskey at the same time, Barney, or is it the cricket match you want to see?" said Mr. Mordaunt.

"Begorra! av it wor a game of shinney ye had afut, where iviry bhoy has a sthick av his own in his hand, an' can have a belt at the ball whiniver he has a chance av it, an' can rap the bhoy over the hid av they're onmannerly an' don't behave dacent

an' peaceful, it's plazed I'd be to join in the divarshun, but cricket's too quite a game fur me, sorr !"

"Every one to his taste, Barney. Is there anything else you want?"

"Faix ! there is'nt, sorr ! barrin' that I've got the litters and papirs fur yiz. I got thim last night, but I wor kep waitin' on thim that long at 'Tin Lakes beyant, that I cuddent git back time enough to give ye thim till the marning."

"Oh ! we'll say it was the letters, Barney, but I think it was the tavern that kept you so late. It's all right, Barney. That will do," and with a bow and a scrape that individua! made his exit.

"Here are a couple of letters for you, Vance," said Mr. Mordaunt, handing them to him. "One bears a lady's handwriting too ; take care, or some one will be looking after your correspondence," he added, with a laugh.

"Oh ! it will bear inspection—I'm not afraid," replied Edwin, lightly, as he put them in his pocket. "And they will bear waiting also until I have finished my breakfast."

A delicious after breakfast saunter through the conservatory with his Ethel caused them to remain forgotten until its conclusion, when suddenly remembering their existence, he took them from their resting place and read as follows :

TORONTO, July 22nd, 1873.

DEAR SIR,—

We beg to advise you that a decision has been reached in the suit "*Orden et al. vs. yourself*," which terminates, it would appear to us, with a result not unfavourable to your interests. Your title to that portion of your Toronto property involved in the suit is declared perfect, and should not have been questioned, and on this ground costs have gone against the other parties. As was anticipated, the properties in Western Ontario, attached in the same suit, go to those New York people, but burdened with the payment to you, as representing your late grandfather, of the settlements, etc., to which they were liable, when, as apparent next of kin, he took possession, together with the interest to this date.

Their lawyers have already paid over on account twenty-five thousand dollars, until the amount of your claims against the property are definitely ascertained, and at the same time they ask for a year's delay for payment of the balance. This we refer to your decision. The sum of twenty-five thousand dollars, mentioned above, we hold to your order.

We would also advise you that, yesterday, Miss Agnes Seaforth, on visiting our office to receive the half-yearly allowance made her by you in lieu of the annuity expired by her mother's decease, complained of annoyance to which she claimed to be subjected, in presenting for payment your cheque for the amount, and required, peremptorily, that some other mode be adopted. Upon our statement of the fact that we held no other funds for the purpose, she enquired in what manner your name had a right to be mixed up with her business, and threatened law proceedings if her demand was not complied with or her enquiries answered. In order to avert a course which could not fail to be disagreeable to both herself and to you, and could be productive of no good end, we were compelled to explain the entire matter to her, and that in reality she possessed no legal claim upon you for the sums she had received since the death of her mother. As she very evidently hesitated to believe our account of this matter, we advised her to address herself for its confirmation to you. It is our opinion that the young lady, being of a romantic turn of mind, will decline further to receive money from the same source, which will be so much the better for you, and will save you six hundred dollars a year.

Please advise us at your early convenience of your decision in the matters referred to above.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

JOHN HATCHITFESS & SON.

Edwin Vance, Esq., }
Lake Mordaunt. }

"Well! I am twenty-five thousand dollars richer at any rate than I supposed myself," said Edwin to himself. "For since these people turned up with their claim, I have never considered my title good, or that the property would ever yield me a dollar. So much the better. I am very sorry, though, about this matter of Agnes Seaforth's. It will be a difficult thing with that

proud and independent spirit of hers to arrange this affair again on the satisfactory footing it held before the unfortunate interview with the Hatchitfesses. If she would but have left well alone! The money is hers—most justly hers. My father's dying breath, which left it to her, makes it sacred to me—as binding as if his command had been engrossed on parchment, signed, sealed and delivered. I wish it had been, for I fear her proud spirit will view it in a different light, and spurn the thought of accepting the money from me, as she will too probably look at my mere agency in it for my dead father. This letter is, I suppose, from her."

TORONTO, 22nd, July, 1873.

MY DEAR MR. VANCE,—

I trust you will excuse, for the sake of the old friendship that existed between my father's family and yours, my addressing you on a subject which, though it is of serious and disquieting importance to myself, may not be considered so by you, and that you will on the same score, kindly consider and reply, at your early convenience, to the contents of this letter.

Yesterday I came to hear, for the first time, a story connected with myself of a very unexpected nature, and one, which if it be true, would have been much better for me had I heard it long since, as it would have relieved me from the involuntary assumption of a burden, whose removal presents an aspect of great difficulty to me.

During the course of a conversation with Mr. John Hatchitfess, which conversation, I may premise, was brought on by myself, in fact unwillingly forced upon him by me, for various reasons, to which it is needless to advert. I learned to my surprise and great disgust, that the income which, during my mother's life, she had enjoyed, and which I had always been led to believe had, since her decease, become mine, was an annuity which expired with her life; that in effect I was then left penniless, and that you, with a generosity which is none the less honorable to you that it was mistaken, had continued since that period, the same amount from your private funds for my benefit, in deference to the expressed wish of your father. I also learned, at the same time, from Mr. Hatchitfess the various transactions alike honorable to both, that occurred between your father and

mine, with reference to the property from which my mother's annuity was derived, together with the events which preceded and brought to pass these transactions.

From all this, for the truth of which Mr. Hatchitfess vouched, and which I do not see any reason to disbelieve, it would seem that, for too long a time past, I have been receiving and living in idleness upon money which was not mine, to which I was not lawfully entitled, and for which I had no legal claim upon you. Upon your money, in fact, I have been for over two years existing, and I have to repeat that it would have been much better for me had I been informed of the true state of affairs at my mother's death, and much easier also, as I would not then have had to commence life under the burden of a heavy debt to you. A debt which my self-respect will not permit me to breathe freely under until it is discharged to the last dollar.

While thanking you for the kind motive which impelled your mistaken generosity to me, I must at once and peremptorily decline to accept any further aid from that source. It would not be right for me to do so. I will earn my own bread, by my own exertions, and will not consent to live upon the generosity of another.

I took yesterday the three hundred dollars which Mr. Hatchitfess paid me, as a loan, in order to enable my aunt and myself to live until I can find the means of earning our living, and stern necessity alone compelled me to take it even in that light.

May I request the favour of your early reply, as I wish the assurance from yourself that Mr. Hatchitfess's account of these matters has been a true one, and also the hope that my decision, as expressed above, may not come between the friendship that exists between your mother and myself, and, I hope I may add, with you also.

I am, dear Mr. Vance,

Yours sincerely,

AGNES SEAFORTH.

Such was the letter that Edwin Vance read, and as he concluded it he walked up and down the room disquietly and soliloquised as follows:—

“Poor Agnes! That brute Hatchitfess in his cold-blooded epistle, describes you as of a romantic turn of mind. Well! perhaps he is not far wrong, but you are nor a whit more romanti-

cally inclined than I am, and no more determined about this matter either. It would more burn my fingers to keep this money, which is so rightfully yours, than it will burn yours to take it."

"Not if I know it, shall you spoil your good looks and drudge away your life in the slavery of teaching, or some other equally harrassing and ill-paid occupation, to which women have to resort. Could I rest at ease? a great part of my fortune sprung from the purchase, equitable though it may have been, of her father's property, and with my father's last command yet ringing in my ears, while she might be starving on a crust. No! it shall not be. The matter shall be decided at once. I'll write to-day to Hatchitfess and order him to purchase an annuity for her life out of this money which has so opportunely fallen to me, and if she will not take it, it will not be for want of persuasion on my part. I'll write to her also at once and try to combat her decision."

Having formed this virtuous resolution, Edwin Vance took his way from the conservatory, and proceeded in search of his writing materials.

Passing through the hall, he met Mrs. Mordaunt, and asked her if he could go to the library to answer the letters he had received that morning, as he could post the replies in Ten Lakes that day as they were pressing.

"Certainly! Edwin. You will find all the material you require there. You have not much time, though, for Reggie is hurrying the horses up to the door," she replied.

"Thank you! Mrs. Mordaunt," he said. "They are of importance, so I must try to answer them to-day."

He entered the library, got out his letters for reference, and had seated himself to write, when Sidney Wolverton entered the room in search of him.

Directly after leaving the breakfast table, when the party had separated in different directions, Emily Dearborn had sought an

opportunity to meet Wolverton, and finding him alone enjoying a cigar in the garden, addressed him—

“Sidney! I want you to do me a favour. Edwin Vance received this morning a letter from a lady, and I am convinced by a glimpse I obtained of the envelope that it is the handwriting of a young lady that it bears. If you can by any means, without showing interest in the matter, find out the name of the writer, you will do me a service. I have a reason for wishing to know this.”

“I’ll do it with pleasure, Emily, if I possibly can,” replied he. “But it is rather a difficult task. However am I to get an opportunity to see it? I can’t very well ask him who his fair correspondent may be.”

“If you can do so, I mean. It is not of great importance, but if you find an opportunity take it. I will see you in Ten Lakes to-day.”

It was for this purpose that Sidney had followed Edwin into the library and was lounging about the book-case, on the watch for the means of accomplishing his undignified mission. That he did not feel the indignity laid upon him in the mere proposal that he should accept so unworthy an errand was very evident from the fact of his seeking to fulfil it. He had ceased to be, though he still bore the outward semblance of a gentleman, and no sense of his degradation, no mortifying perception of its own withered insignificance, stung his soul to the quick, or shrank him into nothingness.

He attained his object, such as it was, easily enough, through the unwitting and unexpected aid of another.

Hardly had he been in the room a couple of minutes when Reginald entered it with his usual impetuosity, shouting—

“Oh! here you are. Come on now as fast as you can. It’s nearly ten o’clock, and the horses are all waiting. The others all ready too. Never mind your letters, Mr. Vance; write them to-morrow. They’ll wait for one day, I’m sure.”

"Can't you wait a few minutes, Reggie? I have two letters which I must answer to-day, and I have only got the half of one reply written," exclaimed Edwin, scribbling away as fast as his pen would move.

"Well! you can write them in Ten Lakes this evening in time for the mail after the match is over. You can go to the hotel or the Dearborn's. I'll show you lots of places where you can write them. That's your best way. We ought to be on the ground before eleven," returned impatient Reggie.

"All right! Reggie, I'm with you. Your plan is the best, for there is one which must be replied to with some care, and I have no time now, that is evident," replied Edwin, and folding up his half-finished letter to the Hatchitfess, he placed it with theirs to

come envelope, and hastily picking up the other, which had contained Miss Seaforth's letter, but from which he had forgotten that he had taken it and laid on the table for reference, he turned and left the room after Reginald.

Wolverton, whose eye had rested on the letters since he had entered, noticed the omission, and as he passed the table he snatched up that which Vance had left, thrust it into his pocket and followed them out of the room. In a few minutes the whole party were on the road to Ten Lakes and the cricket match.

During the drive Sidney, who had contrived to seat himself by the side of Emily, in a two-horse vehicle occupied also by Ada and Mr. Horton, seized an available moment to slip the purloined letter over to her and whispered—

"There's the letter; hope it is the right one; had not time to see it."

"Thanks! I cannot read it now; will see you during the day," answered Emily, quietly putting it into her pocket.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CRICKET MATCH AND A SUBSEQUENT LITTLE GAME.

It was past five o'clock, and intense interest was manifested

by the crowd of spectators assembled on the Ten Lakes cricket ground as the match between the club of that village and the formidable County Club drew to its close. Expectation was on tip-toe ; little flutters of excitement and whispered ripples of suspense ran over the field, for the County had sent its last man to the bat, and had still six runs to make to beat their opponents. But one wicket to go down and six runs to make.

It was an unwonted position for them—in the present case wholly unexpected. Instead of a score high above that of their somewhat complacently regarded rivals, they had six runs to earn ; with their last man handling his willow. Their men, collected in an eager knot, watched with anxiously directed eyes, each ball of the over as after determinate preparedness it flew swift and direct from the round sweeping aim of the Ten Lakes bowler ; to be carefully blocked down by the county batsman. The Ten Lakes players, at their posts around the field, alert, watchful and active, become doubly so with the close contest, and the knowledge that victory or defeat for them depends on the next two or three overs.

“ Ha ! Well played ! For two—run it for two,” shouts the county-field captain, as a ball, slightly off the wicket is beautifully cut to leg by the player, and as beautifully stopped in its course and thrown up by the Ten Lakes fielder whose ground it invaded.

“ How’s that ? Umpire,” exclaims the wicket keeper, as simultaneously the bails fell and the panting runner’s bat grounded in his popping crease.

“ Not out,” is the quiet reply, and two runs are added to the score.

Four to make. The County men’s faces lighten up with renewed hope, and again a buzz of excitement runs through the field. Ada Dearborn, seated with her sister in a carriage among the spectators, snivels with apprehension.

“ We’ll be beaten. They’re only four to make to beat us.

Only three to tie ; will they never get that wicket down ;" she groans out between her clenched teeth.

" Ha ! they're running it. Well done !" shout the County men, as a ball struck barely past mid-wicket is run by the excited batsman, who barely saves his wicket.

" Three to make to win," and the County is jubilant.

" Over," cries the Umpire, and as the Ten Lakes cross to their posts, Reggie Mordaunt catches the ball thrown to him by the wicket keeper, and walks to his place to bowl the over.

Determination is written on his face, but anxiety in his heart, for he feels as if the honor of Ten Lakes lay in his hand.

Carefully he measures his distance and pitch, as he poises himself in readiness.

" Play," cries the Umpire, and running his four paces, his gracefully round-even ball flies straight for the middle stump. It is blocked dead. Again, and it meets the same fate. The third, somewhat swifter, rises higher, is missed by the batsman, and passing six inches above the bails, goes into the wicket-keeper's hands.

" That's it ! That's the kind you don't like. Swift and pitching high," mutters Reggie to himself as he walks forward to receive his ball. Again it flies to its mark, rises as it pitches almost into the popping crease, glances over the shoulder of the bat, and drops the off bail to the ground.

The match is over and the hitherto invincible County Club is defeated. Defeated by only two runs—it is true—but defeated by a young village club of their own county, whom they had half condescendingly met, and had fully intended to defeat in one innings. Instead of this, though they had played but one innings, Ten Lakes had played but one also, and had defeated them by two runs.

Probably this over-confidence in themselves and their record had led them to underrate their opponents' prowess, and had induced careless play on their part. On the other hand, the

Ten Lakes Club, in general younger and more active, and inspired by a wholesome awe of the formidable County, had striven by constant practice since receiving the challenge to bring their fielding and their play up to the scientific standard of their opponents.

It was hard on the County, and they felt it hard, but like true cricketers they did not shew their disappointment and chagrin. Gathered into a knot together, and swinging their hats over their heads, they manfully gave three rousing cheers for the Ten Lakes Cricket Club ; and by thus honoring those who had defeated them, they honored themselves. In return the Ten Lakes' proved themselves to be not less generous. Every outward demonstration of the exultation that swelled their hearts, was carefully restrained, and their answering cheers were vociferously hearty ; taken up and prolonged as they were by the whole body of spectators, for Ten Lakes had turned out its population *en masse* to witness the play of their cricketers against the picked men of the County. After the graceful handing over of a new ball, the usual tribute to victory, had been performed by the County field Captain, the dispersal commenced, and the assemblage began to move towards home.

Sidney Wolverton, approaching the Dearborn's carriage, found it occupied by Emily alone : the delighted Ada having flown to jubilate over the Ten Lakes' victory with Ethel and Reggie, and every one else who would listen.

"So you are beaten, it seems, Sidney, at your stupid cricket," she said. "Are your feelings much injured by the defeat?"

"Well ! I should much have preferred it the other way. It comes hard on our fellows to be beaten by the club of a little place like this. I trust, though, I won't meet like defeat in the little game I have to play to-night ;" he answered.

"If you play it right, you will not. It depends on yourself. Are you sure he remains for the dinner?"

"Yes! I think so," he replied. He said as much before leaving this morning."

"You had better make it assured for all that," replied Emily. "Remember he is rather love-sick at present, and the charms of his beloved one may induce him to alter his intention and return with her instead."

"It's possible enough; by jove, Emily. I'll go and hunt him up. By-the-bye, was that letter the right one that I got hold of so nicely this morning?" inquired he, with a laugh.

"Yes! it was; but, unfortunately, it is not of much importance to me," she answered. "I wonder if his reply would have been of use? I should have liked to have seen it."

"His reply! Why he has not written it yet. He was interrupted by our starting, and intends visiting somewhere here this evening," exclaimed Sidney.

"Well! As you'll have him in tow—try to see it or get it for me, if you easily can do so. It might be of use to me," returned the young lady.

"All right, Emily. I'll keep my eyes open. I'll run over and see you this evening, if all goes well with my undertaking.

"*Au revoir,*" and Sidney went off to search for Edwin in the direction where he was most likely to find him—with the Mordaunts and Ethel.

The dinner of the Ten Lakes Cricket Club in honour of their rivals and guests of the day, with its post prandial accompaniment of laughter and song, toasting and speechifying, had at length come to a conclusion. The players, at least, had brought sharp appetites to it, for a hotly-contested field-day ends with a noble sense of hunger, and the dinner had been a sumptuous one, so sumptuous that by reason of it the funds of the Club would probably also need refreshment by an assessment. But, as Reggie Mordaunt had observed, "It's not every day we play with a County Club and beat them into the bargain," so that the ordinarily plain cricketer's dinner had swollen to the pro-

portions of a banquet, and the flowing bowl had passed in mistaken hospitality, more freely than was altogether good for the revellers, even though there had not been excess. That there was a ball on the *tapis* was the probable reason that there had not been such, for there had been those present, Sidney Wolverton among the number, to whom an orgie was an acceptable element. But the entertainment had not degenerated into excess, and had come to a conclusion.

Edwin Vance and Sidney Wolverton were walking arm-in-arm after leaving the dining-hall, down the street, in amicable conversation together.

The former appeared to be in a peculiarly light-hearted vein. He talked fastly and freely, laughing heartily at every observation of his companion or of his own that bore the faintest semblance of point about it. There was an unwonted sparkle in his eye, an unwonted flush upon his cheek, and there was apparent a tendency to ellipse in his sentences, and to cut last syllables from his words.

Wolverton, on the contrary, although he had drank three times as much wine as his companion had done, did not betray the slightest appearance of having drank any. Neither by his manner, his conversation nor his looks would he have been supposed to have just quitted a convivial meeting.

But that he was seasoned. What would to another have been a drunkard's potion, was to him a harmless and unexciting draught. On this occasion he congratulated himself on the self-sacrifice of being temperate, although the three or four glasses of champagne which had exhilarated his companion, fell far short of the quantum he himself had imbibed. But then the one was an accustomed bibationist and the other was not.

"I have a couple of letters to write, Sidney, for this evening's mail, and I must find a place to write them. Where shall we go to?" said Edwin.

"Oh! we'll go the hotel and get a private room. You'll

find materials there. I've got to dress for the ball, and my valise is there, at any rate. We'll go to the hotel," was the reply.

"Very well! I'm agreed. By-the-by, Sidney, have you done anything since we had that conversation the other evening relative to your affairs? Have you thought of any plan?" returned Edwin.

"Oh! well! Get your letters off your mind, and then we'll have a talk over matters. Here we are at the Ten Lakes Hotel. I've seen better, but it will answer all our purposes."

Entering the hostelry, a large, plain-looking brick structure, with an infinity of windows garnishing its front, and opening on to the many-posted galleries which ran under each of its three stories, they found themselves in a bare, uncarpeted hall, with the usual Canadian-country-hotel arrangement of a dingy common sitting-room on one side, and the bar-room, with its inevitable crowd of loafers, on the other.

Turning into the first, Sidney rang the hand-bell on the cigar-ash-ornamented table for an attendant. This operation having failed in its effect, he proceeded to the bar-room in personal search of the delinquent official. Finding in that classic region no one bearing the appearance of connection with the establishment except the bar-keeper, he addressed himself to that important personage.

"Can you give us the use of a private sitting-room for a short time? I have some business to transact."

"All right!" was the curt reply of the man of bottles, desisting for a moment from the dispensing of Upper Canada whiskey to his bibacious clients. "Here! Jim, show these gentlemen to the little drawing-room up stairs, and see what they want," he called out to a coatless individual sitting among the habitués of the bar-room.

This personage, who was the ostler of the hotel, the perfume of his attire sufficiently indicating the nature of his vocation,

accordingly preceded the two gentlemen to a comfortable and rather handsomely furnished room, and lighting a lamp, awaited their commands.

"Bring some paper, pens and ink," said Sidney. "And, look here! have you any champagne in the house? Champagne, I mean. None of your cider and gooseberry jokes. Have you any good?"

"You bet, we have!" replied he of the stables. "There ain't as much fiz drank in this consarn as there is whiskey by a long chalk. But we've got the real stuff for all that."

"Well! bring up a bottle and glasses, and don't forget the writing materials," answered Sidney, and their queer attendant departed on his errand.

"What did you order the champagne for, Sidney? I'm sure we've both had enough already. I shall not drink any, at least," said Edwin, reproachfully, to his friend.

"Oh! nonsense, Vance. What does a glass of champagne amount to? I want some, at any rate, for I'm tired after my day's work, getting beaten by those young scamps. And so do you, too, after standing roasting in the sun all day with a bat in your hand," replied Sidney, decidedly.

"I've had too much as it is, and I won't drink any more to-night," answered Edwin. "A glass of soda would do better. I wish you had not pressed me so often to take wine, Sidney. I am not used to so much."

"Pooh! What the worse are you for it? But have the soda if you like," returned Sidney, and as he spoke their attendant returned bearing the champagne in one hand and a couple of glasses upside down in the other.

"Here's your fiz! The writing fixings will be here directly. They had to send out for them. Old Whiskey Mixer, down stairs, allowed as how you champagne gents would'nt be satisfied with the yallar envelope, blue-ruled, ten-cent-a-quire sort he keeps on hand in gineral. It goes well enough with your hot

whiskey callers though," said the queer genius, who waited on them.

"All right! Bring up a glass of soda with a stick in it, mind, for this gentleman," said Sidney. "Here! take your pay out of this, and a quarter to treat yourself with. Hurry up with those writing materials and the soda—a stick in it, remember,"—he added, the last words in a low and significant tone, as he handed the man a five dollar bill. "High wines! and keep the change yourself."

"All right!" was the reply, and as the door closed behind him, our worthy ostler shook his head and muttered—

"Sid's up to some of his games to-night with that young fellow. Soda and high wines is a queer mixture on the top of champagne; but its no business of mine, though."

He presently returned with the materials for writing, a bottle of soda water, and a large tumbler, nearly a quarter full of the fiery liquid, y'clept high wines, which, being colourless, escaped Edwin's notice, through the thick sides of the common moulded glass.

"That will do! Thanks," said Sidney to the man, who departed.

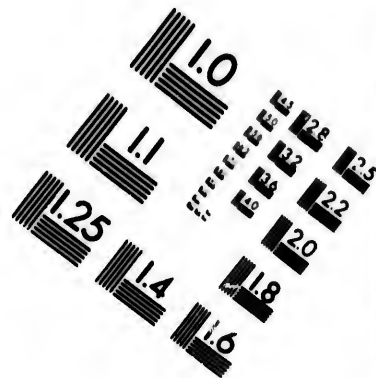
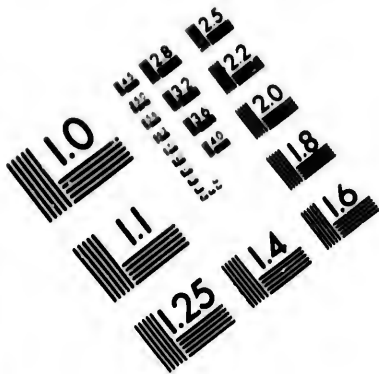
"Here's your paper, Vance. Write away now as fast as you like," he continued, handing Edwin the writing materials. Then, taking up the bottle of soda, he opened it, and poured its contents into the tumbler, with the fiery potion it contained.

"Here! Drink it while it is fresh, though in my opinion a glass of champagne would be better for you," he added, as he gave the traitorous dose to his friend, who drank off what, innocently, he supposed to be a cooling draught.

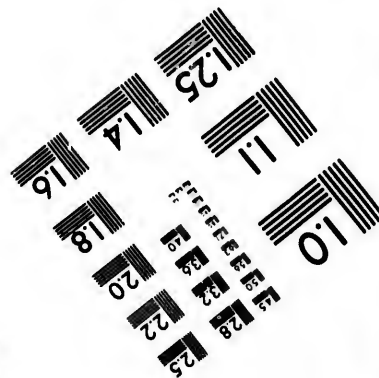
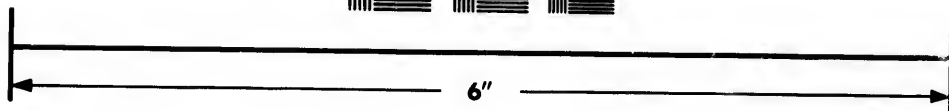
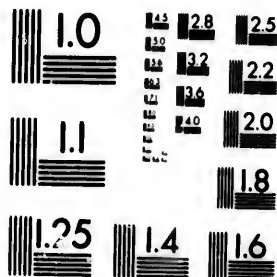
"Well! that soda water has a very strange taste," said Edwin, as he put down the empty glass.

Had he known what a glass of soda "with a stick in it" meant as, if he had been a tavern frequenter, like his friend, he would have known, he would most certainly have avoided it; but to his





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unsophisticated mind the stick meant merely a country contrivance for adding sparkle to a stale commodity, a mere disengager of latent carbonic acid gas, which in country kept soda, was probably very apt to be latent, or, in plain English, very flat.

However, as the soda possessed a cooling effect in itself for the moment, in spite of the dosing to which it had been subjected, whose action was not so immediately apparent, he sat down and finished his letter to the Hatchitfesses coolly and equably enough.

But when, in the course of a few minutes, he commenced his reply to Miss Seaforth, and raised himself from the recumbent attitude of writing to search for her letter, it could be seen that there was a deeper flush on his face, an unsteady and excited light in his eye, and an unnatural expression of feature, which too plainly showed that Wolverton's potion had accomplished its intended purpose.

"What can I have done with that letter?" he exclaimed, impatiently, as, after searching his pockets in the vain attempt to find what was not there, he held the empty envelope in his hand. "I'm sure I picked it up with the other, and all! I can find is the envelope. I wonder now if I left it on the library table. It's vexatious, for I wanted it to refer to in my replying. However, I must do the best I can without it, and answer the letter from memory."

"Perhaps you left it on the cricket ground to-day. Likely enough if you had it loosely in your pocket," said Sidney.

"I may have done so, although it is strange too. I'll write a few words, at any rate. I wish now I had written this morning, for I shall not express myself so clearly as I should wish after that champagne. The soda water has done me no good either," replied he.

"I told you so at the time, Vance, that a glass of champagne would have been better for you. Take some now."

"Indeed I will not, Sidney. I feel as if I had too much already," was his answer, as he picked up his pen again. After a moment's consideration, he dashed off a few lines to Miss Seaforth, folded, enclosed and addressed the two letters, and taking another, written the evening before, from his pocket, laid them on the table.

"I suppose I can get that fellow who showed us up to mail these letters," he observed.

"Oh! yes! I think so; I'll ring," replied Sidney, taking up the hand bell.

"Never mind! Sidney. I don't feel very well, and will go out for a minute. I'll send him up. That soda water or something has upset me. A breath of fresh air is the thing," he said, and going to the door, he walked down stairs.

Sidney thus left to himself with the letters he desired to obtain wholly within his reach, pondered for a moment as to whether he should risk the chances of Vance's return to the room before the man came up and take immediate possession of the prize or wait until sure which of them came first. He hesitated awhile with the uneasy and nervously guilty feeling, the deterring consciousness that, spite of being alone in the closed room, its very walls contained a thousand eyes fixed upon him and taking silent note of the act he was meditating.

"Why did I not think of it at once," he said, almost aloud, and jumping up he put the three letters into his pocket. "If Vance comes up first I'll tell him I have sent the letters off to the post office, and I can then go down stairs and find the man myself."

His pilfering object was attained.

But though attained there remained a sensation of intolerable unrest upon him alone in the room. The letters seemed to burn in his pockets like fire—to drag him down as by tons' weight. Not from remorse or shame of the act he had accomplished, but simply from the fear that, until they were safely on their way to

the post office, there was possibility of detection. Unable to bear it longer, he left the room, and started down stairs in search of the ostler, to meet him half-way coming up.

"The other gentleman told me to get some letters for the mail in the room you were in," he said to Sidney. "Hurry up with them, or it'll be too late, and the office will be shut."

"Here they are," said Sidney, taking the two he did not want from his pocket. "Save the mail if you can, there's a good fellow. Where's my friend?"

"Oh! he's walking about on the gallery down stairs. I calculate he's feeling sick," replied the man with a grin, as he turned down again with the letters.

Sidney followed slowly after him and joined his friend outside.

"Whatever is the matter with you, Vance?" he exclaimed. "If you are feeling the effects of the champagne still, you will be better out of the air. Come up stairs again. You will be all right shortly. Are you not well?" he added.

"Oh! I'm well enough, but I'm half intoxicated, I'm sorry to say, and am worse since I took that villainous soda. I am not accustomed to anything more than a single glass of wine, and I am easily affected, I suppose," replied Edwin, with a half-ashamed laugh, continuing his rapid walk up and down in the fresh evening air.

Sidney saw that he had gone quite far enough with his friend. His eyes had assumed a glassy brightness and shone with an unnatural and wild expression, which, with an occasional unsteady movement in his gait, showed plainly enough that he was not himself by any means.

"Pshaw! You are not half intoxicated, but you will be better out of the air. Come up stairs with me and sit down. You will be straight enough in an hour," said Sidney, taking him by the arm to lead him in.

"Well! I believe I shall do so. Anything would be better

than my present sensations," replied Edwin, as they walked into the house together. "I wanted to speak with you of your own affairs to-night, but I don't feel capable of much at present," he continued.

Returning to the room they had left, Edwin threw himself down on a sofa and fanned his flushed face with his handkerchief, while Sidney, pouring out some champagne, handed a glass to him, which, however, was refused by a gesture.

"No more for me! thanks," he said. "I'm quite satisfied with my evening's experience."

"Well! please yourself. You make too much of a trifle, though," replied Sidney, putting the glass down again on the table.

Seating himself, he continued. "I suppose you don't care for going into business matters to-night, Vance. Don't feel up to it quite, so we'll defer consideration of my affairs until another opportunity, but in the meantime you can do me a great favour if you will. You mentioned, during our conversation the other evening, that you had a couple of thousand at command which you could let me have. Now, I find on a careful review of my immediately available resources, that I can in the course of a couple of days rake together a sum somewhere between six or seven thousand dollars. If you will let me have a thousand for immediate expenses, and give me your endorsement to my note for three thousand five hundred dollars, I can tide over my pressing difficulty. I can thus pay ten thousand on the lands, and get sufficient time to enable me to procure the balance either by disposing of a portion of them or by some other method. The payment for these lands is the most pressing demand I have upon me, and that disposed of I can get along well enough, I think. At any rate, will try to do so. Can you do this for me, Vance?"

This specious little address had been admirably calculated by Wolverton. The falsehoods in regard to his position, and the

means necessary to clear him from his difficulties, had been so stated that, in his present condition, Vance was neither likely to perceive their want of coherence to former statements or to question their probability. The latter had listened, reclining on the sofa, and his head resting on a cushion, and when Sidney had finished he raised himself to a sitting position, as if endeavouring to pluck up a little interest in the matter, as he replied—

“All right! Sidney. I'm glad to see that you think you can get so easily out of your present troubles, and hope sincerely that you will be enabled to do so. I am not fit for business or anything else this evening, but will be happy to do as you ask. You shall have a cheque for a thousand, and either my note or endorsement for the three and a half. Have you a blank? All right, then, fill it up, and here's my cheque-book. Fill up a cheque, I can't do anything,” he continued, throwing his aching head down on the sofa again, unmindful of all his promises and good resolutions with respect to Wolverton and his affairs.

Sidney hesitated a moment as to whether he would accept the offer of the note instead of an endorsement. The former was in many respects infinitely preferable. It was more business like. The presentation for discount of his own paper, no matter how well endorsed, did not look well and bore “accommodation” on its face as plainly as if the word were written there, and Vance's name on the face of the paper would make it the more easily discountable. But then he reflected that bank managers knew quite too much of his affairs to look on Vance's note to him as other than “accommodation.” Again, and this decided him, Vance would have to put his name on the face of the paper instead of the back, and this did not suit his ends.

“Oh! If you endorse mine it will do as well, thanks. Much obliged to you for the offer, though,” replied Sidney, producing a book of blank forms from his pocket.

Taking up a pen he then filled it in properly, promising to pay three thousand five hundred dollars to Edwin Vance or

order, three months after date, and handed it to him for examination.

"All right! Sidney. Three thousand five hundred. I see you've made it payable at the bank where I keep my account. All the better, since if you cannot conveniently meet it when due, I can the easier see to it myself," said Edwin, sitting up and glancing over the paper. He then got up, and, going to the table endorsed it, handed it back to Sidney, and then went back to his sofa.

Sidney took a bill stamp from his pocket-book, affixed it to the note, and took up the pen to cancel it with the date and his initials.

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, springing up impatiently. "I've spoiled it. Splashed it all over with ink, with the spluttering pen. I am afraid I'll have trouble you to endorse a new one, Vance. This is done for," and walking over he showed it to him.

"Yes, I think so," said Edwin, with a half laugh. "Make out another and the cheque too. How my unfortunate head does go! My brain feels as if it were red hot," he continued, burying his head in the cushion.

Sidney filled up the new note, and a cheque from Vance's book. Having finished them, he went to the piano, which stood in the room, took a music book from it, laid the note and the cheque upon it, the former face downwards, and carried it to the sofa, with a pen in his hand.

"Here! Vance, just sign them. I won't trouble you to get up, as you are suffering," he said, in an accent of apparent concern, as he held the book before him.

Edwin raised himself with a sigh, took the pen and wrote his name across the back of the note, and signed the cheque without looking at either, too generously confident of his friend.

"Thank you! I won't trouble you again. Try to rest a few minutes until the pain leaves you," said Sidney, removing the book, the moment Edwin had signed.

He walked back to the table, and with a sense of triumph placed the latter's endorsement for thirty-five thousand dollars, duly signed, stamped and completed into his pocket and he felt secure.

No twinge of remorse, no sense of disgrace for the shameful act he had perpetrated, tugged at his heart strings with the arousing grasp of conscience, or quenched the exultant gleam of his eyes in self-humiliation. No inward retrospect swept over his soul and lowered the confident poise of his head at the abhorrent aspect of his own vileness.

No gleam of pity for the generous-hearted and confiding friend—blameable alone in that he was too aimable and too yielding, whom he had not alone robbed, but had drugged and tried his best to degrade that day—passed from his remorseless eyes.

Did not the reflection—chilling as a northern blast—sweep over him that, as crime after crime, the crimes whose perpetration he had but just accomplished, added their blackness to his soul, the blackness became the more indelible? the harder to be washed out, as washed out they must be, even in tears of blood. Did not the paralyzing thought, like a blow, crush into his consciousness, that for the blackness of that which he had received from his Maker in purity, he was alone responsible, for had he not, with his eyes open, deliberately and again sinned: and as he was responsible, so must he atone?

That, as he added wickedness knowingly to wickedness, hardening his seared conscience in its guilt, so became it the harder for him—the more impossible, the more undesired, even, to turn himself away from his sin; and looking towards the Great Atonement, that would wash his soul again white as snow—appealing to the world-embracing sacrifice—his Saviour's blood, cry forth the cry that His mercy never refuses: "I repent me of my sin—forgive."

No! Sensations such as these would be the last to occur to Sidney Wolverton, as he stood there, triumphant. There was

no remorse or shame—no pity—no sense of his own vileness present to him, as he looked down on the generous friend whom he had injured—and considered, as to his next move. He was the victor—what cared he for the victim? He had swept away the trace of one crime, and its danger to himself, by the commission of another—and what cared he who suffered thereby? Joy, and the pride of success reigned in his heart in place of bitter humiliation and disgrace of himself.

He had but little left to do: his work for the day was very nearly completed. He had but to see Miss Dearborn, and then take himself off with his spoil. Now that he had been successful, he had not the slightest intention of returning to Lake Mor-daunt to spend the Sunday, or even to bid his "Farewell!" He had brought his travelling valise with him to Ten Lakes, and an hour hence would see him on the road. He sat for a few minutes meditating upon the events of the day, and his next moves—and quietly finishing his champagne.

At length he rose from his seat, looked at his watch, and half audibly muttered: "If I can make a start in half an hour, I'll catch the night train at Cascades; and the first on Monday for Toronto. But I'll have to hurry, though. I must see Emily Dearborn before I go. I wonder how my friend there is getting along," continued he, walking over to the sofa, where Vance still lay reclining, and found that he had fallen asleep.

"All the better for him," he said to himself; "he'll be straight enough again when he wakes. Well! If I had such a head as he has—that two or three glasses of champagne would knock me into a cocked hat, like that—I'd—yes!—I'd become a temperance man, or I'd season it with a little 'del. tre.'"

"I guess that that whiskey sickened him; but it was a bright idea of mine, though! How Emily will laugh over it! I'll go and see her now, and I'll come back and bid him 'good-bye' before I start," and turning away he walked quickly from the room, not to disturb the sleeper.

Proceeding to the bar-room, he asked that a conveyance be ready in half an hour to take him to Cascades.

"Cascades!—the devil!" replied the bar tender with agreeable politeness. "What in thunder do you want to go to Cascades for, at this time of a Saturday night? You can't get out of it before Monday."

"Can I have the tears, or shall I go elsewhere for it?" said Sidney, peremptorily. "I want to catch the night train, and am willing to pay for speed to do it."

"Oh! you can have it fast enough, if you must have it. It will be ready for you on time," replied the bar-tender sulkily.

"All right! I'll be back for it in half an hour," and Sidney departed for his interview with Miss Dearborn.

"I wonder what in the world Emily wants this letter of Vance's for?" he soliloquized, as he walked along the street towards the Town Hall. "She's up to some deep game or other against him and his love affair with the Mordaunt girl. I can't see into her idea—though I'm very certain there's nothing between him and this Miss Seaforth, to whom he is writing. He's not the kind to make love to two at once, by any means," and Sidney laughed at the idea of his very proper friend indulging himself with two strings to his bow.

"She's trying to break off the match with the charming Ethel. I feel pretty sure; but for what end I can't imagine," he continued. "She surely can't expect that he'll marry her after. Not much!—he won't. I would not give a fig for her chance. She's too fast—too knowing a chicken altogether for his taste. One of your straight-laced beauties, very proper and very good, is his ideal of female perfection. Strange!—how tastes differ.

"I'd rather have that vicious little witch of an Emily—full of life and wicked cleverness—than forty Ethel Mordaunts. But she won't catch Vance, though; if she breaks off his marriage, with some of her schemes, the poor wretch will break his heart over it. Well! it's no business of mine; I have enough of my

own affairs to take care of at present, and she may play her game for all I care. Let her fire away, and amuse herself. I'll marry her myself as soon as I get ready.

"She'll be at the hop to-night, that's certain—flirting away with some of the young puppies around here, in lieu of higher game. I'll have to send in for her to come out to me, as I am not altogether in ball-room fig," and he concluded his soliloquy as he arrived at the Town Hall.

He had to wait for a few minutes in an anti-room, after sending in his message—until Emily Dearborn, a radiant vision in white—beautiful as a dream—came out to meet him.

So very fair was she—so lovely in her charming youth and beauty,—the gauzy folds of her shining dress floating around her in snowy purity; so sweet and so innocent seeming, she hardly appeared as belonging to this lower earth, where angel-visits are few and far between. And well might she be imagined some such starry creation, strayed from its transcending abode; yet how eagerly had she come forth on what she knew to be a mission of evil!

Sidney Wolverton, fresh from his scene of crime, gazed with rapt and wondering admiration at the spectacle of loveliness before him, and—so strongly is imbued in our consciousness the impression that innocence and beauty are natural allies; that loveliness is the visible appearance of innocence,—he absolutely hesitated to address himself to her on his unworthy errand, even though it had been herself who had instigated it.

"Well; how have you succeeded in your projects?" she enquired, as soon as they were alone.

"I felt a little dubious as to the result, as I found that the dinner party broke up early, and that Vance had hardly drank enough to be affected. How did you get on with him?" she continued.

"Everything worked to perfection, from beginning to end; and resulted as you foretold it would, Emily. In the first

place, here is his letter to Miss Seaforth, which you asked me to get. Whatever is the motive you have in view with these letters? You surely do not suspect the pious Edwin Vance of having two loves, do you?" he replied, handing her the letter,

"Never mind my motive for it," answered Emily, taking her prize, which she unhesitatingly proceeded to open and read.

"This is splendid!—it's capital! The very thing I wanted, Sidney! Tell me all about it, and how you got it!" exclaimed Miss Dearborn excitedly.

"I'll tell you the whole story, Emily; it will be the shortest way, and I have not much time, as I leave for Cascades to-night.

"Notwithstanding all I could do, Vance would not be persuaded to drink more than two or three glasses of champagne at the dinner; but, nevertheless, he was considerably excited by what little he had taken, and when he got out into the fresh air he was visibly affected. He is probably not so much accustomed to drinking as some people I know. Well! we got a room at the hotel here, where he could write his letters, and have a talk over my affairs. I ordered up champagne, but nothing would induce him to partake of it. He complained of my pressure at dinner, and said he had taken too much, and called for soda-water. I privately directed the attendant to put a strong glass of whiskey into the tumbler, and I poured the soda into the same glass. This was worse than champagne would have been for him, and speedily had a powerful effect.

"Of course he was unable to find the letter I got for you this morning; and I noticed he merely dashed off a few lines in haste, and seemingly glad to get it done. The whiskey had made him ill as well as intoxicated him, and he laid down on a sofa, just as I wished. In fact, he acceded to my request at once. The little game of spoiling the first note was eminently successful. He never looked at the new one I made, but endorsed it unhesitatingly—little imagining, however, that he endorsed ten

times the amount he supposed. This puts me all right, and removes all danger. I doubt that he would have looked at it, even had he not been suffering. He never suspects any one."

"Wish me joy of my success, Emily," he continued. "I am a rich man again. Tell me you are glad for my sake, and Emily: tell me also you are glad for your own."

"Well! I'm glad for your sake, at any rate, Sidney. You are not out of the mire yet, though you have escaped the danger that pressed you. You know I like you, though you are not the most honest man in the world," she answered, laughing. "But I am still too doubtful of your future to make promises. However, I congratulate you," and she held up her rosy lips to him.

"How beautiful you are to-night, Emily," he said, when he had availed himself of the tempting privilege. "As you came in just now you were such a dazzling vision, so sweet, so lovely and so innocent-looking, so like an angel might appear, I was half afraid to speak to you on our rather uncelestial subjects. Oh! Emily, you know that I love you, and you say you like me; why then do you so unceremoniously throw to one side every overture of my love?"

"Because I'm not so innocent as I may appear, and I go about the world with my eyes open, Sidney," she replied, decidedly, though evidently pleased at his tribute to her charms and her power. "I've told you already that I will not marry an unsuccessful man. Be successful, and it may be different, though I make no promises."

"Unsuccessful! I am not an unsuccessful man to-day, Emily. You are too hard upon me," he replied.

"No! I am not too hard upon you, Sidney, and if you think a moment you will acknowledge that I am not so. I do not pretend to romance, to 'love in a cottage,' or the thousand and one merits of the heroine of a novel. I am a live girl, alive to my own merits, and determined from the first that I will not throw away my chances, my marketable value, so to speak, upon

any ridiculous notions of love, and love alone. Yet I can love, and love intensely, with all the intensity of a woman's love, and can add to that love the inestimable advantage, the infinite variety with which the talent of a clever woman, who sees the world as it should be seen, and adapts herself to it, enhaloes and glorifies her love. But I intend to marry a rich man, and if I can love the man I marry, so much the better. Yet if that is not possible, I would still marry him, for without wealth and the power and position it gives, there could not, for me, be happiness. Again! silly as you may think it, Sidney, though I am not a good woman, yet I would like to marry a good man, not alone for the respectability which attaches to his status as such, but because it would be so much better for me in the end—in that future which surely comes. Though such as you and I appear to regard it as too far off—it's well worth our calculations. But enough of this."

"Well! Emily, I am not a good man, most decidedly, and I don't think I ever can be, I'm too far gone for that. But do you think yourself that, even with your beauty and talents, your marriage to a good man whom you loved, would make him happy or yourself a good woman?" sarcastically enquired Sidney.

"No! but if I loved him he might make me a good woman, and then find both his own happiness and mine. As however, such an event is not at present probable, we'll talk no further about it," replied she, gently enough.

"I will have to be moving, I think. I must catch the night train at Cascades, so as to get the first Grand Trunk train for Toronto on Monday."

"Toronto! Shall you be in Toronto?" interrupted Emily. "Then you can do something for me. Do you know Mr. Hatchitfess' office, Sidney?"

"Oh! Yes. I know the old villain to my cost and his scamp of a son also. Whatever do you want with these people, Emily?" he replied.

"Some information. I wish you would go to their office and try to find out from one of them all they know about Miss Agnes Seaforth. Who she is? What they think of her? What she is like? and generally any information you can obtain concerning her, and write me at once the full details. You'll render me a service by so doing, Sidney."

"Well! under the circumstances, I must say it is cool of you, Emily, to expect me to do this. I can see plainly enough that you are hatching a scheme against Vance's engagement, hoping, I suppose, to marry him afterwards. And you ask me to help you to that end. I've helped you more than I like already," answered Sidney, disgusted.

"You will do it, Sidney, whether or not you like to do it, and you had better not quarrel about the matter. You are in my power at present. Supposing I were to enlighten Mr. Vance as to to-day's proceedings, what then would follow? You and I had better remain allies and assist each other. Do you really deem me capable of the folly of imagining that I could marry Vance, supposing I wished it, by breaking off his engagement? His heart is too deeply concerned for so facile a change, and he already honours me with his dislike. You will send me the information I require, Sidney," replied Miss Dearborn, decisively.

"That makes the matter different, Emily," and I will do all I can. I must really say 'good-bye,' though I could wish to stay. By-the-bye, show me the letter to this Miss Seaforth which I brought you. What can it contain to be of use to you? Vance is the most unlikely man in the world to have two loves. Let me see it?"

"I'd rather not at present. I'll tell you so much, that, had Vance not drunk any wine to-day, he would not have been so careless in his expressions. "Well! 'Good-bye.' Get yourself out of danger as quickly as you can, and cease your vicious and extravagant habits, if you have any object at heart which you desire to attain. You know what I mean. Farewell," and shak-

ing hands with him she returned to the ball room, while he walked back to the hotel.

CHAPTER XX.

PECCAVI.

Edwin Vance, lying asleep on his sofa, became suddenly conscious of the fact that he was undergoing the operation of being well shaken up, and shaken too with no gentle hand.

Springing to his feet he found himself confronted by the familiar form of Mr. Barney Conley, whose features, generally twinkling with fun and of pleasant expression, on this occasion, at least, wore by no means an aspect of amiability.

"What the divil are ye doing here, sorr?" were the first words that greeted his astonished ears.

"Doing!" repeated Edwin, not yet wholly awake, and looking around him in a surprised manner. "What am I doing? Why I should think I have been asleep."

"Aslape! It's just aslape ye wor, and no mishtake," replied Barney, glancing significantly at the empty champagne bottles and glasses on the table. "Ye'd better come wid me and at wance too."

"Go home with you. What! are you waiting for me, Barney? But where's Mr. Wolverton?" answered Edwin, now thoroughly awake, and finding that his nap had had the effect of making him feel like himself again, mitigating to some extent his headache.

"Oh! it wor him ye were with then? I tought as much, be-gorra! It's in bad company ye wor, anyhow, sorr!" replied Barney, sarcastically. Then, gazing fixedly at him for a moment or two, he continued. "But ye're not dhrunk, after all, I percave. By the powers o' war! it's lucky for ye then, in this murdering shebeen wid ould Sidney Wolverton. Didn't ye

have enough av it at the denner, that ye had to come here fur more?" he enquired, in continuation.

"Why, whatever is the matter with you, Barney?" exclaimed Edwin, gazing at the man as if probably thinking he had taken leave of his senses. "You have not been taking too much whiskey, have you?"

"Faix, thin! I had a tasthe or two, mebbe, av it, but I hav'ent made an omadhaun av meself wid it, and I did'nt put whiskey and soda wather on the top av champagne eider," replied Barney, who had got a part of the facts of the closed soda from the ostler, whom he had closely questioned on finding the two friends were there. "And did ye sign yer name to the false papers ould Wolverton give ye?—for the tree thousand and the tirty thousand? Begorra! if ye've got——"

"What's going on here?" exclaimed Sidney Wolverton, walking into the room, at this point of the conversation, to which he had been quietly listening for a minute or so at the door.

"Is our friend Barney drunk or crazy to-night, that he is inflicting his maudlin rubbish upon you? What have you been doing with yourself, Barney, that you forget to whom you are speaking?" he continued,

"It's to Mистер Vance I am sphakin', sorr, and not to you, sorr. It's better ye'd be wid the banker's daughter—hatching schemes again honest folk, sorr. Dhrunk, am I! Faix! and if I was as dhrunk as wan gentleman I know, the night I drove him to the Lake, it's raison ye'd have to talk," returned Barney, in high indignation; for he cordially hated Sidney Wolverton, and was probably a little inspired by the elevating effects of Upper Canada whiskey.

"No more of this, Barney!—we have had enough. Go and get your carriage ready; we will be down directly," broke in Edwin impatiently; and Barney turned on his heel and left the room.

"I see you are all straight again, Vance. It certainly does not take much to upset you. When you fell asleep I went out for a walk and a look at the ball-room, and I've come back to say good-bye to you, and ask you to make my excuses at the Lake. I have received a telegram calling me at once to Hoptown on business of importance; and I start directly to take the night train at Cascades. I'm very much obliged to you for what you have done for me to-night, Vance; you are a true friend. Remember me to them all at the Lake, and especially to your fair fiancée.

"Good-bye, old fellow; I must be off;" and Sidney held out his hand to his friend.

"Good-bye, Sidney—sorry you have to go to-night. You have a long drive before you. I shall start, too, with Barney; so we'll go down together. When shall I see you again?" replied Edwin, shaking his hand warmly, as they went down stairs together.

* * * * *

Edwin Vance's reflections, as he returned with Barney to the Lake, were none too pleasant.

As he looked back on the events of the evening, he felt humiliated, and blamed himself severely for his want of firmness and ability to utter that very useful word 'No!' at the proper time. He acknowledged to himself that his yielding nature, which would submit to inconvenience, or the opinions and wishes of others, rather than make a scene appear to be disobligeing or different from those around him, in the assertion of what he knew to be the right thing, was a fault which on this occasion notably had placed him in a false position, and which must be corrected.

Had he not been, this very evening, over-excited by wine, and been ill by reason of it? Yet, though he had drunk but little—had it not been too much for him? Was it not his own fault in weakly yielding to apparently friendly pressure?—an

example to those around him? He was compelled to acknowledge that it was such.

He remembered with dismay his implicit promise to Ethel, that he would not drink wine on this occasion; and how had he kept it? he asked himself. He had told her that in all probability he would not do so—and he meant what he said at the time; while she had evidently, to his mind, accepted his statement as an unconditional promise, and was satisfied. Yet he had broken his word to her!

This was an intensely bitter remembrance to him—so bitter that he could have thrown himself to the ground in his shame and agony, and have hidden himself from the world and his own thoughts.

That, in the very first days of their engagement—of the acceptance of his love by a being so beautiful, so sweet and so pure—who, in return, undoubtedly expected of him that he should keep himself undefiled, both before the world and in his own eyes; he had not only touched defilement, but had violated his word of honour to her. He groaned in spirit. His humiliation and contempt for himself almost amounted to despair.

“How has this evil thing arisen to me?” he asked himself, as he gloomily and remorsefully pondered over the incidents which had led to this self-abandonment.

“This morning I no more imagined that I should do what I have done, than I should have supposed myself capable of committing a murder. I may do that next,” he added with bitter humour. “After this, why should I not deem myself equal to any atrocity? A man who will drink and tell lies, may not regard himself as a saint; and yet I have been in the habit of considering myself a very decent fellow. I could hardly claim distinction on that score to-day,” he continued, with a savage laugh at himself.

“It is a hard lesson for me—a very hard lesson; but I will

learn it to the last letter, and reap the benefits of its teachings. I will drink the bitter cup to its dregs ; I will accept manfully my humiliation and the consequences of my fault, and shall not attempt to avert them by any dastardly throwing the blame upon others, which so rightly rested upon myself.

“No more moderate drinking for me ! I have had enough of that ; I accept that as a finality. Moderate, indeed ! It would hardly seem so to-day. I have prided myself upon being a temperate man ; that in this matter I was under control, and could not commit excess ; yet my moderate drinking has bro't me to grief. It shall do so no more. Never again shall the wine cup touch my lips. With the firm resolve to place between myself and harm the breast-plate of total abstinence, I can deem myself safe. I have proved to-day that for me there is not safety without its protection. The temperance people are right. They may be injudicious and unwise towards the advancement of their cause, by their peremptoriness and resistance upon this very subject of moderate drinking ; it is very possible that they may rather repel than attract those who have not yet suffered ;—but I have now for myself experienced its insidious dangers, and can no longer wonder that they be not dispassionate and calm in their denunciations.”

Edwin's reflections were here interrupted by Barney, who was driving him home, and had apparently been, since they had started, cogitating over some question of interest—who now in a tone wheedlingly conciliatory, and of disarming respectfulness, put forth the following query :

“Shure now ! Mистер Vance, didn't ye know better nor to put whishkey intil yer sodha-wather, after the hoight av champagne ye'd all been dhrinking at the dinner?—or wor it a thrick some wan wor playing on ye?”

“What's that you say, Barney?” exclaimed Edwin, looking up hastily ; “I don't understand what you mean. Whiskey ! put whiskey into my soda water ! I had no whiskey.”

"Oh, begorra! then, but it's the truth I am tellin' ye. It wor the dirty baste of an ostler they kape over at the hot-tel there as tould me that he'd carried up a smashing big glass o' whiskey and a bottle av sodha wather till ye, and, bad luck to me, but I was thinking it was quare it wor av a quite gintleman the like av yoursilf for to do. Arrah, thin! but it was a bad mixther ye made av it—the whiskey and the champagne ye drank. It's foighting together they'd be, and it's as dhrunk as a piper and as sick as a dog they'd lave ye, in just less nor no time."

"But I had no whiskey, Barney, I tell you. I drank nothing but a glass of soda water at the hotel, though I noticed it was not good, and had a peculiar taste," replied Edwin, who was becoming interested.

"Faix! It's likely the taste av it wud be peculer, wid a noggin av high wines intil it. It wor a shabby thrick wor played on yer, Misther Vance," answered Barney.

"You mistake entirely, Barney. What possible interest could the people of the house have to serve by playing me such a senseless trick? Besides, my friend opened the bottle of soda water in my presence."

"Deed it wor not the people of the hot-tel played it on ye; they did as they wor bid, belike. If ye'd looked intil the tumbler afore yer friend put the sodha wather intil it, ye'd have seed the whiskey there. If yer friend, Misther Wolverton, didn't know of the dirthy thrick, then no man knowed it. But, begorra! he'd his raysins for getting ye dhrunk, and it wor him as gin ye the whiskey, and no mishtake about it."

"This is impertinent nonsense, Barney, and I'll have no more of it. You shall not say another word on the subject," returned Edwin, angrily.

"Oh! the divil another word 'll pass me mouth. But he axed ye till sign papers fur him, didn't he now, Misther Vance? False papers and sphoilt papers, and he wanted to put ye free like and careless, so ye'd take no notish till his doings. I meant no har-

rum to say what I've said. It's raisons av me own I have, and ye can ax Miss Ethel."

Barney would say no more, and Edwin did not ask him.

Here was a new light on the subject. He remembered again and with more significance the pressure which Wolverton had applied to induce him to drink champagne, both at the dinner and at the hotel afterwards, and for the first time the suspicion arose in his mind that all was not right. A suspicion that was, however, cast aside and rejected as unworthy of himself and of his friend, as soon as formed.

"Absurd and impossible!" he said to himself; but Barney's words nevertheless left their impression.

Their arrival at Lake Mordaunt, however, put an end to his further reflections on the matter. The carriage drew up at the house, and he proceeded to alight.

Hardly had the crunching on the gravel ceased, than Ethel, who had evidently been on the watch for them, appeared, a lamp in her hand, at the door.

"How late you are!" she exclaimed.

Apart from her lover, she had probably found the time to be long.

"I thought you did not intend remaining for the ball, Edwin."

As he entered the hall, and the light fell upon his pale face and eyes, from which the excitement of wine had vanished, leaving them unwontedly dim and watery, she, looking up eagerly for the accustomed smile, listening for the accustomed loving words, saw the change, and with anxiety in her voice, enquired—

"Are you ill, Edwin? What has occurred? Is anything the matter with you? Tell me! dearest."

Then, as an idea of the truth flashed upon her, or as probably some faint trace, some infinitesimal wafting of the odour of wine reached her pure and sensitive nostril, she started and said—

"Oh! Edwin."

The hearty reproach conveyed in the tone of the low, sweet voice ; the fading away of the smile from that dear face ; the mute sorrow expressed in the lovely eyes fixed upon his, was anguish for him, as deep as he had ever experienced.

"Yes ! Ethel ; I have something to tell you," he answered ; with deep sorrow in his voice, but a tone of firmness and decision ringing through it.

"In regret, deep shame and sorrow I tell it, yet whatever the consequences to myself may be, I am decided to tell it—my shame and my sin. I promised you, my darling, but yesterday that I would not, in all probability I would not, take wine at this dinner to-day, and I have broken my promise—my pledged word to you, my pure darling, my affianced wife—that I would not touch the accursed thing, and I have touched it. I have been miserably weak and yielding when I should, in my faith to you, have been strong, and I have fallen. I have no one to blame but myself. I have yielded, in pure want of firmness, when I should not have yielded. I have, it is true, committed no disgraceful excess, and drank but little wine. Still, little as it was, it was excess for me, for I was not myself, and I was made ill. The only atonement in my power to make, and my plain duty to you, as my affianced wife, required of me that I should come, as I have come regardless of the shame, to tell you of my fault and my sin.

"Could you but know, my darling, the shame, the bitter shame, and humiliation that oppresses me as I relate these things to you, you would pity me. Forgive me, if you can ! Ethel ; though I cannot forgive myself. If you cannot do so, I must bear the bitter consequences as I best can. My lesson has been a hard one, but its teachings shall not be in vain, the warning shall not be lost upon me, and I have made my resolve ; the determination to maintain my resolve, that never again shall my lips touch the wine cup. But as I have already

violated a promise, and that a promise made to you in the first few days of our new engagement, a promise, which of all others I should have held sacred, you may well question my power or my will to maintain the sanctity of another vow. But for the space of one year Ethel, I surely am able to hold inviolate my word, and I solemnly promise you, that for such space, I will remain in total abstinence. Had I been as little self-confident as I am now—when you—knowing me better than I know myself—asked for my promise, I would not have had the shame of these avowals to make to you ; my darling.”

“ You did not break any promise to me Edwin, for you did not make such. You merely told me that in all probability, you would not drink wine at the dinner ; I would not have thought of asking for your promise, had I not been aware that in all probability an attempt would be made to induce you to take too much wine. Had your friend, Mr. Wolverton been absent, I should not have dreamed of such a request. It was in anxiety for you that I did so, for I had good reason to know that he had a design against you, which was to be forwarded in this manner. In fact you were plotted against,” replied Ethel quietly, standing before him as when she first spoke.

“ That may be so, Ethel. Indeed, I suspect that all was not right, though I cannot conceive what reason Sidney Wolverton, could possibly have for such a cause ; still, that does not excuse me, or relieve me of my culpability in yielding, when tempted ; for breaking as I, in reality did break—my word to you,” returned Edwin mournfully enough.

“ I do not blame you, Edwin, under the circumstances, except for your over confidence in your friend, whom I know—if you have not yet discovered—to be false, and also, perhaps, that you are inclined to be too complaisant, and to give way to those surrounding you. Forgive me for saying so. Let me also tell you, that I honour you for your manliness and courage in coming to me as you have done to-night ; that would

convince me, were I inclined to doubt the sincerity of your resolve of total abstinence ; in which I rejoice, as armed with that one is always safe. Were it not for the mental sufferings you have endured both by the occurrences of this evening, and by your brave avowal of them to me, I should not regret them, if they have but the effect of opening your eyes to the real merits of your friend Mr. Wolverton.

“ Of whom hereafter I shall not speak.”

“ Where is Reggie ? Did you see him this evening ?” she added.

“ Not since we parted on leaving the dining hall. He then told me that he would remain for the dance, and would not be home until after midnight,” replied Edwin to her question.

“ And is it possible that you forgive me ? Ethel.” “ Is it the same as ever between us ?” he continued looking wistfully at her.

“ I have told you so already, Edwin. There are others who are to blame, and whom I do not forgive. Now run up stairs, Edwin and make yourself presentable for the half hour or so before bedtime,” he answered with a reassuring smile.

CHAPTER XXI.

AND HE WAS COMFORTED.

To apply to Miss Ethel Mordaunt the appellation of a ‘ girl of the period,’ in the usual acceptation of the term, would be certainly the application of a misnomer. She was not either fast enough, loud enough, dressy, showy or brazen enough to merit the enviable distinction. And yet, if she were not a girl of the period, she was truly a girl for the period—for any period—for all periods.

Whether her century were the nineteenth, the thirteenth or the third ; A. D., or B. C. ; in savage or in civilized life ; in

poverty or in affluence, the amiabilities of her character would have made her, in every age, that best and loveliest of creation—a true woman ; an ornament and a blessing to the world in which she lived.

That the Earth has been a treasure-house of such, through all its ages, is a truth self-evident ; else had not the pages of its history borne the record of so much that is noble and pure and good ; else had not so much of happiness shone out over a dark blank of misery and crime. Their beneficent influence dies not with themselves, but flowing after them in their offspring, blesses the future. Were all the women of the world of such-like cast ; how soon would not much of the pain and care, the wretchedness and sin that mar its bright bosom, disappear ?

The mothers of civilizers and advancers—as themselves—rather than of the destructive and the criminal, how soon would not the generations spread out over the earth, the pleasant picture of virtue, of goodness and of purity ; of prosperity, peace and happiness, in contrast to the old time storm-shadowed landscape, all blackened with misery and lurid with crime.

Had not Ethel Mordaunt possessed the elevated and elevating characteristics which make a good woman, the discernment, patience and Christian forbearance, the charitable amiability and sympathizing kindness of heart which exist among the virtues of such a being and make her a chief conservator of the goodness and happiness of the world, she might by an unguarded word almost, during her trying interview of the preceding evening, not only have destroyed her own earthly happiness, but that also of the man who loved her, and whom she loved.

For a young girl, in the first bloom and joy of her love—her hero, her prince of men set up on the high pedestal that youthful love and romance assigns ; to find that hero slipping down to earth, proving himself but mortal, the common clay of surrounding humanity, is a sore disillusion, a bitter awakening.

and carries with it a sufficiently sharp sting, a personal loss and injury that would be the more resented the higher and more perfect are the susceptibilities thus wounded, and though Ethel's lover had almost raised himself to the hero again by the moral courage, the open candour he had displayed in a situation of mental pain and humiliation, still, had he not fallen?

There was a loss and an injury to be resented.

But though Ethel had felt the blow, the more keenly perhaps as her own standard of purity was so high; her Christian charity that imputeth not the evil, and the true discernment it gave her, had enabled her to perceive that it was not intentionally, but from pure want of firmness, that her lover had erred, and she had estimated at its just value the painful effort—to a man of his character how painful—he had made in the courageous avowal of his faults to her.

In place therefore of selfish complaint and reproach, which, to a man who had so thrown himself at her feet, would almost inevitably have wholly alienated him, by ungenerosity; her powerful yet sweet influence had assisted him to his feet again before her; had raised him from his humiliation; had strengthened his resolution toward the good; had doubly bound him in the bonds of his love for her, and had raised herself the higher in his eyes that she had raised him.

But although her Edwin's errors had been condoned and forgiven, and himself restored, she could not conceal from herself that the faults existed. The habit of yielding to others in little matters, arising from his want of firmness, and the rather perverted "trait" of an inconsistent, if honourable obstinacy, in sticking to his friend, because he was his friend, even when he held good reason to consider him an unworthy friend. That these were not very grave errors she acknowledged, but, nevertheless, strive as she might to put the remembrance of them away from her, they left their impression on her mind. Had she not asked him, almost in plain terms, to discard for her sake the

friend whom she knew to be false? and he had not done so. The sore touch of a woman's wounded vanity kept alive the painful recollection.

That she cordially disliked Mr. Sidney Wolverton she felt in the depth of her heart. Disliked him more thoroughly than she had conceived it possible for her to dislike any human being, and she imputed to him everything that had come between her lover and herself that had ruffled the bright smoothness of their young engagement. She remembered this bitterly against him and strengthened herself in the determination to break the friendship with which she knew Edwin still regarded him. There should no longer be but passive resistance on her part; he had become actively aggressive, and so would she become. It should be war to the knife between them—a fight for her own and her affianced's happiness.

The news of his sudden departure the preceding evening had been received by the family of Lake Mordaunt with remarkable equanimity and by herself with secret joy. He was gone, that was an undisguised blessing; she was rid of him and his machinations for the time being. His absence was rejoiced over by her, and not particularly regretted by any person else.

So little was it noticed that the want of courtesy displayed by his hasty departure and the meagre explanations of it sent by him was not commented upon, although it may have been out of respect to Edwin that reticence was observed.

Ethel was, at any rate, perfectly satisfied—the disturber of her peace was gone, and with him all present anxiety. She resolved to enjoy the hours as with golden feet they flew.

She was happy, and all she had to do was to make her lover happy again also, that the remainder of his visit should be as delightful to both as their own society could make it.

Edwin Vance appeared among them on the Sunday morning grave, silent and constrained enough. Although his interview with Ethel, the evening before, had been a much happier one

than he had anticipated ; had resulted so favourably to him, and his darling had shown herself before his loving eyes, almost as an angel would have done, in kindness, mercy, soft sympathy and forgiveness, still his night-accusing conscience had pressed hardly upon him, and he depreciated himself the more that he had the more to appreciate the worth of the lovely girl whose heart he had gained. He loved her the more for her generosity to his unworthiness, that he loved himself the less for that unworthiness, and though she had forgiven him, he could not forgive himself.

So he appeared before them constrained and depressed. The smile and the loving glance of his Ethel, even her kind greeting did not at once altogether reassure him, and he sat down to the breakfast table with a more sombre aspect than was usual with him.

Reggie, however, was full of life and in high spirits. Every moment he could spare from his breakfast was devoted to an enthusiastic narration of the delights of the ball, and his enjoyment thereof ; marred, as he feelingly deplored, by the sad fact that it had taken place on a Saturday night, when respect for the Sunday had necessitated a break-up before twelve o'clock.

"Oh ! so you found the time short, did you, Reggie ?" said his uncle with a mischievous laugh. "Twelve o'clock was all too soon for your parting from the fair Emily Dearborn, was it ? Were I a young man I would not fall in love with a woman old enough to be my grandmother. Did you dance with her all the evening, or only those dances for which she could not find a more eligible partner ?"

Highly disgusted at these insinuations, Reggie replied, "I danced with her as often as I desired, uncle, and that's more than some fellows there can say."

"Oho ! I dare say," said his uncle, laughingly. "She's old enough to know how to keep you in good humor, and flirt with half a dozen besides yourself. Why, she's as old as the hills and

the most consummate flirt in the country. Ada's worth twenty of her. Why did you not take a fancy to her, Reggie? There would have been some sense in that."

"Ada! pooh! that great hoyden," replied Reggie, indignantly. "Emily Dearborn is the prettiest girl in this part of Canada, let me tell you, uncle, and he'll be a very lucky fellow who gets her for his wife," added he, incautiously, in defence of the charmer who had bewitched him.

"Oh! and you hope to be that lucky fellow," returned Mr. Horton, in a fit of laughter. "Well! Reggie, I don't admire your taste. You might as well marry your grandmother at once. Why, Sidney Wolverton and half the young men of Ten Lakes have been making love to her for ages past. She'll only laugh at you for your pains."

"Will she though! I know better than that. Perhaps you'll see before——" But Reggie thought again and did not complete his sentence, while Mrs. Mordaunt, whose attention had been attracted by their conversation, interposed.

"Don't tease him, Edward. Reggie has more sense than that. Emily Dearborn may be a pretty girl, but she is not one whom Reggie would marry, or whom his father or I would like to see him choose; she is not, to say the least, an amiable girl, and, besides, if I am not mistaken, Sidney Wolverton is the man whom she will marry. Reggie has time enough in six or eight years to look out for a wife; meantime, he will find quite enough to attend to with his books and his college."

Reggie muttered something so inaudibly that even his uncle, who was watching him, failed to catch the words, and the latter, thinking he said enough, changed the conversation.

"When are you going to Cacouna, Florence?" he said, addressing Mrs. Mordaunt. "As was proposed; or do you prefer waiting until the hot weather is all over before you start? Here it is nearly the end of July, and we are nearly roasted alive. If

you will get your mind made up for the start in two or three days, I'll go with you.

"But I don't think a winter trip would be agreeable," he continued, with a laugh.

"Don't be nonsensical! Edward," she replied. "We did think of a trip there this summer, but it is so hard to get away with a large household to look after and the farm. It would be very nice, though, for us all. But oh! there's so much to see to on a large place like this, and who can be got to do it——"

"Oh! never mind your house, Florence," said Mr. Mordaunt. "You have servants enough to look after it while you're away, and I'll see that the farming matters are left in proper train. We'll go to Cacouna for a month. August is the best time of the season, as it is too hot here for comfort, and just getting a little above freezing point down there. "We'll all like the change. Suppose we start Thursday, so as to get comfortably settled by Sunday. You'll go with us, Vance, won't you? It is the long vacation, and you have nothing to do at present. We'll take a trip down the Gulf, too, while we're away."

"I shall be most happy to accompany the party, I'm sure," said Edwin, with a delightful look towards Ethel. "But I fear I cannot remain for a month. I must be back in Toronto ten days at least before Term time. But I can spare three weeks for it, and will be delighted to join you in the trip."

"That is quite a long enough time for me to be away from my home affairs, Mr. Vance, and I cannot consent to a longer visit, so we'll all come back together," Mrs Mordaunt said, decisively.

"Oh! well then! it's settled," remarked Mr. Mordaunt. "The ladies must have their own way. Be all ready for Thursday morning early to catch the mid-day train at Cascades."

And the party separated to prepare for the drive to church.

* * * * *

As Edwin knelt in worship beside the fair young girl who had

given him her love, his yearning soul rose in earnest petition— heartfelt, sincere and humbled from the searchings and revealings of accusing conscience—for God's favour upon them both—for her that she might have all happiness; that if her life and her happiness on earth were to be confided to his care, he might have a greater strength than his own to fulfil the precious trust; that God with His merciful eyes would look down upon them and grant His all-powerful aid, that they might walk before His face all the days of their life in purity and humble faith; that as he was weak and feeble and had sinned, he sought for grace that he might sin no more, and be made strong.

As the grand old Litany of his Church sounded in his ears, with its matchless songs of praise, its earnest and appealing prayers, and its glorious promises of salvation, his full heart clung with a deeper and more reverential love to the sublime words that carried with them strength and comfort and hope; the grand old words that his infancy had heard, and that Sunday morning after Sunday morning through the circling ages rise in glorious concert from the worshipping lips of united millions from one end of God's bright world to the other.

And he was comforted and strengthened.

He walked into the sunlit air with the reverential demeanour of one who has been in the presence of his God, but with a new happiness shining in his eyes, a lightened heart at peace with himself and the world.

As the Lake Mordaunt party stood near the Church door waiting for their carriage, Emily Dearborn and her sister Ada approached them.

After the customary greetings and mutual enquires were over, the former seeing that Ada was engaged in talking to Mrs. Mordaunt, attached herself to Ethel, and regardless of the fact that she had just come out of Church, proceeded to regale her with an account of her doings at the last night's ball.

"Why in the world did you not wait for it, Ethel?" she at

length asked. "It was a delightful affair, and you would have enjoyed it wonderfully. Was it because you knew Mr. Vance would not be there that you preferred going home?"

"I did not care for it, Emily. Mamma could not go, and of course I could not have appeared there without her," replied Ethel, coldly enough.

"But Mrs. Mordaunt would have gone had you asked her, and you would have enjoyed yourself in spite of the early break-up," answered Emily.

"By-the-by, how did you get home, Mr. Vance? All right! I hope," she added, with a meaning laugh. "And why did you not come to the ball? I suppose, though, you would not think of it unless Ethel were there. Or had you attractions more potent than dancing? The flowing bowl for instance. You were at the dinner, I know, and I have heard that by some of the revellers a good deal too much champagne was drunk. I hope you were not one of the number."

This direct, pointed and very unexpected attack of the merciless Emily, took poor Edwin completely by surprise. He gazed at her speechlessly for a moment, though without indignation, for the calm peace of his last two hours had not passed from him. But he was thoroughly astonished, not so much at the rude attack upon himself, but that it should have been made by so fair and outwardly lovely a young lady as Emily Dearborn.

Recovering himself, however, he replied—
"I was not at the ball last evening, Miss Dearborn, for the reason that——" but Ethel indignantly interposed.

"Miss Dearborn! After the conversation between yourself and Mr. Sidney Wolverton, in the long walk at Lake Mordaunt, during your visit there last week, which was overheard, and, I am sorry to say, reported to me, I should have supposed it quite unnecessary for *you*, at any rate, to make enquiries as to the dinner and the drinking of champagne that was to accompany it; seeing that you and the person I have named, on that occasion,

arranged the details of a most nefarious scheme to force wine upon a gentleman who was to be present, for certain ulterior purposes with which you are well acquainted, and of which, permit me to remark, I also have been informed. I wish you 'good morning,' Miss Dearborn."

Uttering these words with a cold sarcasm in the farewell that suggested but few others, Ethel turned away and walked to the carriage which had then drawn up at the church door, leaving Edwin standing in a fresh burst of astonishment at the sudden reversal of the attack and apparently incapable of either speech or action.

Emily, on the contrary, though startled enough, was not in the least abashed, but with an innocently surprised and perplexed expression of face, looked after Ethel as she walked away.

"Whatever is Ethel talking of, Mr. Vance? I don't understand it at all. How very strange," she said, addressing him in a voice of wonderment.

He, however, raising his hat and bowing politely but gravely, merely answered, "Good morning, Miss Dearborn, I must join them," and following Ethel, he helped her into the carriage, towards which the rest of the party were then approaching.

Emily, left to herself, gazed after them a moment. "However came she to learn of that interview? Who could have overheard us? But it is all the worse for her, for there is open war between us henceforth. Take care! Miss Ethel Mordaunt. My turn comes next," she soliloquised, with a dangerous gleam in her eye, and then walked towards Ada, who, after shaking hands with the Mordaunt party; stood waiting for her when they had driven off.

The carriage had proceeded but a short distance—a couple of hundred yards or so—when Mrs. Mordaunt, whose motherly anxiety knew no rest, turned to her brother, and said—

"Edward, pray look back and see if Reggie is following us.

He surely ought to have got his horse out by this time. I'm always anxious unless I have him in sight.

Mr. Horton, turning round, gazed in the indicated direction.

"Oh! yes! I see him," he answered. "But he is walking home with the Dearborn girls. He is going to dinner with them, I'll bet a new dollar."

"I'll tell you what it is Mordaunt," he continued, "you will have to look after that boy, or he'll give you trouble. He's in love with that detestable Emily Dearborn to a certainty.

"If you don't take care she'll lead him into an entanglement, she is as smart as a steel trap; as fond of intrigue as she's capable of it, and will stick at nothing. She knows what's good for herself too, and, absurd as it seems to be with a boy of his age, it would be a very good match for her. She's leading him on, I'm certain—a spare string to her bow, and will marry him the first day it suits her.

"Oh! I hope not, uncle. It can't be true. Reggie would never marry that hateful girl," exclaimed Ethel, with alarm in her tone.

"Oh! you have found out that she is a hateful girl, have you, Ethel? She is both very pretty and very sharp as well, and can do almost anything she pleases with a very young man like Reggie. I am afraid for him I confess," replied Mr. Horton.

"Pshaw! Horton. It is not so bad as you represent," said Mr. Mordaunt. "Reggie likes to be with the girls, I dare say, but he has too much sense to get himself into a scrape. However, he'll be away with us to the salt water in a day or two, and after we return he goes to Sarnia for a visit to a college friend, or for a trip up Lake Huron. That will keep him away and occupied until vacation is over. He'll come out all right."

"Very well! I hope so," said Mr. Horton, in reply. "I have warned you. That he is in love with the girl at this present I am very confident. Keep him away from home as much as possible, at any rate. I wish we were home, for I'm hungry. I hope you have a good dinner, for us, Florence."

"Better than you deserve, uncle, for you've taken away my appetite completely by the fright you gave me about Reggie," answered Ethel quickly, for her mother.

"Bad plan to lose one's dinner by the mere anticipation of trouble. I don't lose mine, even when it arrives," said Mr. Horton, and the conversation changed.

CHAPTER XXII.

COVERING UP HIS TRACKS.

The fair city of Toronto, throned in queenly state between the two splendid domains over which her sceptral hand holds sway—the noble Lake Ontario, with its golden commerce and the vast and wealthy Province to which it gives its name—was duly honoured, on the Monday evening after his hasty exit from Lake Mordaunt, with the presence of Mr. Sidney Wolverton, who, being determined to strike whilst the iron was hot, had made such very good speed that he had caught the same morning the Grand Trunk day express from the East, and had been delivered in the Queen City at the very earliest moment it was possible for him to be.

But, nevertheless, the speed of his journey had been laggard sloth to his impatience, for until the endorsed paper, he had so villainously procured from his friend Edwin Vance, was converted into hard cash, he was in a fever of uneasiness and disquiet. For might not, by some unlooked for mischance, some mischievous contingency, his trick be discovered by him whom he had wronged, and his design frustrated.

The glittering and interminable lengths of the telegraph wires scorched his eyes with fevered apprehension, and carried guilty fear and dismay to his heart as the train had flown passed them; for what was its speed to the instantaneous spark which at any moment might flash the truth before him hundreds of miles in

advance, which mocked at time and distance, to which a thousand miles was as one.

How he had longed, as the bright threads stretched on in endless continuity, in danger-menacing completeness, for some happy accident—a sudden gale—the fall of some monster tree—a devouring thunder-bolt—anything that might dash them, scorched, paralyzed and useless to the earth, to break their silent speakings and end his fears.

And had not his tortured reflections during the journey forced his mind with painful minuteness to ponder again and again, unending and unsatisfied, over every circumstance of that interview whose results had been so triumphant for him?

Had not his reason again and again assured him, with the force of a mathematical demonstration, that discovery was well nigh impossible; that he might rest in the consciousness of safety and peace; yet had not even the logic of reason failed to conquer the nervous fears, the trembling apprehensiveness which beset his guilt-dismayed heart?

Every hour of the journey had been an unending nightmare, every mile a long drawn agony.

But as station after station had been passed in safety, when no denouncing officer of the law had appeared to arrest his progress, his nervousness had been gradually allayed, and when he stepped from the train at his destination, unopposedly placed himself in the hotel omnibus, he regained his composure and steadiness, satisfied that all was so far right with him, and that as discovery had not yet taken place, it was not likely to take place at all.

In a few moments his name appeared on the register of distinguished arrivals at the "Queens," one of the best hotels in the Dominion, comfortable, homelike and withal fashionable; facts which Mr. Sidney Wolverton was not slow to appreciate, for he had a keen sense of enjoyment for personal surroundings

and the good things of this world, for which reasons he designed to honour the said hostelry with his guestship.

When the necessary change of his travel-dusted attire had been effected, and a prolonged attention to the wants of the inner man paid, very necessary and enjoyable after his long, fatiguing and anxious journey ; he resolved, as it was much too late for the transaction of business, to devote the remainder of the evening to the amusements most congenial to his tastes, of which billiards, brandy and water and cigars formed a not inconsiderable part, in the gratifications to be derived from which he found little difficulty in obtaining the assistance of kindred and most capable spirits, as ready as he himself for these or like exhilarating pursuits.

However, when two or three hours had been spent in these delights, and he was lounging about the billiard rooms, fatiguedly, making up his mind to retire for a good night's rest, in readiness for business on the morrow, a young gentleman—magnificent of attire and of much jewellery, with his hat rakishly stuck on one side of his head, a cigar angularly placed in the corner of his mouth, and the fires of many hot brandies glistening in his eyes—sauntered into the room, and proceeded to make a patronizing inspection of the denizens thereof and of the play going on.

His gaze at length rested upon Sidney, who had not perceived his entrance, and when he had remained standing a few moments with a hopelessly muddled expression on his features, as if he was saying to himself, " I ought to know who that fellow is, but hang me ! if I can make him out," he decided apparently that the best thing he could do would be to get nearer to him, and find out. Accordingly he staggered as well as he could into nearer proximity, when Sidney, turning at his step, held out his hand, as he recognized him—

" Hallo ! Hatchitfess, is that you ? Arn't you out late to-night ? One would think the worthy governor would have had you in

bed long ago. How wags the world with you?" said Sidney, as they shook hands.

"Hang the world and the governor too!" answered the dutiful Albert Montague Maximus Hatchitfess, for it was no less a person. "The old boy would like to know I was in bed, I dare say, but he's away out of town and can't help himself, the old skin flint. But what's brought you to Toronto, Sidney Wolverton? No good, I'll be bound. If you have come for money this time, you won't get it at our shop, I can tell you, especially as the old boy's away," and the amiable youth grinned diabolically at his listener.

"Ha! ha! ha! Why you must have been drinking pretty hard to-day, my worthy Albert. Do you imagine that I'm ass enough to wish to put myself into your father's fifty per cent. clutches, if I can help it? Not yet awhile, if I know it. But come along, and we'll have something to drink. I want to talk to you. You can help me in an affair I have on hand of importance," said Sidney.

"All right! Wolvy. Brandy first and business after," replied the playful Albert, as they adjourned to a parlour upon calling for the desired stimulants.

"Well! What's your biz, Sid?" he continued, as he mixed himself a strong glass of brandy and water, which he sipped with loving relish. "Look here, though, before we go into things I must understand about the pay first. I don't work for nothing, and any business of yours is apt to be rather fishy, you know. I must have money for it. The old governor, confound him! has taken to tightening the purse strings of late to keep me in order, he says, and I want a lot of tin just now."

"Oh! you do, do you?" answered Sidney, looking at him. "Debts that it won't do to leave unpaid, I suppose. Got to keep them dark, or the old man raves."

"Yes! that's about the figure of it. And the money I must get. It's pull devil or pull baker with me," was the reply.

"Well! you enact the part of the devil, I suppose, and if you'll help me, I'll enable you to pull the baker about as you wish. Look at this!" continued Wolverton, producing from his pocket-book the note which Edwin Vance had so innocently endorsed. "I want you to get this discounted for me to-morrow morning, so that I can get away by the Eastern train in the afternoon. You see I cannot very well put it up myself as I am the maker of the note, and it would look too much like an 'accom.' Now, you get it done for me, and I'll pay handsomely," he continued, showing the note to his companion.

"Hallo! What's this? You don't say. Well! if Vance isn't a bigger fool than I took him to be. How in the mischief did you get this out of him?" said Hatchitfess, staring at the paper, and turning it over and over as if he could not believe its too plain appearance. "Look here?" he continued, with sudden suspicion. "Is this all right? You did not put that name on yourself, eh, Sidney? You're capable of it enough."

"No! I did not put that name there myself, my young friend," answered Sidney. "The name is genuine, as you could see were you not so much under the influence of brandy and water as you are at present. Do you suppose I'd run my neck into a noose for such a trifle as this is?"

"I don't know about that," was the flattering reply. "The signature looks right enough, anyway. Yes! By George. It's only a lawyer who could write such a villainous scrawl as this is. But, if I put this up at the bank, I'll have to endorse it. I can't do it," he continued.

"Now, look here! Hatchitfess. You want money, don't you? Now, if you do this for me by twelve o'clock to-morrow, I'll allow you two per cent. out of it. That's seven hundred dollars in a lump. Worth having for a short half hour's work," said Sidney, coming to the point at once.

"Seven hundred!" replied he. "Will the note be met?"

"Yes! It will," replied Sidney. "And isn't Vance good for it in any event?"

"Oh! Yes! he's good enough. But your note is more likely than not to go to protest. However, I guess I'm able to humbug the old boy yet, mad as he'll be if it does——. Seven hundred," he repeated, musingly. "With what I can scrape up, I can pay the piper, and have something left over, free, for running expenses, independent too of old Grip and Gripe," continued the dutiful son, with touching allusion to his father. "I'll do it, Sid, if you'll keep mum, and pay me the seven hundred. No trouble to get it done. Vance's name and ours would put anything through."

"All right!" replied Sidney. "That matter is settled. You can take your seven hundred out of it when you get it done. No cure, no pay, though. Now, mix yourself another glass, for I have something else to say to you. Not business matters. Only a few questions to ask."

"Go ahead with your questions. But you're not going to make much money out of me with them, I can tell you."

"Bother your money," exclaimed Sidney, impatiently. "You think of nothing but your money, you greedy little wretch. I want to find out something concerning a young lady."

"Do you know a Miss Agnes Seaforth?" he continued.

"Agnes Seaforth! What in thunder do you want to know about her for?" asked Hatchitfess in return.

"Oh! you know her then, do you?" replied Sidney. "Well! Who is she? What is she like? and what connection has Vance with her? She writes to him and he to her."

"They write to each other! oh! I dare say," answered the mischievous young imp, with a laugh. "Yes! and more than that too, if all were known."

"What do you mean by that? You don't mean to say she's a sweetheart of Vance's," said Sidney, with an answering laugh.

"Sweetheart!" exclaimed Hatchitfess, as with drunken fury

his mind reverted to the very disagreeable interview he had held with the young lady a few days previously. "Sweetheart," and bending over he whispered into Wolverton's ear, glancing with guilty timorousness around, as if the spirited girl he traduced could hear and revenge his words.

"Come now! Hatchitfess, that's too thin. I know better than that. Vance is not one of that kind, at any rate. But with whom does she live? Are her parents alive? No! no! my spiteful young friend. Tell me a more probable story; that statement won't wash. I know Vance too well to believe all that. He's got what he calls his principles, and he's a pious young man," answered Sidney, who, though he stood up for his friend, did so more from the deduction of reason which his knowledge of him gave, than from the charitable wish to impute the good motive rather than the evil.

"He's got principles! has he? and he's pious, is he? Thunder!" sneered the remarkably unprincipled Albert Montague Maximus. "Then what does he give her six hundred dollars a year for, I'd like to know?"

"Do you mean to say Vance gives her six hundred dollars a year?" asked Sidney, with a little astonishment in his tone.

"Yes, I do! I know it, for she gets the money twice a year at our office."

"Oh! Indeed! One would imagine that the respectable firm of John Hatchitfess & Son would not mix themselves up with so dubious a transaction as you would make it appear. Stuff! It's some settlement or annuity, some just debt, I'll be bound. There are fifty ways to account for it. Why, he's head over ears in love with, and engaged to be married to, a very pretty young heiress down in the country," replied Wolverton, anxious, however, to get all the information he could from his inebriated companion.

"Going to be married to an heiress! Oh! ho! That accounts then for his instructions to us to-day to purchase an

annuity on the life of this same young lady for six hundred dollars a year. Out of his own funds too, for she has not a rap," exclaimed Hatchitfess, with triumph in his tone. "What do you think of that? Looks fishy, don't it? As if he wanted to keep her quiet, you know!"

"I'm not so sure of that! He may hold funds of hers in trust for all you know."

"Funds in trust. Pshaw! She has'n't a cent nor never had. We know all about her," replied Hatchitfess.

"Well! What is she like? Is she a pretty girl? and where does she live?" queried Sidney, getting interested in spite of his convictions.

"She's one of the prettiest girls in Toronto, but she's got the temper of a vixen, a perfect little fury, and looks at a fellow as if he was dirt under her feet, confound her!" Hatchitfess replied, brandy and spite getting the better of his tongue.

"Oh! I see," returned Sidney, "and you don't like it. Very natural; quite so, indeed. But where and with whom does she live?"

"She's an orphan, and lives with an old half blind and deaf aunt in a little house out in the suburbs," was answered sleepily.

"I say! Hatchitfess, wake up if you want to get home to-night," said Sidney. "Rouse yourself up, and I'll see you part of the way. Look here! What's Miss Seaforth's address?"

"Oh! leave me alone, can't you? What do you want her address for? Want to make love to her yourself? Try it on just and see how you'll come out," replied Hatchitfess, impatiently, as he was becoming more hopelessly somnolent and intoxicated.

"Not much! thank you. I'll leave that to you—I'm no spooney gawk," said Sidney, with a sneering laugh. "Listen! Hatchitfess, I've a reason for wishing to know the address. Tell it me, there's a good fellow, and the old aunt's name."

"Oh! confound it! I'm sick of your questions. The aunt's

name is Patience Springle. The address I don't know, and if I did I would'nt tell you, so there's an end of it," was the angry reply.

"Indeed! You won't tell it. Well! It does not matter much, at any rate. But its quite evident where the trouble lies with you. I don't believe a word of that nice little story you've told me. Is'nt it all pure malice and spite of your own? You've been persecuting the girl with your cubbish attentions, and you have got thundering well snubbed for you pains. That's what's the matter with you, my disappointed little Hatchy," said Sidney, sticking his feet upon the table and surveying his companion with an exasperating smile.

"It's no such thing. You be hanged! Sidney Wolverton. I would not condescend to speak to the girl," exclaimed Hatchitfess, springing up from his chair, his face purple with mortification, rage and ardent spirits. "And my story is'nt true, you think. All Toronto is ringing with it, at any rate, as you can find out if you choose to enquire."

"Oh! I dare say! with your version of it," interrupted Sidney, "but you need not get vexed, Hatchitfess. I don't care a pin whether your story is true or false. It's no affair of mine. It will, however, do very well for my purposes, and may probably do more mischief than it has done already. Never mind what I have said, Hatchy, I did not mean to offend you. Take another glass of brandy to steady yourself up, and I'll get a cab called for you. You'd better get to bed, or you'll be fit for nothing in the morning. Remember, you've to attend to that business of mine."

"Don't trouble yourself about me. I'll be on hand, never fear. "You'd better be more civil than you are, Wolverton, if you expect a man to do anything you want," was the surly answer, as he helped himself from the decanter. "Well! I must be off, I suppose. Come to the door with me, Sid. There's a cabstand close at hand, and I'm none too steady on my pins."

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COVERING UP HIS TRACKS.

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"All right! Come along then. Here's your hat. I'll see you at the office early to-morrow," said Sidney, taking his arm and steadying him as they left the room.

"He's a beautiful specimen, I must say," soliloquised Sidney, as he returned towards the hotel, after safely installing his precious friend in a cab. "He is his worthy father all over, with a thousand additional and meaner vices superadded. The atrocious little wretch. I'm not a saint myself, by any means, but I hope I'm not so unutterably bad, so despicably base as he is. When I do evil, I do it because it is necessary for me or profitable, or because the stress of circumstances compels me to do it. I may not be an honest or a good man, but nothing in the world could induce to traduce and vilify a woman as he has done this evening, and that too out of mere petty spite. I don't want to do unnecessary evil. I'm bad enough as it is. The little brute has almost made me sick with myself, that I have to be classed with such villiany as his. I am a villain, and I feel myself more than ever such that I have to send this lying story down to that girl at Ten Lakes. Could I help it, I would most certainly not send it. She's bent on mischief against that unfortunate Vance and his pretty Ethel. Such unnecessary mischief too, for it can avail her nothing. But she's got the rein over me, and I must obey. Well! It's no affair of mine to attend to the morality of other people. Plenty to do to look after myself. Yet I don't like to do unnecessary evil," and with this highly virtuous reflection on his lips, Mr. Sidney Wolverton betok himself to bed.

* * * * *

At the hour of ten the next morning, as the banks opened, and the stir and bustle of the city's daily life had fairly set in, Albert Montague Maximus Hatchitfess, Esq., compelled by the dire necessity of his father's absence to attend to the affairs of the office, was driven up in his own very gaudily equipped vehicle—which rivalled himself in flashy magnificence—to the

detested door, where work, which he did not like, and no idle pleasures, which he did like, awaited him.

Excepting a somewhat redder aspect than usual of his fishy eyes, his potations of the previous night did not seem to have affected his personal appearance to any great degree ; but then, it is to be remembered, that his features had naturally been so unpleasantly endowed that no amount of dissipation, or indeed any other conceivable despoiler of beauty, could have made him look more hideous than he appeared in his normal condition.

Entering the private office, after a glance around to see all was going on as it should do, and a few harsh words to the clerks to show his authority, he found Sidney Wolverton already installed there before him, seated at the desk engaged in writing a letter.

"Good morning !" said Sidney, looking up at the other's entrance. "How do you find yourself to-day?"

"All right ! A little seedy perhaps, but I'm used to that. You're early this morning. Making yourself at home, too, as if it were your own office. Pretty cool ! I must say," was the reply.

"Oho ! a love letter we're inditing. 'My dearest Emily,' and so forth ! and so forth !" he continued, peering over the other's shoulder at the letter.

"Well ! You're pretty cool too, my inquisitive young friend," exclaimed Sidney, hastily turning down the letter in which he was giving Miss Dearborn a full detail of their last night's conversation. "One would think you were raised in a barn by the good breeding you display."

"Well, it's after ten and the banks are open."

"I wish then you'd attend at once to that little financial transaction of ours, as I want, if possible, to be off by the afternoon train for the East. It may take you a little time," he continued.

"Confound it! Wolverton. If I put that thing up for discount I'll have to endorse. I've been thinking it over, and I'm afraid almost, for if the old governor finds it out, I'll never hear the last of it."

"Yes! and if he hears about those little things which had better be paid, and for which you have not the money, you'll never hear the last of it either. You have your choice between the two evils. Seven hundred dollars is a lot of money, when one wants it," replied Sidney, coolly and quietly.

"Hang it! Yes! I suppose I'll have to do it. Here! give me the note, and I'll be off before my mind changes, for I must have that money," exclaimed Hatchitfess.

"That's talking sensible now. Here it is! Just sign this for form's sake," said Sidney, rapidly writing off a receipt for the note which he placed before the other.

"Well! You *are* suspicious. Do you suppose I would run away with your precious note, which if it was not for the name on it's back, would not be worth the stamps on it," Hatchitfess said, with grumbling indignation, as he wrote the firm's name to the receipt.

"Safe bind, safe find, my dear Albert. In case of any little accident I have this to show for the note, which is fortunately worth a good deal more than its stamps. Farewell for the present, and success attend you," replied Sidney, as the other took up his hat and went off on his errand.

A period of something more than an hour elapsed, the first part of which Wolverton occupied very comfortably in finishing his letter to Miss Dearborn, and the latter very uncomfortably in striding up and down the room, tormenting himself with all the chimeras that harass the soul of the man who lives outside the strict path of rectitude; the thousand and one fears that oppress the guilty mind in every thinking moment; the squeezing of the heart that makes the success of a nefarious plan as intolerable as its failure; that blanches the hair and wrinkles

the cheek faster and more surely than ceaseless labour or grinding poverty ; that wastes the body as it dries up the soul.

His harassed thoughts, searing, anxious and painful, flew over, again and again, every contingency, possible and impossible, that could militate against and bar his success.

"Why did I not do it myself? Why did I trust another? and he a rogue also. The bank may suspect something and refuse to discount.

"Emily Dearborn may have let fall a chance word ; Vance may have discovered the fraud and telegraphed. At this moment Hatchitfess may be in the hands of the officers, and they"—he glanced uneasily around—"are on the watch for me. Who knows but at this moment a liveried official of the law stands outside awaiting my exit?"

Such were the unendurable reflections that burned in his brain as he walked up and down and made that waiting hour a drawn-out age.

"I can't stand this longer," he exclaimed at length, catching up his hat. "I'll go down to the bank and see for myself what the upshot of the matter may be, let it be good or evil for me."

But just as he had wound himself up to the highest possible extent of mental agony and misery, the door opened, and young Hatchitfess entered, with an aspect cool and calm, very much in contrast with Wolverton's excited and harassed looking appearance.

"Hallo ! What's the matter with you?" exclaimed the former, arresting his steps in surprise, as he gazed at Sidney. "Have you been having snakes in your boots since I left you?"

"Oh ! you're back at *last*, are you, Hatchitfess? You've been gone long enough," he said, snappishly, though evidently very glad to see him. "Well ! How did you get along? Is it all right?"

"Right as a trivet. And I've got the cash," was the reply. "The Board is sitting to-day, and the thing was sent right into

them. They kept me waiting long enough, and after all they would not discount without our name, hang it. They were rough on you too, Sid, I can tell you. The old President is a great friend of Vance's, and before I got through getting the cash and the other formalities, he came out and asked me a lot of questions which of course I could not answer, as to what you and Vance were doing together. He shook his head, and very evidently showed he did not like the transaction. He had to acknowledge the endorsement as genuine, but he said he'd write at once to Vance about it. Fact he did!"

"The mischief he did!" exclaimed Sidney, unguardedly, the surprise of such danger coming upon him being too much for his presence of mind. "What business is it of his, I'd like to know? I suppose he'd like to constitute himself guardian to Vance and myself, would not he? We are quite competent to manage our own affairs. He'll get no good by his writing," he continued, recovering his momentarily lost self-possession.

"I say! Wolverton. That name on the note is genuine, isn't it?" Hatchitfess returned, with alarm pictured on his visage, for he had noticed Sidney's imprudent and hasty exclamation. "You didn't put it on yourself did you? You turned as pale as death just now when you heard about them writing to Vance. There's something wrong about the affair, I'm certain."

"Stuff and nonsense! Hatchitfess. Don't make a fool of yourself with your absurd suspicions. You know as well as I do that the name is genuine; did not the old banker himself acknowledge it? How about that, eh? And so I turned as pale as death because he's going to write to Vance, did I? Ridiculous! I'll own I was vexed at his impertinent interference in affairs which do not concern him. But the terrors of his writing to Vance are simply the creatures of your own frightened brain," returned Sidney, hotly.

"Well! It may be as you assert, Wolverton. Had it been any person but yourself who presented the note, the name would

have passed wholly unquestioned. But as the matter stands, with our firm's name endorsing, I intend to hold the proceeds until you have proved that it's not forged paper," said Hatchitfess, his fears lending him determination.

"Forged paper, the devil!" exclaimed Sidney, wrathfully, but as a scene would not have suited him, he cooled down. "Come now, Hatchitfess, be reasonable and use what sense you possess. The note is genuine, and you know it—know it just as well as you know that it is accommodation paper. Here! hand me over the cash before I have to resort to other measures," continued he in a firm tone, which showed he would allow no trifling.

"Resort to what you please! I'll hold the money until you get an acknowledgement of his signature from Vance," replied Hatchitfess with equal firmness, though edging away from his companion.

"You'll do no such thing," Albert Hatchitfess," was the calm answer. "And you'll find I'm not the man you can play your tricks upon. Settle up this instant, or I'll call a policeman."

"Pooh! Call in your police, and see what you'll make by it. Who'll be believed the first, I wonder? Albert Hatchitfess, of the firm of John Hatchitfess & Son, or Sidney Wolverton, a stranger of doubtful repute. Ha! ha! Call in your police," sneered the other rather emboldened that the law was the arbiter proposed than intimidated by the threats of its terrors.

"That's your game, is it? you little thief. I'll see about that," roared Sidney, as he sprung from his chair, and reaching the door at a bound, he locked it and placed the key in his pocket.

His features swollen and working with rage, every muscle of his stalwart frame tense and quivering with his powerful excitement he was not a very pleasant or reassuring-looking object for the now thoroughly alarmed Albert Hatchitfess, locked in alone with him, to confront. "Out with the money this instant, you cursed little wretch, before I wring your ugly head off your

shoulders," and with a rush the unfortunate little Albert was seized by the collar and whirled into his chair, helpless and gasping in the strong hands of the enraged Sidney. "Now! you cowering hound! Will you fork out the cash, or shall I take it from you and throttle you afterwards."

With one horrified glance at his captor, and an utterly futile effort to wrench his half-crushed shoulder out of the vice-like grasp that compressed it, the wretched little Albert, with the most abject expression of fear convulsing his features into ludicrous contortions, exclaimed, in mumbling accents,

"Here it is, Sidney. I did not mean to offend you. Oh! let me go. You're killing me. It was but a harmless joke I played you," and he threw his pocket-book down on the table before him.

"A joke, however, which resulted differently to your anticipations, Mr. Hatchitfess," replied Sidney, releasing him and taking up the pocket-book. "Sit down, I'm not done with you yet," he continued, and proceeded to count the drafts and money contained in the bundle he took from the pocket-book. "What discount did they take?" he enquired of his yet trembling companion, "and have you taken your seven hundred out of it?"

"Seven per cent. was the rate they charged. Yes! I took mine out," was Hatchitfess' reply.

"Well! then, there's a hundred dollars short. There are only thirty-three thousand five hundred here, and there ought to be thirty-three six. What's the reason?" asked Sidney, looking at his companion.

"Well! I had to endorse the note, and an extra hundred was little enough, I thought, for the risk. Besides, I want the money."

"Oh! I won't quarrel with you about it," answered Sidney, pocketing his cash. "Nevertheless, as you might wish to play some more of your jokes upon me, and as I don't wish to be detained in Toronto, you shall sign a receipt for it as your com-

mission for discounting the note for me. With this in my possession I can defy any little joke you might like to perpetrate upon me to make up for your rather unsuccessful first attempt. Here sign this at once, and no nonsense, unless you choose to get into my hands again."

rantically snatching up a pen, for the terrors of Sidney's former attack were still so strong upon him that the prospect of another was simply appalling, he barely glanced at the first lines of the receipt, and hastily dashing off his signature at the bottom, he pushed the paper towards Sidney, exclaiming—

"Oh! Here you are; who wants to play tricks upon you? Not I, for I've had enough of you."

Sidney chuckled audibly as he placed the following paper in his pocket—

"TORONTO, July 27th, 1873.

"Received of Sidney Wolverton the sum of one hundred dollars, our commission for procuring the discount of his note endorsed by Edwin C. Vance, dated July 24th, 1873, at three months, for thirty-five hundred dollars.

"JOHN HATCHITFESS & SON,
"Per Albert Hatchitfess."

"How scared he must have been when he could not see that hundreds were written in place of thousands," he thought to himself; and then exultantly, "How well I'll humbug Vance with this when the note falls due. It will come in most excellently."

"Here is the acknowledgement you gave me for the note. I don't want it longer," he continued aloud to his companion. "Look at it, before I tear it up; it's of no use to any one. Well! Hatchitfess, I don't bear malice, if you don't. Let's shake hands and we'll go and have something to drink. Will you come?"

"All right! I want something at any rate. I bear no malice, either—at least to your face," he added to himself. "And you

can afford to come down handsomely after your morning's work," replied Hatchitfess, surlily enough, however.

"Oh! Well! for that matter you've made a good day's work too. But, I'll stand the champagne. Come along!"

* * * * *

The Grand Trunk eastward bound express of that afternoon carried one passenger, at least, who was very well contented and light-hearted. Mr. Sidney Wolverton's pockets were full of cash. His troubles and anxieties were, temporarily, at least, thrown far into the future. He felt that he had been successful; that he had obviated and overcome the dangers that menaced him; his confidence in himself and his self-importance hourly increased. Prosperity was his again, and the sun shone for him more brightly, and nature's loveliness smiled forth for him more sweetly as he gazed on the bright panorama that flashed past him as the train flew on. He did not watch the stations with nervous dread or long for some falling tree to interrupt telegraphic communication on his return journey.

His soul soared above such vain terrors now. "What a fool I was," and he laughed a light-hearted laugh.

CHAPTER XXII.

YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR TRIP, ADA.

Mrs. Dearborn and her daughter, Ada, for Emily had resolutely declined the sultry honors of a July afternoon's walk, had betaken themselves, despite the heat, upon a shopping expedition among the half dozen stores of the village of Ten Lakes, for the purpose of effecting some necessary household purchases. To the former it was a sufficiently pleasant occupation, for she dearly liked the spending of money, the lingering and long drawn out delights of rambling from one store to another, examining with intense minuteness and circumspection each

separate piece of goods that each separate establishment contained, and driving the outwardly smiling but inwardly anathematizing attendants to the verge of imbecility and despair by the wandering indecision, which would reject but to return again to twenty different articles as many times in an hour, finally to resolve and fix upon and purchase something as wholly unsuitable to her purposes as it was unexpected either by herself or any person else.

But to the straightforward and decided Ada, who regarded dress as a necessary evil incident to mankind and impossible to be averted, like whooping cough or ceremonious calls, and worse than these because of daily recurrence—these expeditions were simply unendurable horror. Any other mortal thing in this world, washing dishes, darning stockings, or worse than all, entertaining in state some fashionable visitor, were infinitely preferable in her eyes. It was only her sense of duty, and her love for her mother, outraged by the blank refusal of her sister, that enabled her to listen and consent to a proposal of the kind with any tolerable complacency, and even then her bright, good-humored smile had to cover a shuddering heart. A couple of hours pleasure for the one and dire penance to the other had come to an end; they were walking, their purchases concluded, to Ada's great content, along the street towards home, after Mrs. Dearborn had nearly driven mad the two partners and the entire force of assistants of the largest establishment in the place, and were on the point of turning in at their own gate, when a carriage dashed up behind them, stopped, and the pleasant voice of Mrs. Mordaunt who, with Ethel, were its occupants, sounded in their ears.

"Good afternoon! Mrs. Dearborn—How do you do, Ada?" said the former. "We are coming to you in great haste, and have a favor to ask of you."

"How do you do, Mrs. Mordaunt? I'm sure I'm delighted to see you both. Pray come inside out of this broiling sun,"

replied Mrs. Dearborn, shaking hands with the ladies. "I hav'n't seen you, Miss Mordaunt, since I heard of a certain event of late occurrence. I'm sure I congratulate you, and hope you'll be very happy," she continued to Ethel.

"Thank you, Mrs. Dearborn," answered the latter. "But my happiness is a long time off yet, and I wish that you will make me very happy in the meantime by granting me a favor. We are going to the seaside for a month, and mamma has come to ask you to let Ada go with us for the trip?"

"Yes, Mrs. Dearborn," continued Mrs. Mordaunt; "Ethel wants her young friend, Ada, with her, and we hope you will let her come with us. We'll take good care of her, and try to give her a pleasant trip. We decided upon it very suddenly, and we start to-morrow morning—consequently we don't give Ada much time to get ready; but we could not help it, and we will see to everything after we arrive at Cacoua."

"Ada!—Ada to go to the seaside with you!" exclaimed Mrs. Dearborn, in utter amazement at the idea of Ada being asked. "You want Ada—Oh! Mrs. Mordaunt, I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure, but I'm afraid she cannot go. I'll never get along without her, and she has not a dress ready. Besides, I don't know where the mon—I am very sorry, but I fear Ada will have to decline your kind invitation. We have only one girl to help us, and I'd never get along without Ada. I wished it had been Emily you asked," she continued, wringing her hands in doubt and indecision. "But pray come in. Ada! call Fin to take the horse."

"Oh! never mind about Ada's dresses, Mrs. Dearborn, or anything else. She must come with us. She has not much change or amusement, and a seaside trip would do her a world of good every way. We want her with us, and I'll undertake that her dresses shall not discredit you," said Mrs. Mordaunt laughing. "Thank you, Mrs. Dearborn, we are really in haste, and will not come in to-day. You must consent that Ada goes

with us, though. You'll be ready for to-morrow morning, Ada?"

"Oh! Mamma! I should so like to go," said poor Ada, looking up most supplicatingly to her mother. "I'll work hard to make up when I come back. Could you not manage it?"

But then, as she remembered their continued hard scrape for money—her mother's ill health, and the numerous little things, which if she herself did not do, would be left undone, she hesitated, and, with a sigh, continued:

"Oh! well, then, mamma, never mind; I won't be so selfish as to wish it, when you cannot spare me, and it's not convenient. I'm so much obliged, dear Mrs. Mordaunt and Ethel, but I am afraid I cannot go this time," and she looked up wistfully at them all.

"You're a good, unselfish girl, Ada; but Mrs. Dearborn will let you go, I know," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a kind smile at the disappointed, yet bright young face.

"Yes; she is a good girl, Mrs. Mordaunt, and she deserves a little pleasure. But I don't know what to say, and Mr. Dearborn is not here," said Mrs. Dearborn, whose weak but loving heart beat very warmly towards her dutiful little daughter, whose willing hands had ever done so much to smooth her troubled road. "Run down to the bank, Ada, and ask your father if you can go. It's after hours, but he will be there still. Tell him, too, that I'll try to manage without you."

"Oh! thank you, Mrs. Dearborn," said Ethel warmly. "I know Mr. Dearborn will let you go. Jump in, Ada: I'll drive you to the bank, and add my persuasions."

"Yes, do, Ethel," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt. "I'll get out and stay with Mrs. Dearborn until you return."

In a few minutes they were at the door of the bank offices, and Ada had rushed into the little private room, where her father sat, finishing his day's business.

"Oh! Papa!" she exclaimed, breathless with excitement. "Mrs. and Miss Mordaunt have asked me to go with them to the sea-side to-morrow, for a month, and mamma has sent me to ask you if it is possible?"

"To go to the seaside with the Mordaunts, for a month! That would be delightful, Ada!" he answered, looking up from his work with a smile. But a moment after the smile faded from his face, as he remembered his difficulties and struggle to make all ends meet—and he sorrowfully continued:

"My dear little girl; I'm very sorry, but I am afraid I must refuse. I don't think I can afford the expense, and you have nothing ready. Do you wish to go very much, Ada?"

"Oh! so much, papa! That is, if you can afford it. It won't cost very much—just my travelling expenses and a little bit to keep in my pocket. And I have lots of nice dresses—all ready," said Ada, beseechingly.

"Yes; but I would not like my daughter to look shabby beside other people. I fear it's impossible, my dear little Ada," he replied—his besetting sin coming up to the surface, though he looked very sadly in the pretty disappointed face of his darling Ada.

"Oh! but I sha'nt be shabby, papa. I'll be as nice as any one else, and I'd like to go awfully. But never mind, papa, if you can't afford it, I'll give up the idea. There are so many things that the money has to go for that are necessary," she added, with a sigh, and then she looked up lovingly into her father's face.

"I love him—my dear, hard-working father," she continued to herself, "and I will not increase his difficulties to gratify my own selfish pleasures," and she turned away to rejoin Ethel.

"Stay, Ada—my dear little girl! Let me think a minute," said her father. "The expenses cannot be very great, and you are a careful little thing. You have hardly ever been out of this dull little place, or had any amusement—while you, at any

rate, are a dutiful and good girl. Yes ; you shall go, Ada, if I have to scrape closer for it. You have not had many pleasures in your young life ; you shall have this trip. You go with nice people, too. I'll miss your bright face, though, my dear little girl, from our dull fireside. You shall have your trip, though, my dear ; so you may go and get ready," continued Mr. Dearborn, with a kiss on his young daughter's cheek.

"Thank you, papa !—thank you so much. But I fear you cannot afford the expense, and, if so, I'd rather not go. I could not enjoy myself if it made things harder to you and mamma. I'll give up the idea," said the generous-hearted girl.

"No ! No ! Ada. I can bear the expense well enough, and it would be harder to me to think I had kept my unselfish little daughter from a pleasure. You shall go with the Mordaunts, Ada," replied her father, and he looked with a smile into the now grateful face, whose answering smile already repaid him for the little sacrifice he had made ; for to Mr. Dearborn's credit, be it said, it was more that he would miss the only bit of sunshine of his daily life, the presence of his joyous and natural Ada, than he would the money that her pleasure trip would cost him. He remembered how self-sacrificing and generous had she been to him and to all, amid much that was selfish and undutiful.

"Thank you ! Mr. Dearborn," exclaimed Ethel who had at the moment entered the room. "I knew we should get your consent to Ada going with us, and I am much obliged to you, for my own sake as well as for Ada's."

"Good evening ! Miss Mordaunt," he replied, warmly. "I am delighted to see you, though you are going to take my little Ada from me. But I spare her willingly, for I know she'll be happy with you, and enjoy her excursion to the salt-water."

"Oh ! Yes ! Mr. Dearborn. We'll take good care of her, and bring her back to you all safely. And we'll try to make

the trip pleasant to her you may be sure," said Ethel. "Ada! We must be moving, mamma is in a hurry, and we both have lots to do. Good evening! Mr. Dearborn. We will come round for Ada in the morning," continued Ethel, and they went back to the carriage.

As they drove back again Ethel, who had heard the few last words of the conversation between father and daughter and who had her instructions from her mother, turned to Ada, and said. "I'm very glad you are going with us, Ada, for Mamma and I would have found it lonely without a nice girl like yourself of the party, and I'm especially glad that I have a friend to depend upon, when the gentlemen tire of us or we of them. We should have been very much disappointed if you could not have come.

"But, Ada, there's not to be any question of expense on your part. You are my mother's invited guest, and one of us. So you are not to waste your money on tickets or things, but keep it for your own pleasures. The through tickets are already purchased and everything arranged, so that——"

"Oh! but Ethel. Neither papa nor I could consent to such a thing as——"

"Oh! but Ada, you'll have to consent to it. It's all arranged before hand. So make your mind easy that you cannot help it. And here we are back again," replied Ethel hastily.

"Well! Ada is to accompany us; is she not?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, who, with Mrs. Dearborn, came out of the house as the carriage drove up. "I see by Ethel's face that such is the case."

"Oh! Yes! Mrs. Mordaunt. Papa has consented that I should encumber you, I am happy to say, and mamma will I'm sure also. Won't you, mamma? But Ethel, I'll dictate my own terms about that of which we were speaking," said Ada, with serious face.

"Very well ! Ada. We'll see though," replied Ethel, laughing.

"Come along, mamma. We must be off. We have lots to do yet."

"Yes ! indeed we have." Good bye ! Mrs. Dearborn. I am very glad, you have let Ada join us. I will take great care of her. Good bye ! until to-morrow ! Ada. We shall call for you in the morning," and shaking hands with the ladies, Mrs. Mordaunt was assisted by Ada into the carriage and they drove off.

During the time that Ethel and Ada had been absent on their mission to the bank, Mrs. Dearborn and Mrs. Mordaunt had comfortably ensconced themselves in the cool and handsome Dearborn drawing-room—the pride of the Dearborn heart and measure of its claims to bank and society. Unless to Ada, to whom it was the purgatory, where, for her sins, she underwent the—to her, unendurable penance—of unendurably prosy, momentarily ceremonious and horribly pretentious, morning calls—and amid the stumps ! ! ! !

And well might the handsome and handsomely furnished apartment be their pride,—for to its glories were sacrificed the necessary means for the comfort of the rest of the house ; a bed of flowers in a garden of weeds—a swell of handsome coat—but no shirt. Outside magnificence, held forth to the world, at the cost of how many meannesses of discomfort endured by themselves. And as the two ladies entered it, they found the equally handsome and handsomely equipped Emily leaning back in an easy chair, reading a lengthy letter of that evening's mail.

Rising from her seat, at their entrance, she hastily concealed the letter—crumpling it up out of sight, as if its very existence was to be held secret, and proceeded to do the agreeable, in her very sweetest manner to Mrs. Mordaunt. She listened to and was interested with the sweetest sisterly sympathy, to all

appearance, in the proposed excursion of her sister with the Mordaunts. She smiled, and made herself pleasant, was enthusiastic, delighted and hopeful for Ada's pleasure and enjoyment ; took the thing for granted and laughed at all doubts of her father's consent ; shewed herself so generous-hearted and open ; so unselfish and amiable in the matter ; was so avowedly grateful on Ada's account and in consequence so polite and deferential to Mrs. Mordaunt, that the latter lady, in the happy unsuspectingness of her heart, began to wonder if she had not, —despite everything—wrongly misdoubted and calumniated her. It was therefore with some twinge of repentance that she regarded her, and was kind and conciliatory where, from previous impressions, she would have remained cool and distant. So well had Emily's attractiveness and well assumed agreeability won upon her preconceived dislike, that she began to wish that her invitation had been extended as well to the elder as the younger sister ; and to wonder whether it was not possible yet to manage the extension of it, without the proffer being looked upon, and resented as an afterthought. But as she listened and thought, there arose to her mind the remembrance of her brother's warning ; so far, but lightly regarded by herself, it is true, that Reggie—her son—her child of promise, in whom centered so much of her earthly future, was infatuated with this girl, who sat there before her, so charming, so dangerously sweet and attractive ; and as she looked at her—with the warning present in her mind—she, for the first time realized that it might not be wholly imaginary, and that there might be a probability of the, to her, bitter truth. It might be, it is true, but the evanescent and shallow-rooted passion of a boy, whose budding love so oft does homage to the full-blown rose, and then wears itself off so easily by its own expansion and capabilities to fix itself anew upon some object whose real beauties can bear the testing light of more matured experience.

But yet the thought was agony to the mother's heart that

Reggie should love this girl. The remembrance cleared away—as a wholesome breeze—the misty haloes of charms and softness, with which Emily's deferential politeness and attractiveness had enshrouded her real self, and revived more strongly than before all the old dislike.

Whether the young lady was right in this matter, or was wrong; whether she encouraged or did not encourage Reggie's silly suit, was nothing to Mrs. Mordaunt. She disliked her—hated her almost just the same for it. But that she did encourage his love, was, to her mind, certain; persistently encouraged it—for her Reggie, she was sure, would not need a second rebuff, if his attentions were not agreeable. She was therefore very glad that she had not included Emily in her invitation. She would keep her Reggie away from the syren as much as she could, and would save him from her if possible.

For what purer or nobler motive could the girl have who, all the world said, looked with favoring eyes on no better a lover than Sydney Wolverton, if she could look with favoring eyes on any lover—than she hoped for advantages of position and wealth which the prospect of a marriage with Reggie offered. It could not be for love, that was certain—though the mother's proud heart would not allow that it was possible for any girl not to love her handsome Reggie—for if this girl loved at all, the favored personage was Sidney Wolverton, and no person else.

Her manner, which had been interesting, attractive and kind—changed all at once under the new impression, and became again cold and distant, and the keen perceptions of Emily instantly noticed the alteration. The swelling burst of rage which had filled her breast at the preference shown her younger sister over herself—which heretofore she had kept forced down within her breast—now almost over-mastered her; while it was only the knowledge that in her hand—soon to ripen into forceful action—lay her triumph, a double triumph of revenge and

victory to come; that did restrain her. When the two girls, returning from their drive to the bank, stopped at the gate, and Mrs. Mordaunt, rising to leave and bid her adieux, asked Emily if she would not walk out and speak to Ethel in the carriage, as they were hurried to reach home,—she declined, but could not help saying :

“No, thank you, Mrs. Mordaunt; I will not detain you, as you have doubtless much to do in the way of preparation, and we also have to help Ada with hers. Pray give my love to Ethel. Her bright young dreams of love, doubtless, urge her back to Lake Mordaunt, and her waiting lover. It would be cruelty to longer keep her. I only hope her dreams of happiness may not prove evanescent. If Mr. Vance remains as successfully cautious and reticent in his actions as heretofore, there is no reason why it should not be so.”

“What do you mean by that, Miss Dearborn?” exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, turning round and looking fixedly at her.

“Oh! nothing in particular. It was only merely the expression of my hope that everything may go on as smoothly as it has done, and that Mr. Vance may continue to avoid and get over certain difficulties of his position,” replied Emily, looking back as fixedly in the face of the other.

Too indignant to reply, Mrs. Mordaunt bade Mrs. Dearborn farewell, and left the house, accompanied, however, by the latter to the carriage, and drove off, as before narrated, after promising to call for Ada in the morning.

The fair Emily, so soon as her sister entered the house and ran to acquaint her with her own happy prospects, commenced at once, as stated to Mrs. Mordaunt, to help her on with her preparations for the journey, as follows :

“And so the dear little girl has wormed herself into an invitation from the Mordaunts, to go to the seaside—has she? Very well done indeed, for ingenious simplicity and innocence! And pray from whence does the money come to pay Miss’s

expenses?—or are you hired out as companion and foil to the magnificent Ethel? Pray let us know," continued Emily, with her profoundest scorn.

Poor Ada! her eyes sparkling and her face bright at the prospect of her anticipated pleasures, was stopped in her course by this sisterly salute as suddenly as by a blow. The light faded from her face and the tears sprang to her eyes, at the cruel words. But indignation at Emily's malicious and undeserved taunts—coming as they did in place of the expected sisterly response to her happiness—came to her aid, and overmastered her lachrymose tendency, as she warmly replied :

"What a shame ! Emily, to say such things ; which you know to be as false as they are cruel to me. When have I ever tried to worm myself into the Mordaunt's favor, or even sought them ? You are a selfish and ungenerous girl. You are vexed because it is I who am asked for this occasion, and not yourself. It is my father who pays my expenses and it is no concern of yours. Let me tell you also that Ethel Mordaunt's beauty requires no foil ; while I am quite sufficiently aware of my own good looks to know that I am unfitted for the honorable post you would assign me, Emily."

"Oh ! indeed. We are getting on our high horse ; are we ? And we talk of our beauty too. How very interesting !" replied Emily, with a sarcastic laugh.

"The family, too, must remain contentedly stunted and cut down to the scraping of cents that our sweet young lady may air her newly-discovered good looks among the fashionables of Cacouna. Truly a pleasant prospect for the rest of us."

"Have I ever spoken to you—Emily—of the very many pleasures you have enjoyed, in the manner you now speak to me at the prospect of the only visit, almost, I have made from home ?" queried Ada in reply, with a quiet but fixed gaze at her sister.

"No! I should think not! I should imagine there is a difference between us," answered Emily meaningly.

"Visit forsooth! As if you, a mere country girl, were asked without a purpose. If nothing else you will be made useful to walk on ahead 'solus' in Miss Ethel's promenades, so that she and Vance can spoon together to their heart's content."

"It is simply disgraceful in you to say such things, Emily, to which I will not listen. You are beside yourself with rage that I am to get this little pleasure; and you do not know what you are saying," said Ada, turning to leave the room.

"Stay a moment, pray? I have not done with you, Miss," exclaimed Emily barring Ada's exit by running to the door. "I suppose now, little Miss is looking forward to a delightful time with Reggie Mordaunt for her devoted cavalier. Dear me! how mistaken we shall find ourselves; how unpleasantly shall we be undeceived."

"Reggie Mordaunt has been, and will still be, polite; and that is all that will be expected of him. I am not, which is more than my sister can say—in the habit of flirting with any person; much less of endeavouring to draw on, and entangle a mere boy, as he is."

"Oh! indeed. Then I have drawn him on to some purpose though," replied Emily, now flaming with rage. "How pleased you will be to hear that he and I are engaged."

"I should not be pleased to hear it; either for his sake or the credit of the family, Emily; what is more, I do not think it is at all a likely thing to occur;" said Ada, with a startled look at her sister, however.

"Oh! hear the Mentor! Little miss has turned preacher. 'Credit of the family'—forsooth! Little miss is not pleased to hear it. How very dreadful," replied Emily, laughing long and loud. "And not a likely thing to occur; is it not? Whether our dignified little miss is pleased or is not pleased, allow me to tell you that the event has occurred; that Reggie Mordaunt and

myself are engaged to each other. What thinks our young lady of that? Her newly found beauty will be absolutely thrown away upon a brother-in-law elect upon our pleasant little trip. Ha! Ha! Ha!" and Emily shook with mingled laughter and rage.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are engaged to be married to Reggie Mordaunt, a mere boy of eighteen, Emily Dearborn. In love with another man at the same time. You surely cannot be in earnest; so mercenary; so evidently mercenary! It simply means disgrace to us all. It's not true, is it? Emily," rapidly and earnestly exclaimed Ada, now interested enough and with a painfully shocked face.

"Yes! it is quite true, Miss. Since it is so easy to disgrace the family—it is disgraced. Reggie Mordaunt and myself are engaged. At least he is engaged to me and I to him so long as it suits me. The privileges without the penalties and disadvantages, you know. Oh! la! how horried Miss appears. The good little girl. As if butter would'nt melt in her mouth. Yes! and shall probably marry him into the bargain. A very good match it will be for me, as he is the only son, and they're too fond of him to throw him over. I'll do it to spite that hateful Ethel and the old lady; little miss here also," and Emily courtseyed in mocking derision of her sister, took little dancing steps before her, holding her skirts back as she took took them and poking her face into Ada's with the most aggravating and exaggerated smilingness she could command.

"And are the Mordaunts acquainted with all this?" asked Ada, taking no notice of the pantomime, and regarding her sister fixedly.

"That is no business of yours! little miss. You attend to your own affairs and do not trouble yourself with mine, or it will be the worse for you and your dear friends, the Mordaunts, also," replied Emily, still backing up against the drawing-room door.

"Have you told papa and mamma, Emily?" again asked Ada.
 "But I know—"

"Mind your own business! Ada Dearborn," wrathfully exclaimed the enraged Emily. You go upon your pleasure trip, for which I and the rest of us have to pay, and do not you dare to say a word of this to living soul, or I send word to Reggie, and marry him to-morrow morning. He'll only be too glad."

"Yes! I dare say, the poor boy. He is doubtless entranced enough for that. I can only say your heart, Emily is not in keeping with your beautiful face. I pity him, and hope for all our sakes—for yours also—that his delusion will pass away. Let me pass, Emily. I will no longer be stayed," and with a push the vigorous young girl, who under less excitement would not have dared, moved her sister aside and gained the door. "Yes! you have gained what you desired, Emily. I shall not go with the Mordaunts to-morrow upon this excursion. I will not be a party to this wickedness. I am a loyal sister to you, but I will not, knowing what I now know, treacherously implant myself among them as a friend, when I am not, and cannot be, a real friend. It is not my business, as you say, and it is not my place to interfere in this matter. But I will have nothing to do with it, and I shall not go with them, until your engagement is approved by the Mordaunts, to whom at the present it is, I am certain, wholly unknown, and by papa and mamma also. I shall hold myself aloof from them, and shall not pretend to be a friend when I shall be a traitor. You have gained your wish, Emily. I do not go with them to-morrow. I remain your sister—most sorrowfully your sister. But you shall make my excuses! No matter what they think! I will not appear before them to-morrow morning. I am your sister, and, as I see it, no longer their friend!"

* * * * *

Mr. Edwin Vance was very much astonished, on opening a letter which his fair fiancee handed to him, on her return with

her mother from Ten Lakes. It was short, if it was not sweet.

Yet its contents surprised him ; not that they were very unusual, but that he should have been written to at all upon the subject.

“TORONTO, July 28th, 1873.

“MY DEAR VANCE,—

“I see that a note of Wolverton's for a considerable sum, endorsed by you, was discounted at this bank to-day by a third party. As president of the bank, I ask you if everything is correct ; and, as an old friend, I ask you likewise if the transaction is a wise one on your part ?

“I remain, dear Edwin,

“Yours faithfully,

“E. CHUTER.”

“What in the world does the man mean ?” he exclaimed aloud, as he glanced again over the epistle. “Can not I endorse a note for two or three thousand dollars without being brought to book about it, as if I was not capable of taking care of myself ? If I had a dozen or so of them afloat it might be different, I allow ; but even if I lose altogether a trifle like this I shall not be very much hurt. ‘Is everything correct ?’ That's tantamount to saying that I or Sidney forged the note. If they were afraid of it what did they discount it for ? and then come bothering me about it. It is interference that I won't put up with. Though I suppose old Chuter meant well enough.”

Vance walked hastily into the library, snatched up pen and paper, and replied as follows—

“MY DEAR SIR,—

“The note of which you speak in yours is perfectly correct. Neither Wolverton nor I have forged it, as you would seem to imply. I was not aware that either of us had developed talent in that line. As to the wisdom or unwisdom of the transaction that is another affair, of which, however, I must beg to retain my own opinion.

“I am, my dear sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“EDWIN VANCE.”

"There is one thing seems evident," continued he, as he closed his reply and left it for mailing. "That Wolverton manages to get me into a scrape through everything I have to do with him or for him. He is either uncommonly unlucky, or the rather bad opinion of him of which I have heard so much lately about here must be formed by something other than mere prejudice. Well ! I won't trouble myself with old Chuter's letter further," and he tore it up and threw it into the waste-paper basket.

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But after all Ada Dearborn went with the Mordaunts on their trip to the salt water. There was a scene at the Dearborn residence that evening, but the commands of papa and mamma were imperative and Ada had to submit. She resolutely persisted in divulging, despite Emily's threats, menaces and fury, the secret of the engagement between the latter and Reggie Mordaunt, but was very much surprised that sides were taken against her, and to find herself in a hopeless minority, represented, in fact, by herself alone.

"It's Emily's affair and not yours," exclaimed her mother, "and I forbid you to speak of it to any person, unless it is first mentioned to you by some of the Mordaunts."

"It is no business of yours ! Ada, and go you shall ! whether you like it or not," she continued with more than ordinary decision, for she was more delighted than vexed at Emily's engagement, and possessed none of Ada's scruples.

"Do you suppose that the Mordaunts can speak to me about it, mamma ? when they do not know it themselves. If they had known and approved of it, would they not have asked Emily, and not myself, to accompany them ?" queried Ada in reply.

"Approve of it ! Approve ! indeed. They may think themselves very lucky if a girl of Emily's accomplishments and refinement marries him. Where could they find another who could so well do the honors of his house ? Approve of it indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Dearborn, with scornful emphasis.

"A mere boy, for whom she does not care one straw," returned Ada, warmly. "If she marries him it will be because she thinks it will be a good marriage in a money point of view for her, and for no other reason. She would throw him over and marry Mr. Wolverton to-morrow if she thought he was rich."

"Come! Cease all that nonsense and ridiculous stuff about engagements and love," said Mr. Dearborn, impatiently. "Ada! you will go on this journey to-morrow, as arranged! I repeat it. I'll believe it when I see it that Emily marries young Mordaunt. If he does, he's a bigger fool than I take him to be, and all I can say is that I won't envy him," continued he, and, seizing his newspaper he turned away from the group and said no more.

"Thank you! papa, for the compliment," almost screamed Emily, jumping from her chair in a flaming passion. "I'll marry him if I choose, no matter who approves or who doesn't. As for you, you minx," to Ada, "I'll pay you and your fine friends the Mordaunts off for this, so sure as my name is Emily Dearborn," and rushing past them, she slammed the door behind her with a bang, and was gone.

So Ada went with the Mordaunts in the morning, but all the anticipated pleasure of the trip seemed to have gone from her. She obeyed her parents' commands, yet it was a woeful-looking young face that appeared before them when they called for her.

"Was it not traiterous and disloyal in her?" she enquired, "to accept the friendship and hospitality of these people, knowing what she knew." She would much rather have stayed at home and kept herself aloof from them.

She had to go, though, and bear her load—which would have sat lightly enough in all conscience on many other shoulders—as best she might.

How could she, a young girl, interfere in the matter, or say anything to the Mordaunts of that which she felt sure they were not acquainted with, but which they ought to know.

It was not for her to interfere, and had she not her mother's absolute command not to do so.

Oh! how she longed and wished for an opportunity to arise by which she could escape the visit with them. But no such god-send arose, and she had to go. She bade her farewells to her brothers and sisters, and was driven off to enjoy or disenjoy her pleasure trip as best she might.

 CHAPTER XXIV.

A COMING STROKE.

That a human creature, the masterpiece of creation, living in this world of ours, and to all appearance making it subservient to him, though he be gifted with its choicest blessings, intellect, energy and industry, wisdom, physical strength and beauty, or even the possession of fortune, should have the current of his life altered, turned aside and deflected from the wished for channel by the mere force of circumstances surrounding him, in almost as great degree as one who, possessing none of these advantages, is floated helplessly along the stream of his existence, amid sunshine or amid storm as chance may befall, is a seeming contradiction, an apparent paradox, yet, nevertheless, a truth in fact. For of those we see around us, no matter what talent, application, force of character be displayed, who is there that can so wholly direct and control his course, that some slight event, springing mayhap from the veriest trifle, may not turn aside that straight course into a devious pathway, unlooked for, unexpected and irretrievably giving a new tenor to the whole after destiny?

Happiness, the possession of all that seems desirable, may to some of us appear to be almost a secured certainty—within the grasp; the cup of enjoyment overflowing to our lips, yet may not some untoward accident of a moment drop its poison into the sweet draught of existence and vitiate for this world every bright prospect.

It does not need that the untoward thing be of our own causation. Were it of such alone the race of man could much better command its own happiness. Inevitable Death—with his gaunt terrors that separate the beloved from us—would then be, in things of earth, the sole destroyer we would need to fear. For who could command the stay of his dread approach?

It is not the effects of our own errors and imperfections with which we alone have to contend. These are numerous and forceful enough to wreck full many a hope, to lend full many a carking care and sorrow for the embittering of our steps. But these are not all.

Our course is devious and uncertain. Full many an evil of which we are innocent shall bend its force against the would-be straight lines of our life, and we have to bear the brunt who provoked not the fray. Full many a good, that to our short seeing eyes is disguised as evil, stems its power against and turns us from our fancied way, in present pain and toil, and though in after days we recognise the brightness and the beauty, and acknowledge the Beneficence that changed our road, yet in its time it had added to our load.

Or how many chances and events, outside of our cognizance or intention, wholly independent of us and beyond our control, come between us and our wished for goal; marring our fancied happiness: thwarting our best laid plans; diverting us, perforce, from our most cherished aims, and, strive as we may, leaving us to flounder in uncertain seas, at the mercy of changing wind and wave, to regain our course, as we best may, in whatsoever sorry plight we may find ourselves.

Even he, who battered by long misfortune, wearied, scarred and calloused in the ceaseless fray of life, the bright visions of early days all dimmed, and hope ensanguined no more, forces himself again upon his road, content with quiet content, that his hard journey is brightened by the loved ones whose steps are with him, may not, even he may not, pass scatheless. Mayhap a lovely

little child, expanding before his eyes like a flower, and in very sweetness and beauty winding close and closer its little bands of love around him, until his seared heart wells forth again with bright hopes for his little one, with tender and unselfish love, and in fond prospects for his darling's happiness he is again happy. Untimely Death—the surer that the little child is the more lovely and loveable, too sweet, too pure and bright for earth's long, hard journeyings—snatches away his beloved form from him, and casts him, with heart strings torn and bleeding prostrate and nerveless to the desert sands; until, from Him, the great Aider, coming the strength, He always gives to those who bow to His fiat, and seek His aid, knowing that in mercy was His stroke—he rises to repeat the onward march of his sad pilgrimage.

But if sorrow and pain and bitter trials seem to dog with relentless pursuit the hard steps of man, yet how many gleams of brightness, of goodness, and of love light up the dreary way? It is not all pain. The pleasures equal the pain, but are not remembered in the same degree. To the sorest grief is brought time consolation and solace. The short seeing eyes are opened to the Mercy and the Benificence. It is not always sorrow. Had not the fond parents, whose hearts are wrung by the loss of their beloved little one, exquisite joy and pleasure in the pure little life whilst it was with them? Do they wish in their agony, their wringing of hands, that their darling had never been born to them?

No! the loving breasts could never frame the thought; that their little angel in the robes of light had never been. Rather do not they think, and thinking know that their child was God's child—too pure and lovely for this world—that He made its probation short, and here its journey ended, took it to Himself safe in His arms forever; that he loved their darling better than they, and in His mercy removed it from earthly care and sin to His heavenly realms of bliss, and do not they, with longing

hearts, look forward to the heavenly meeting, when, life's struggles over, there shall be no more separation, no more sorrow, but infinite joy, eternal bliss ?

Man's life is not all darkness. There may be shadows over the road, but God gives His light to aid us through them. There may be pains to be endured, but there are pleasures also. Labors, but there is rest, and over all His Hand guides us—not, perhaps, in the way we, blind mortals, would wish, but as He knows best for us—in His mercy to lead us to Him. He places the obstacles in our path. He sends the trials and the sorrows that we may be turned from our own way and seek the true road that His mercy and loving kindness would fain that we find and which His Hand helps us to gain.

We may not see the Hand nor recognize the Mercy. We grieve over the trials and fruitless labors, the hard chances and circumstances that surround and prevent us. We fret at the bonds that restrain us from our cherished aims ; not seeing that our griefs and trials and the force of circumstances that we so lament as beyond our control, are the putting forth of His forceful yet merciful strength to save us from ourselves, to lead us in the right road, whose ending is everlasting felicity. And if we bend to Him, and seek His guidance in humble faith, we shall not find it all sorrow here below.

Five weeks have elapsed, and the Lake Mordaunt party have ended their salt water excursion, and are again within the pleasant walks of home.

Delighted they all were to be back again amid the loved and familiar surroundings, for there is nothing like absence, short though it may be, to show the true beauties of, and open wide the heart, to Home.

Their seaside visit had been a very enjoyable one to all of them, except perhaps to Ada Dearborn, who had not started upon it in a happy frame of mind, and who, unwillingly forced by parental authority to accompany the Mordaunts, and to

keep silence to them, had found herself wholly unable to cope with, or interfere in the disagreeable subject that oppressed her, and who though interested and attracted, as any young girl would be, by the novel scenes and experiences of her trip, found her chief pleasure in its conclusion, and was unfeignedly glad to be on her way home, where, if she still had to maintain the secret that weighed upon her heart, she could at any rate, keep away from the Mordaunts, and no longer be involved in the treachery of apparent friendship to them, when she felt that 'per force,' she was not a real friend.

To Edwin Vance and Ethel, the return had been the only alloy to their pleasure, for it involved the sad season of their first parting ; to lovers a very sad season.

Their five weeks' excursion had indeed been five weeks of summery delights, the sunny hours, bright skies and smooth seas of a happy love. Five weeks of Elysium together, never to be forgotten ; the bright dawning of the long and happy day of their love ; for which the sun rose brighter, and beautiful earth smiled more sweetly on her children, whose softened eyes drank in the greeting beauty that lighted the dawn of their life of love and hope. The few weeks they had spent together since their engagement had drawn them very close to each other, and had brought their love into a perfect accord of thought and of feeling. They had learned to perceive and to admire the good qualities, the sterling worth, and the fitting amiabilities of each other's character. Qualities which their love intensified and brought forward the more prominently to each other's view.

The threatening storm that had blown over them with menacing wreck, had but cleared their sky, and freshened the morning air of their life. The gale had swept away the dregs of egotism and self-confidence from them, and its menacing aspect had shewn them how necessary they were to each other—that their love had become the greater part of their earthly

life and the knowledge had drawn them the closer to each other. If they had loved from the first with a pure and unselfish love, they loved now more purely and more unselfishly. The ennobling passion that loves because the object is wholly worthy, that recognises that in this love is alone to live as oneself ; that Edwin Vance could not be Edwin Vance unless he loved Ethel Mordaunt, and Ethel Mordaunt could not be herself unless she loved Edwin Vance ; that no calamity could subvert that love, or make either different. They felt this and gloried in the knowledge. When Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt returned with their party from their bright summer trip, they were, in each other's eyes, perfect, they loved each other with an absorbing love, and they were happy.

But the hour of their parting had come ; the inevitable first parting of little pangs and sweet memories. A short parting it is true ; for a month was to bring her Edwin again to the tearful Ethel's feet, but it was nevertheless the parting. The carriage that was to drive her hero away, stood at the door, and Barney reining up his impatient horses, turning his reproachful eyes into the hall from whence the lingerer came not, and she hated Barney. Ada Dearborn, who was to accompany Edwin to her home at Ten Lakes, stood on the verandah bidding ' farewells ' to the Mordaunts, who had been so kind to her, and yet from whom she longed to get away—while Edwin and Ethel lingered over their parting in the hall.

" It is very hard to leave you, my darling ! " he said. " A month away from you is the prospect of an age. But you shall never be absent from my thoughts, Ethel, my beautiful love. And you will write to me often. Will you not ? to brighten my lonely absence."

" Yes ! Edwin, I will write, and you must also, so soon as you reach Toronto, for I shall be anxious," she answered. " But the time will soon fly away, for we love each other, Ed-

win, in full trust and confidence, and we will be happy in our love. Nothing can come between us now."

"That nothing can come between us now, is the sweetest consolation that is left me in our parting; my darling; and we can trust each other's love. See! Ethel," he continued, taking a handsome ring from its case, and holding it up that she might read its inscription. "While this little circlet is the sign of our happy engagement, it is also the pledge of my unalterable truth. I shall not change while time exists for me."

"I believe it Edwin," she replied; "I know it, for I judge you by myself. What a beauty it is!" she continued taking the ring. My love faileth not. No need to have engraved the motto within the ring, Edwin. Have I not your sweet promise in my heart. No need of symbols when I have the reality."

"My darling!" was his brief but comprehensive reply. "If I were but worthy of your love! But I must place the ring on your finger with my own hand, and bind my pledge. Remember always, Ethel, that, whatsoever befalls, so long as life shall last, 'my love faileth not.' And now I must say 'farewell'—the first sad 'farewell.' I must not miss my train, and Barney will be raving."

Their parting words shall be sacred. A few short minutes and he was seated in the carriage with Ada, in another he was gone. Ethel, with her lover's parting kiss upon her cheek, turned away and fled up stairs into solitude.

* * * * *

"Oh! Indeed! We've managed to find our way home at last, have we?" exclaimed Emily Dearborn, meeting her sister in the hall of the parental mansion, Mr. Vance having hurriedly bid her "farewell" at the door and driven on. "Oh! yes! our little girl has come out grand among her fine friends, I see. Fine feathers make fine birds, indeed," she continued with a contemptuously critical gaze at her sister's general make-up.

"And pray, why could not little miss have come home the day before yesterday, when she arrived? I should like to be informed. But no! that would not have done at all. Little miss must go on to Lake Mordaunt for two days more with her grand friends. I know all about it you see. I have a friend at court also. But how humbly grateful we must be that little miss has condescended at length to honor us again with her presence after her fashionable summer visit."

"Oh! Emily, how can you speak to me so? If you only knew how glad I am to be back again. Mrs. Mordaunt insisted on my going to Lake Mordaunt with them. They could not come out of the way to leave me, as little Ally was not well, and they hurried on home with her. It was not my fault, and, oh! Emily, I'm so glad to be back," continued Ada, attempting to kiss her sister.

"Enough of that, thanks!" returned Emily, repulsing the embrace. "A fig for your affection; I know it's value. You were not so much missed, let me tell you, that we are to be in raptures at your coming home. Hardly that, I think. In fact, little miss' return is at least as unendurable as her absence."

"Ada! my darling! my child! How happy I am to see you again," exclaimed Mrs. Dearborn, rushing in and clasping her daughter to her warm motherly heart, kissing her again and again.

"My dear mamma—my dear mamma. How glad I am to be back to you again," returned the affectionate girl, holding her arms around her mother's neck. "How glad I am; how glad I am. And how is papa, and all of them?"

"They're all well, Ada. Your papa will be glad to see you again. He has missed you more than you can tell," was the reply. "How well you look and how pretty you are grown, my darling. Mrs. Mordaunt has taken care of you in everything," continued Mrs. Dearborn, gazing admiringly at the pretty figure of her younger daughter. "Your trip has done you good, as it

has taught you to pay proper attention to your appearance and your dress. But you are looking very pale. Have you enjoyed yourself, and has all gone right with you, Ada?"

"Oh! yes, mamma. It was all very pleasant; but I am very glad to be back again, though. They had intended remaining some time longer, but little Ally was taken unwell, and Mrs. Mor-daunt hurried home."

"Alida unwell! What is the matter? Nothing infectious, I hope. But come into the sitting-room and tell me all the news, Ada," said her mother, fidgetting about and anxious for a chat. "How are Mr. Vance and Ethel getting along? and Emily's Reggie?"

"Mr. Vance left to-day for Toronto. He brought me home with him on his way to Cascades. He is very nice, and so is Ethel, and they are awfully fond of each other. Reggie goes to Toronto and Hamilton to-morrow to visit a couple of his college friends," answered Ada, with a quiet meaning glance, which she could not help, at her sister.

"Oh! yes, Ada. I perceived your look towards me. It falls harmless. Reggie was here yesterday, and he told me all about it. He does not go of his own will. But I'm just as well pleased, so long as he is in the frame of mind that I find suitable. I don't care for his presence, as I'm sure of his fidelity. So your shot fails of effect, miss," replied Emily, with a laugh and a sneer.

"You should not speak in that manner, Emily; it is not right," said her mother, deprecatingly, but smiling nevertheless at her elder daughter's assured confidence. "Did any of them speak to you, Ada, about Reggie's and Emily's engagement? Was it referred to in any way?"

"No! mamma, the matter was not mentioned. They did not speak to me about it, and I had your orders not to speak to them. I think also that none of them are aware of the engagement, at any rate, and I am very glad to be away from them for

that reason. The engagement should not be kept secret from Reggie's parents."

"That is no business of yours, miss. Reggie and I can manage our own affairs; your opinion will not be required in the matter. Of one thing you may rest assured, if I ever marry Reggie, it will be of my own free will. We shall be married as soon as Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt are, in any case, as you will shortly see," exclaimed Emily in a rage, getting up from her seat, and preparing to leave the room.

"If their engagement is ever broken, it will be through your treachery, Emily—your unhappy spite and malice. They love each other truly, and it will not be easy to part them. But you have warned me, and I will warn Ethel to beware of you," replied Ada, warmly.

"Ah! indeed! How much little miss's efforts will avail," said Emily, as she passed out of the door and looked back with a mocking sneer at her sister. "I do not forget their insulting slight in passing me over for little miss's desirable company. We shall see."

"Mamma! I am confident that Emily is meditating some scheme against Ethel Mordaunt's happiness," said Ada, when her sister had gone. "She does not like her, I know, and was very much annoyed from the first that Edwin Vance became engaged to her. She wished that his liking had been for herself, and I fear that she is ripening a plot to sunder them. Could you not interfere with her and prevent any cruelty against poor Ethel, who has been so kind to us both; and again, discovery will be in the end certain, with deep disgrace to us all. Speak to her, mamma, on the matter," she continued.

"Oh! now, Ada, how can you imagine such things of your sister. I am sure Emily has no such wicked idea as you suppose. What interest can it be for her to interfere between Ethel and Mr. Vance? especially now as she is engaged to Reginald," replied Mrs. Dearborn, with some warmth. "You are unjust to

your sister. But even were it true, what can I do? You know she is unmanageable by any one, even her own father, and she has her own way altogether. I can do nothing. I think though that you are wrong, and that she has no such intention as you impute to her. She is vexed, I dare say, that she was not asked to accompany them to the sea side, while you were instead, and she, very likely, does not like the necessity of keeping her engagement secret from the Mordaunts."

"Well, it may be so, mamma, and I hope it is as you think, but I do not feel confident. When Emily can consent that her engagement can be kept a secret at her lover's request, she shows so little self-respect that there can be no confidence. That she does not love Reggie, I am certain; her engagement is but a part of an ambitious scheme, and when she could do one wrong thing she would do another, if it suited her. If she can break Ethel's engagement and get Mr. Vance at her feet, do you think she will not throw poor Reggie over? Yes! without compunction, and moreover, if Sidney Wulverton were in the position she requires, it would be the same, for if she loves any person it is that despicable man," said Ada, in return. "I will watch her as well as I can, and if I get trace of any overt act I will warn Ethel."

"You are cruel to Emily, and have no reason to say such things, Ada," replied her mother. "Don't do anything rashly, at any rate, and make no more trouble than we have already. What could a girl like Emily do? I'd like to know, to break off their engagement?" answered Mrs. Dearborn.

"That I do not know, mamma, but Emily is very clever, and, I fear, unscrupulous. However, I will say no more about the matter. For all our sakes, do not allow her to do anything that would disgrace us," said Ada, earnestly. And now I am going to be useful to you after my long absence. I'll go and get my fine clothes off, and get back to the dear old work-a-day life

which I had no business to have ever left. I would have been better and happier at home."

"You are a good girl, my little Ada," replied her mother. "Though I think you are too hard upon Emily, and misjudge her."

CHAPTER XXV.

MY LOVE FAILETH NOT! OH! EDWIN, EDWIN!

A week after the events narrated in the last chapter, Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter Ethel sat in their pleasant morning-room, the former busily employed in looking over the dearly loved plagues of a good housekeeper, the mending and darning of a large family, and the latter as pleasantly at least engaged in reading over and over again, a letter received the night before from her absent lover—the second love letter of her life—and, as may be supposed, a very delightful occupation of an hour it was to her before commencing the duties of the day.

There was a new light shining in the soft eyes, and a brighter bloom on her fair cheek, a soft smile on the rosy lips, as the loving words, read so often, and yet so fresh, passed before her sense.

There lay the words on the paper, all plain, distinct and lasting. Plain and distinct as though he whispered them in her ear. She could almost imagine he spoke them to her, and that she would hear the soft inflections of his voice upon every syllable. It was very delicious, and as each rounded phrase, redolent of their sweet romance, and delightfully nonsensical—for even a lawyer, it is to be supposed, can write a love letter—swept before her eyes and kept time with every pulsation of her heart, she realized almost as keen a pleasure as if indeed in proper person he spoke the words. For they did not, as spoken words would do, die away with the sound and end there. There

they were before her, to be mused over, delighted over, pressed to her lips and held to her heart exultingly, again and again. Dreant over again and again in bright day dreams. Soft smiling landscapes, wherein lay pictured the bright unending vistas of love and happiness.

"Well! That must be a very delightful epistle, Ethel," said Mrs. Mordaunt, after a pause from her work, during which she had gazed with a smile at her preoccupied daughter. "You have spent an hour over it. You find your first letters from him very sweet, I dare say. Your *preux chevalier* has done his *devoir* in knightly style. Two letters a week. It will not do; you spend the week in reading them."

Ethel, at her mother's first words, started, and a blush spread over her face. With a forced little laugh she answered, "Oh! mamma, that's too bad. I was only thinking a little."

"Yes! I dare say! Dreaming happy dreams, Ethel," replied her mother. "I hope your life will be as wholly bright as your fancy now pictures it, my darling daughter. Does he give any news of interest to any one but yourself? Anything but sweet phrases meant only for your own ear?"

"Don't tease me, mamma! He does not say much of himself, except that he is very busy. He sends love to all, and asks after every one, down to his friend Barney, who greatly amused his journey to Cascades. He asks particularly after Ally, who was so unwell after he left."

"Very kind of him. I feel anxious about Ally. I think I will send for Dr. Sreatham again at once. She is getting very thin, and I do not like the whooping cough stopping so suddenly," said Mrs. Mordaunt, her motherly thoughts taking a new direction.

"Oh! I do not know! I think Ally is better. She is getting very thin, certainly, and her cough is not altogether gone, though there is no whoop left. She is a little weakened, and should be strengthened up."

"She is not well, at all, my little beauty. She has no appetite, and eats nothing. She is not like her usual little bright self. I am getting very uneasy about her. She seems to have a low fever, too, though there are hardly any feverish symptoms," replied Mrs. Mordaunt.

"She does not seem to me to be any worse, except that she is weaker, than usual, which probably accounts for her listlessness. And then, is it not a good thing that the horrid whooping cough is gone? What did the Doctor say when he was last here? I hope our Ally is not really ill."

"The last time the Doctor was here he said there was no danger, but that we were to watch her well, and notice her throat and lungs. All is right there, so far, but I do not like her listlessness and the sudden abatement of the cough. I'll go to her now to see how she is, and I will send Barney off at once for Dr. Streatham. She was asleep when I came down; she is too sleepy, more so than is natural," said Mrs. Mordaunt, as she rose and gathering up her work, left the room.

"Five minutes more with my dear letter, and then I must disenchant myself for the work-a-day world," exclaimed Ethel, throwing herself back in her chair, and proceeding to lose herself again in the bright reveries that charmed youth can alone weave out of the unsubstantialities and unrealities, which man, dis severing from the hard unpleasing facts of his existence, exalts before him, and with eager, though vain attempt, essays to erect thereon the delightful structures of his happiness, but upon which foundation, unstable as the shifting sands, the painted house of cards, comes all too soon and too oft, to hopeless wreck, at the feet of the sanguine but hapless builder on the sand. Another bright vision disappears before the disappointed eyes, and for him again the world is all desolate, cold and bear.

But happy youth, all doubtless, of hope unblasted, and whose flowering blooms the withering frosts of disappointment have not cut down, builds fast its frail but brilliant edifices of

imaginary bliss, and for Ethel, all happily engaged in such, the minutes flew past with unsounding wings. At length the grating of wheels on the gravelled roadway attracted her attention, and, looking from the open window, she perceived the approach of a carriage towards the house, having for its tenant, so far as she could discern, a young lady.

"Who can it be at this time of the morning?" she asked of herself. "A lady driving herself and alone! She cannot have come from any distance to be here at ten o'clock in the morning. Who is it, I wonder? Why, it is Emily Dearborn, I do believe! It is not likely that she would honor us by a mere call and alone. It is something other than that improbable event that brings her to Lake Mordaunt," she continued, with no particular pleasure on her countenance, for Emily had not made herself a favorite. "Well! I suppose I must go and receive her, as mamma is up stairs busy, and I must, though somewhat against my inclinations, be polite to her, for dear little Ada's sake," and as the carriage drew up before the door, she left the room to meet her visitor on the verandah.

"Good morning! Miss Dearborn," she said. "Come in! A man will be round directly to take your horse. She will stand a moment, I suppose."

"Thank you! Miss Mordaunt, it is not necessary," was Emily's reply. "I am going to remain but a few minutes, and will secure the horse in a moment," she continued, throwing a weight, which she produced from the carriage, to the ground and attaching it by its strap to the animal's head. "You see I am a Canadian girl, Miss Mordaunt, and can manage my horse without other assistance than my own."

"Yes! I perceive so. Were it otherwise we would be deprived of a chief pleasure of the country. driving about when we wish to do so. Pray walk in this way," continued Ethel, shewing Emily into the room in which she had been sitting

where she had built up her bright tinted castles of the aerial future.

"Mr. and Mrs. Dearborn are well, I hope? and my friend Ada. I have not seen her since she left us a week ago."

"Yes! they are all well, thank you. Ada has been much occupied; she has to make up for lost time now, I suppose. I was sorry to hear from her that little Alida had been very unwell, and we all trust that by this time she has recovered," replied Emily.

"Well! I cannot say that she is either better or worse. The whooping cough has apparently abated, but still she is not well, and is very thin and weak, but I do not think there is any danger."

"I have never heard that it is a dangerous disease, but Alida is of a nervous organization, excitable and rather precocious; such children are easily prostrated," answered Emily, unable to resist the temptation of administering a little of the comfort which Job received so plentifully.

"Mamma feels uneasy about her, which must be her apology for her absence this morning. Did you wish to see her?"

"No! thank you, Ethel. It is yourself whom I came to see. Something which I have to tell you," was the reply, and then finding that her subject was more difficult to open than she had imagined, Emily paused to collect her thoughts and prepare herself for her object.

"Something to say to me! Well! It must be something of more than ordinary importance, then, to have brought you from Ten Lakes on purpose. What is it, Emily?" answered Ethel, laughing after her first surprise, that the mission was to herself, had given way to curiosity.

But Emily did not reply on the instant. Perhaps it was that some twinge of remorse awakened within her spirit and pressed hardly on her evil-seared conscience. Perhaps the perception that that which she was about to do, might be of more direful

consequence to the finer, purer and softer nature before her than it would have been to her own case-hardened and earthy mind—the mere destruction of a girl's ambitious hopes, a blow to her vanity, whose pain a few days would smooth over or efface. Or, perhaps, the risk of discovery, with its disagreeable prospects of inconvenience, if not of danger to herself, might have been the more selfish urging which prompted her delay. Did not the very baseness of the act she was about to commit: the base act which was to effect a baser purpose, appal her self-respect and tighten the restraining chain of Pride—that quality, unworthy in the main, but which is so often beneficial that it will hold back from sin and crime those to whom, in but too many instances, neither the Divine commands nor the ordinances of man would bring prevention.

Did not the remembrance of these Divine commands come upon her soul even at this eleventh hour? The fear of her God? All merciful, if she but repented her of her sin, at even this late moment; but whose justice she was about to provoke, and whose mercy she was about to despise. It may have been so! But if these thoughts—even the dread thought of her Creator's anger—flashed over her soul, her purpose was not altered.

Rejected as sentimentalities—which in the conduct of life were to her absurd—were alike the soft gleams of mercy, the call of self-respect and the promptings of her pride. The idea of danger held no terror to her bold spirit, nor had either the prospect of inevitable disgrace which would follow discovery of her plot, and mayhap the deadened conscience was irresponsive and answered not, to even the lightening-stroke—the dread force of the last terrible reflection—her Maker's wrath.

Emily Dearborn, clever, bold and self-confident; ill brought up, untrained to the right, and left, as she had been, wholly to the unchecked workings of her own heart, was not the spirit who, for a few moments timourous reflection, would turn aside from her decided and matured way.

“What’s the matter with you, Emily? Why do you not speak?” at length exclaimed Ethel, who with gradually increasing surprise had waited for Emily’s reply, and at last broke the pause. “What is it that you can have to say to me that you hesitate so,” she continued, impatiently.

Thus adjured, Emily Dearborn straightened herself in her seat, erected her head with a decisive motion, and turned her face full towards her companion.

“My dear Miss Mordaunt, I am come to you, to day, on an errand—a mission, I should rather call it—which is neither pleasant to myself, nor, do I suppose, will it be pleasing to you. A mission, which has been to me, the theme of anxious debate, of doubt and hesitancy for some days, and of which I would much rather have been excused. And, I would most certainly have excused myself of a painful, and, to me, cruel duty, had I not, after anxious deliberation, come to the conclusion that it would have been a greater cruelty and injustice to you to have refrained from its performance; for, from your concern in the matter, it is but justice to you, and better for you, for your own sake, in every way, that you should at once be made acquainted with that which is of vital interest to you. And this premise must be my apology and excuse to you for entering upon a subject not otherwise of concern to me, and for an apparent interference.”

“Oh! never mind apologies, Miss Dearborn, but come to the point at once; if, as you say, the communication you have to make affects me in any way, though I cannot see how such can be the case, thus indirectly brought forward,” replied Ethel, gravely and composedly, yet, nevertheless, with an involuntary glance at the shining ring on her finger, and a tight clutch of the precious letter in her pocket, as if they had power to protect and comfort; to allay the alarm that already gnawed at her heart.

Emily’s eyes flashed fire, and an angry colour rose in her

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cheeks, as the remark, and the tone in which it was uttered, fell upon her ears, and there was no hesitancy or semblance of anything that could be construed into feeling or friendliness in her voice, as she continued. Her soul had thoroughly warmed to her work.

"Yes, Miss Mordaunt, I will come to the point at once, for the communication I have to make does affect you, notwithstanding the impossibility you would imply. I am well aware that what I have to say will be found unpleasing, and for that reason, any apology, or rather, any delicacy of entering upon the matter, is made by me. However, it pleases you to repudiate the kindness, even before——"

"I would repeat, Miss Dearborn, my desire that you will confine your remarks to the object of your visit, or else permit me to close the interview, which, I certainly find unpleasant," interrupted Ethel, who, although alarmed and anxious, would not allow Emily's impertinences.

"Very well! Miss Mordaunt, as you desire, the interview shall be made as brief as possible. I find it no more pleasant than you do," returned Emily, quickly, but, in spite of her words, her whole appearance and manner showed that the interview was not so unpleasing to her as she implied.

She was in battle now, and the ring of her voice already betrayed an anticipated triumph, as she continued—

"Three days ago, I received from a lady in Toronto this letter and its enclosures, which have brought me here to-day. With this lady I am acquainted—slightly acquainted, it is true—but still sufficiently so to know who she is, and to justify me in taking notice of her communication. I may also mention that I met her in the company of Mrs. Edwin Vance's mother, which is sufficient guarantee of her respectability. My acquaintance with her, is the probable reason why I have been selected by her in this affair, and why the letter has been addressed to me, though for many reasons, I wish that it had not

been so. The letter speaks for itself, and requires no comment on my part. It is here for you to read, if you choose to do so, and is indeed meant for your perusal."

As she spoke, Emily Dearborn took from her pocket an envelope, from which she produced a letter, within which another paper lay. Handing the first to Ethel, but retaining in her hand the other together with the envelope, she continued—

"Please to read this first, and its enclosures will then be at your service."

Ethel, who, at the mention of her lover's name, had grown deadly pale, her vague fears confirmed that the unwelcome visit had reference to him, and who was now visibly startled, took the letter handed her, and proceeded to read it, but not before her eyes had again lighted on the ring, which, so few days before, her Edwin had fitted on her finger, and not before her lips had moved with a silent repetition of its legend "My love faileth not!" as if she would assure her beating heart that she could not mistrust. She read these words, written in a cramped and old-fashioned hand :

"TORONTO, Sept. 13th, 1875.

"MY DEAR MISS DEARBORN,

"For addressing you, to-day, upon the subject which occupies the pages of this letter, I am well aware that I am presuming very heavily upon the acquaintance which I had the pleasure of forming with you, at the residence of our mutual friend, Mrs. Vance, during your visit to this city a year ago. Were it not a matter of paramount importance to one very dear to me, and, consequently, to myself, I would not so presume upon that slight acquaintance, but, as the affair in question is most pressing, involving, as it does, the interests of a person of your vicinity, and, as I have no other friend in that vicinity, excepting yourself, in whom I could confide, I am under the necessity of taxing your good nature, and asking you, in Christian kindness, to lend me your friendly aid. A report—a well-authenticated report—I regret to say, has reached me that Mr. Edwin Vance, who, since the death of his father, two years

ago, has been the affianced husband of my niece, Agnes Seaforth, and who, by every right, human and divine, should, ere this, have made her his wife, with the blessing of the Church, and openly, as he has done, taking advantage of her love for him, in real fact, has become engaged, during the last two months, to marry a young lady of good position in your neighborhood—a Miss Mordaunt.

“ If this report has the foundation of truth, and the source from which it is derived, leaves me no reason to doubt its accuracy, not only has a very gross act of cruelty been perpetrated against my poor Agnes, but a great injustice is done to this Miss Mordaunt, who, of course, must be in ignorance of the real facts of the case, or she would have not accepted the love of a man capable of the baseness of deserting the sweet young girl, who so fondly had placed her trust in him.

“ As I am informed, that the marriage with Miss Mordaunt is being hurried on, and takes place almost immediately, it becomes, for that young lady's sake, a pressing necessity that she be, at once, made aware of the position in which she stands, of the dangers of the almost inevitable wreck of her life's happiness if she becomes the wife of a man, who, in the bitterness of my heart, I am forced to proclaim a villain. A villain! And yet the circumstances are such, that I am compelled to hope, to wish, and to strive for his marriage with my poor niece. Yes! though the marriage be for her a living death, the sacrifice of her life's comfort and happiness, I am compelled to strive for it, in order to save my child.

“ I, therefore, write to you, trusting to your kindness, that you will, at once make these things known to Miss Mordaunt, with whom, in all probability, you are acquainted. To-night, I have addressed her directly, but, unfortunately, I am not acquainted with her, and she might, very naturally, demur to, and reject the unguaranteed statements of one to whom she is wholly unknown.

“ I have not yet been able to summon up sufficient courage to inform poor Agnes of this last crowning proof of her lover's perfidy. That she has had reason of late to doubt his good faith to her, I am tolerably certain, for she has been visibly depressed in spirit for four or five weeks past, and the enclosed letter from Mr. Vance to her, of which I have been enabled to obtain possession, would appear to have given her ample

reason. And it is also a strong guarantee of the truth of the statements I have advanced. For that reason I send it you. If further proof is required, it is easily attainable, for the fact of their intimacy and their engagement is not unknown in this city. I would also mention the fact that, for some time past, my unhappy niece has been in the habit of receiving from Mr. Vance the annual sum of six hundred dollars. I had been aware that, since her mother's death, some two years ago, my niece was in the reception of such an income, but it had been represented to me as derived from an interest in certain property which had belonged to her father, and it has, but very lately, come to my knowledge, on the authority of Mr. Vance's agents, the Messrs. Hatchitfess, of this city, that such is not the case, but that it was paid by Mr. Vance to Agnes, ostensibly for her proper maintenance, until her marriage to him should take place.

"I have to admit, with pain and humiliation that my niece has been most indiscreet, and much to blame in this matter, but it has to be said for her that she has loved him fondly, and trusted in him, and she is my dead sister's child.

"Were it only the desertion of a recreant lover, the wound of which loss time would soon heal, we would have endured in silence: I should not, old and infirm as I am, have interfered, and Miss Mordaunt would have been welcome to her lover; his gain not to be envied, or our loss worth the counting; but there is more than this involved. I must use all exertion to bring him back to her, whom he ought to marry.

"Trusting that I am not asking too much in thus imploring your kind offices, and that you will, at once, lay this before Miss Mordaunt, with your representation that I am the person I represent myself to be, and that you will forgive one, who is not so well able to help herself in the hard affairs of the world as she once was, for thus troubling you,

"I remain, dear Miss Dearborn,

"Sorrowfully, but faithfully yours,

"PATIENCE SPRINGLE."

Poor Ethel! Her bright world cut away from under her feet. She read the precious tissue of falshood, the fiendish concoction of Emily Dearborn's brain, with blanching cheeks, wildly beating heart and pale drawn lips. What horrible calamity was this to fall upon her youth? What intense burthen of misery?

Quenching the happy sunlight from the set eyes that were still fixed in direful fascination upon the dreadful words, whose import squeezed her heart with vice-like deadening grip. Stunned and bewildered she sat for a moment gazing at the paper, unable as yet to wholly comprehend and realize the extent of her great evil. Her mind groped about blindly in the dark unlooked for shadow. Tumultuous images of despair and misery, unconnected and disjointed, surged through her brain, but she could not think. At last the drawn lips quivered, and the soft tears forced themselves into her eyes. And then started up like a fresh giant to her aid, Pride—Pride, the invigorator, for her enemy sat before her, and she should never see the quailing of her heart. The forcing tears vanished, the quivering mouth composed itself into calm gravity, the colour rushed back into the white cheeks, and Ethel Mordaunt, herself again, sat up erect with steady gaze, and laid the letter quietly down on the table before her.

Her thoughts were pertinent enough now. Was not this girl her enemy? Always her enemy, her bitter enemy; and, was she not capable of any depth of scheming baseness for the accomplishment of her own ends. She could not believe her lover could be so false. She knew that he could not be the villain that dreadful letter would fain portray him. She was as certain of his love as of her own existence, though, if these things were true, she would have to cast it away from her as unworthy, and not of right hers, but due to another. She glanced down at her ring again, as if to derive comfort from its very presence; the encirclement of her finger of its faithful legend. She felt the words pressing into her very flesh, and her very brain throbbed with—

“‘My love faileth not.’ Oh! Edwin, Edwin!”

And then she spoke—

“This letter might be all very well, Miss Dearborn, did it carry some stronger proofs with it. It will require something more than its mere assertions, and these, coming, too, from a

mere stranger, to convince me of Mr. Vance's disloyalty. How am I to know that this letter is not a forgery, an invention of your own, for instance. I am too well aware of your sentiments towards me to imagine that your mission, to-day, is not a labor of love on your part, a pleasing duty, and I am not inclined, without much stronger confirmation than I think you are able to produce, to accept the letter as a veracity."

"Indeed! Miss Mordaunt. How sorry I am that I have not your good opinion," replied Emily, with sneering politeness. "My pleasing duty, my labor of love, as you term it, merely requires me to lay before you these two letters. With the confirmation of their truth or falsity, whether or not they are genuine even, I have nothing to do. You can form your own opinion. Pray read this letter, the enclosure of Miss Springle's. It may enlighten you somewhat. You will, perhaps, notice that it is dated from this house, a week or so after your engagement. The reflection will be pleasing to you. The handwriting you will hardly fail to recognize."

As Emily concluded her amiable remarks, she handed to Ethel the letter which Edwin Vance had addressed to Miss Seaforth, in response to hers, and which Sidney Wolverton had purloined at the hotel in Ten Lakes, the eventful evening of the cricket match.

Ethel took the letters, and though her pride and indignation upheld her spirits, her heart nearly ceased to beat, when she recognized the handwriting of her Edwin. Hastily she perused it; hope dying within her at every word. Though short, it was momentous, when taken in connection with the first letter which had been written to suit its rather ambiguous terms, with Emily's patient but remorseless ingenuity.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, July 26th, 1873.

"MY DEAREST AGNES,—Your letter was received by me, this morning, and I reply at once, though in haste. I regret extremely the conversation you have had with these law people. I wish that it had not taken place, as it makes things unplea-

sant for both of us, which before were smooth enough. As you wish a categorical reply to your question, I can only confirm that which Mr. Hatchitfess told you. You have no *legal* claim upon me, but you have a very strong moral claim. A claim which I recognize to be as binding upon me as though the law compelled it, and which I will fulfil, as for the two past years I have fulfilled it.

“The concealment which has been practised was to spare you from disappointment and mortification. That you have reason to feel both disappointed and mortified, I must admit, nor do I hold myself free from blame. I wish that things were not as they are, but they cannot now be altered, to my regret. This is hardly a fitting time to announce my engagement and approaching marriage, to you, but later on, you will be able to congratulate me.

“I have, to-day, instructed the Messrs. Hatchitfess to immediately effect the purchase of an annuity on your life, for six hundred dollars per annum. This will be your own, and is but the certain carrying out of my solemn agreement of two years' ago. I will see you, my dearest Agnes, immediately on my return to Toronto, and I trust then to remove any painful impressions that may linger in your mind, and will explain everything fully to you. These things are better done by word of mouth, than by the cold formalities of a letter. Please remember me kindly to your aunt.

“I am, my dearest Agnes,

“Yours as ever,

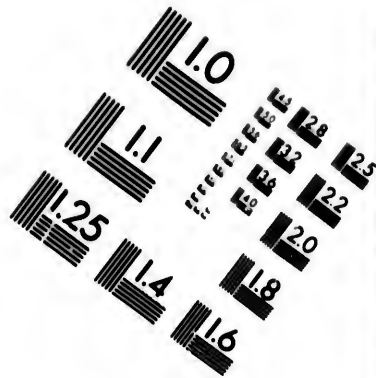
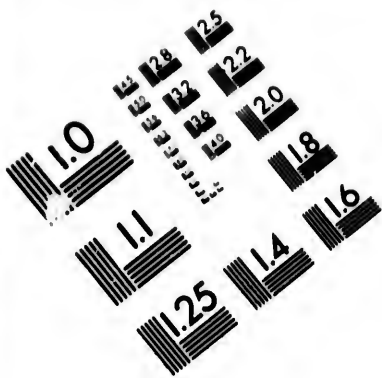
“EDWIN VANCE.

“P.S.—Any objection on your part to the life-annuity, &c., &c., will be useless, as by the time you receive this, the affair will be completed, and I will not vary from my solemn promise.—E. V.

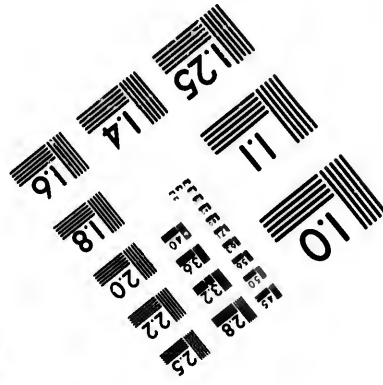
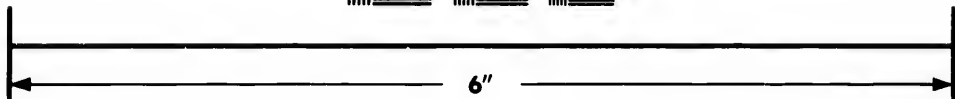
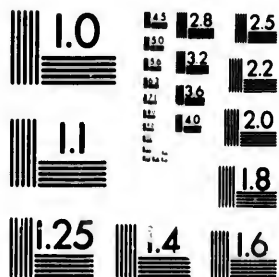
“Miss Agnes Seaforth.”

Innocent of intention as Edwin Vance had been in writing this letter, he could not have put a more powerful weapon against himself into the unscrupulous hands to whom it had fallen. What bitter fruits for his gathering had not already sprung up from that fatal evening's weakness, and the bitterest of them all was fast ripening to his unconscious hand. Had he





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been himself when he wrote it, his judgment clear and unclouded, its wording had not been so incautious, so carelessly ambiguous, and capable of misconstruction.

Yet how was he to suspect that his letter, a mere business reply, would fall into evil hands. Even had it come before Miss Seaforth's eyes, it was hardly a proper letter for him to have written. Too warm in some of its terms, for his heart warmed towards the high-spirited girl, for whose care his father's dying commands had been uttered to him, in others, its rendering had not been sufficiently smooth and careful. But such as it was, it had been written, and, as the sowing of dragon's teeth it was to be for him.

Poor Ethel! all hope was dead within her as she read this letter. Its meaning, all doubtful and ambiguous as it appeared, was but too apparent to her. How could he have been so bad, and so cruel? Within the very week of their engagement, and from *her* father's house, *her* lover had written to this girl. That very morning—she remembered, with a bitter pang—they had had that long interview in the conservatory, the very words of which were still vivid on her mind, that had held so well his every loving tone, and had he not gone straight from her to pen those wicked words, wickedly loving, wickedly familiar, and wickedly cruel, to this Agnes Seaforth. It was quite enough. Her misery had come upon her, and she must bear it as best she might.

The first thing to do now, was to get rid of her enemy, who sat before her, watching, with gloating eyes, for the expression of her pain and agony. But she should not see it. She laid the letter down upon the other, folded them carefully, and put them into her pocket.

"You will be so good as to return me those letters, Miss Mordaunt," exclaimed Emily, on seeing the action; for her triumph not having been as great as she had anticipated, and Ethel apparently taking the matter a great deal too coolly, she

had become alarmed, and wished to have her forgery safely back into her own possession.

"Most decidedly not! Miss Dearborn. I have——"

But at this moment the door opened, and her uncle hastily entered, exclaiming—

"Oh! you are here then, Ethel!" He advanced into the room, and perceiving Emily, bowed coolly, and said, "How do you do, madam!" Then, turning to his niece, "I must bid you a hasty 'good-bye,' Ethel," he continued. "I have this moment received a telegram calling me to New York on business of great importance to my interests, and I cannot delay a minute. Why! what is the matter with you, Ethel? You look as miserable as if your lover had jilted you. What is the trouble now?" he exclaimed, with astonishment, as poor Ethel, with drawn face and piteous eyes, rose from her seat at his speech. But she answered him—

"There is nothing much the matter, uncle. Miss Dearborn has come to persuade me if she can, that he is false, and finds it a pleasant duty."

"Tolerably successful too, I imagine," sarcastically added that young lady, as Ethel spoke.

"Well then! Ethel, you are a fool if you listen to her. It is not Vance but she who is false, believe me! Do not hear a word! I will answer for Vance. But I cannot remain. I want to catch the mid-day train at Cascades; but write me all about it, Ethel. Don't listen to her, and don't do anything rash. Write to me. And now, good-bye, my darling. Believe me all will come right."

Ethel looked up with a mournful smile at his confident words. He kissed her more warmly than was usual with him, and turned away. As he left the room, he bowed with sarcastic profundity to Miss Dearborn. "Yours truly, madam," he said, and was gone.

Miss Mordaunt turned and confronted her visitor with proud

scorn in her brilliant eyes and a cold smile on the beautiful face. However crushing the weight of misery resting upon her, this girl—her bitter foe—should not be delighted at the exhibit ; should fail of her anticipated triumph, and though her heart was weak and sinking, Emily Dearborn should not perceive its weakness nor gloat over the sorrow she had hoped to witness.

“Is your case stated, or have you further dubious epistles for my edification?” she asked, looking at the other from a contemptuously averted profile.

“No more, Miss Mordaunt! I should have imagined you had had enough. But I must insist upon the return of the two you have appropriated,” replied Emily, rising from her seat angrily, and looking disdainfully at the other, though her most prominent feeling was the desire to regain possession of her letters.

“You can insist, if you please to do so, yet I shall most certainly retain them, Miss Dearborn.” And then, though her heart did not bear the same confidence as her voice, she continued: “These letters are genuine, or they are not. If not, it will be very interesting to trace them to their fountain head. I am not surprised at your wish to have their possession, but I shall not gratify it.”

“The letters are mine, and I will have them back, Ethel Mordaunt, unless, indeed, you mean to steal them,” exclaimed Emily, her voice raised in passion.

“Our interview is, I presume, terminated. You have had my answer,” said Ethel, as she struck a silver bell. She then resumed her seat and awaited the appearance of the attendant.

“Oh! you need not have rung. I am quite able to find my way out of the house. I wish you ‘good morning,’ Miss Mordaunt, and I trust you find the prospect of your happiness in the faithful love of Mr. Edwin Vance—or rather in the share of

it he can spare from Agnes Seaforth—very reassuring,” and Emily, with head erect, marched past her out of the room.

Ethel followed her to the hall door and said: “If you will wait a moment, Miss Dearborn, the man will attend to your horse for you.”

“I can attend to him myself, thank you!” was the ungracious reply, and in a moment Emily was in her carriage and had driven off.

She departed from Lake Mordaunt with a great deal less of pleasant triumph in her heart than she had expected, and with a great deal of mortification, anxiety and alarm for herself which she had certainly *not* anticipated.

When once a vicious end is accomplished, then commences its retribution.

The ardent desire of its attainment, the unholy devisal of means to that end, overshadow consideration of consequences, but, the act once committed and irretrievable, the false excitement over, the expected pleasure a Dead Sea apple of dust and ashes, then stalk in Fear and Anxiety. Then grim foreboding and the degrading sense of guilt harrow the trembling soul. The unnerved mind, frightened at every shadow; its waking hours one long terror; its sleep a vision of dread, is led along the gloomy road of black Remorse, until in agony comes the cry: “Oh! that I had not done this thing! Oh! that I could call back my yesterdays!”

Ethel Mordaunt stood at the open door looking out on the bright landscape, in its flooding sunshine, where the birds sang, and all was filled with peaceful life and happiness. She wondered, with a dull wonder, sprung from that refinement of human egotism which would bind and connect the whole universe to the pleasures or the pains of this individual I—how the sun could shine, the flowers bloom, the birds give forth their song, or the world move on unchanged, in its daily round, when for her had come such wreck. The sun shone, but its beams

lightened not her shadows. The birds sang, but their songs were painful mockings to her ears. The flowers bloomed as before, but where was their fragrance and beauty for her? The world moved on in its bright paths, but she was struck down from its brightness to follow on its dreary wake.

She turned away and went back to the sitting-room, where she had that morning dreamed her sweet dreams, where their dissipation she had witnessed, and the ending of her happy love had come to her.

Tearless, pale and benumbed, she threw herself into her chair and tried to think.

But she could not think. A dead weight pressed upon her brain, and her temples throbb'd to bursting.

Her eyes, burningly bright, fixed themselves, through the window, on vacancy. She sat down and tried to collect her thoughts, to bring herself to the knowledge of that which had befallen her, to realize the full extent of her misery. Presently, she took from her pocket the fatal letters. There might be some loop-hole of escape, some overlooked expression from which to deduce hope—some unthought of explanation. She opened out that which bore the handwriting of her lover, and glanced, shudderingly, over the fatal lines. But she could bear no more. The strain upon her nerves had become too great. As its perverted meanings again flashed on her brain, she sprang to her feet, and in the access of powerful excitement, the culmination of agonized sorrow and outraged love, she would have torn the paper into a thousand fragments and scattered them from her but her nerveless fingers refused their office, and mechanically she replaced the letter in the receptacle from which she had taken it.

“Oh! Edwin! Edwin! Cruel and false! Why did you come to me? Why with your cruel love have you blasted my life?”

An hour after Mrs. Mordaunt, entering the room, found her daughter lying senseless upon the floor.

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VOLUME II.

CHAPTER I.

WHA'S ER MARRER WITH LITTLE NOSE, HATCHY?

Three weeks after his return to Toronto, from Lake Mordant, in the cool dusk of a late summer's evening, Mr. Edwin Vance, as yet wholly unconscious of the black cloud looming up on his hitherto sunlit skies, started from his law-chambers, where he had been detained until an unusually late hour by some business of importance, to walk quietly homewards, and pass, as quietly, his evening in the society of his mother.

Notwithstanding his status of a happy, engaged lover, he did not appear to be in a very cheerful frame of mind, for he looked perturbed and anxious, while nervously and half-audibly he muttered his thoughts to himself, as he stepped out on his way. Even the beatific condition of an assured love does not appear to be free from its cares and anxieties, and unimmunity common to all things mundane. The troubles of the engaged, trivial though they may be, are, also, as a rule, viewed as evils of the first magnitude, and are fretted and fumed over in a corresponding degree.

Edwin Vance was fretted and worried this evening with a minor trouble, indeed, but its disturbing effect, was, for him, great enough.

Could he but have but foreseen the heavy cloud that over-

hung his path, that pall-like was enshrouding his life's happiness how trivial in comparison had been his little care.

"What in the world can be the matter at Lake Mordaunt?" he said to himself, as he walked on. "I do not at all understand it. Here it is, a fortnight yesterday, since I got Ethel's letter, her first letter, too, and not a word since from any of them. If my darling only knew how anxious it has made me, she would have written before this, and ended my uneasiness.

"Were it not out of all conscience to desert my client's interests just now, I would run down to Lake Mordaunt, to-morrow, for I cannot endure this suspense longer. Can it be that Ethel, or any of them, are ill? Yet, for that very reason, one would think, they would be all the more likely to write. Well, I'll wait until to-morrow evening, and, if I don't hear from Ethel, I'll give my cases to Ferretout to look after, and run down to see for myself what the reason of this unendurable silence can be."

Such were his meditations, as he pursued his course through the University grounds, his favorite short-cut on his way home.

From the noise and turmoil of the streets, the peaceful rustling of the foliage, the cool, shadowy depths of the tree-surrounded avenues formed a contrast ordinarily very attractive to him, but, on this evening, he was mentally too much in unrest to appreciate these beauties; for when two weeks have passed over a fond lover's head, without bringing him the expected missive from his fair one's hand, he is very likely to become wholly insensible to the natural charms which may surround him, his eyes open to little else save huge imaginary evils looming blackly up, phantasms of terror vastly more disproportionate to a seven-nights' delay, than twice the time could conjure to the merchant's eyes, when his goodly bark comes not to port.

His sombre reflections were, however, cut short by the sudden and distressful sounding of a woman's voice, screaming, in piercing accents for help, and coming apparently from a point of the carriage-road, twenty or thirty yards in advance, where

the dark shadows of the trees made the deepening dusk into heavier darkness. Springing forward on the instant at the fullest speed of which he was capable, for the distressful cry roused all his chivalry, Edwin found himself a second later, and not a moment too soon, an actor in a scene where his physical prowess seemed likely to be put into immediate and stirring requisition.

Not a moment too soon. As he ran swiftly and silently up, he took in the situation at a glance.

A close carriage, attached to a pair of handsome and powerful horses, stood upon the road, into the door of which two men were endeavoring to force a young lady, who, with vigorous resistance, her hand clutching the wheel, opposed their efforts with her whole strength, while with loud and continued cries she called for assistance.

"Stop your infernal noise, will you?" screamed the man nearest him, in a shrill, squeaking voice, which, to Vance, seemed familiar. "Here, Jim, stuff something into her mouth, or we'll have the whole town about us," he continued. But he changed his note into a hideous yell, for Edwin, unnoticed in the melee, as he ran up delivered him a crashing blow in the face, which sent him bleeding and half-summed to the ground. His companion, at the sudden attack, left his hold on the young lady, and sprang nimbly aside, while the driver, too busily engaged in reining in the affrighted horses to assist in the fray, gave his animals their heads and drove off at speed, leaving Edwin master of the field, with the girl he had rescued lying half-fainting in his arms.

Astonished at his easy victory, Edwin gazed a moment around him, as if expecting the advent of new enemies, but seeing none more formidable than he whom he had prostrated, who lay groaning and writhing about the road, he addressed himself to the lady whom he was supporting, and whose hysterical sobbing smote painfully upon his ear—

"You are safe, now, Madam, and need have no further fear.

Good gracious ! is it you, Miss Seaforth ? Who are they that attacked you thus ? Are you injured at all ?”

“ Oh ! Mr. Vance !” she returned, looking up, and regaining her feet. “ How thankful I am. You have saved me, indeed ; I am not injured, and feel well now, that you are with me.”

“ But who are the villains who attacked you ?” he excitedly asked. “ My poor Agnes ! But here is one of them, still. I’ll find out who he is, at all events,” and stepping up, he administered a vigorous kick in the side of the groaning wretch. “ Who are you, you scoundrel ?”

The displeasing propulsion of a heavy boot sole, against a man’s ribs, if not a recognised tonic, is, at least, a powerful restorative and inciter of the locomotive functions.

With a yell, the kicked one sprang to his feet, and, throwing one terrified glance at the kicker, ran fairly away. A dozen paces off, he stopped, picked up a stone, threw it savagely back at his assaulter. “ I’ll pay you off, for this, Vance, see if I don’t !” he screamed, and continued his headlong course.

“ Why, if it isn’t Hatchitfess !” exclaimed the astonished Edwin, gazing after the fleeing figure of the discomfited exquisite, whose abrupt and ludicrous disappearance formed so appropriate an ending of his attempted abduction.

“ Oh ! let us go from this dreadful place, Mr. Vance. I am struck by the stone. Pray let us go !” and Agnes took his arm, and clung terrified to its support.

“ The cowardly villain ! Are you hurt, Miss Seaforth ? Do you think you can walk until we reach the street ? It is not far off.”

“ Oh, yes, I am not hurt ; but pray let us get away !” she returned, eagerly pressing forward.

The whole scene, not lasting a minute, had sprung upon him with such sudden surprise, and was solved with such equally bewildering abruptness, that Edwin Vance, yet labouring under intense excitement, could hardly realize that it was not some

strange dream through which he had passed. There coursed through his brain a confused medley, compounded of screams, coach and horses, a struggling group, a young lady, and then a sudden disappearance ending the confused vision. He could hardly believe that it was Agnes Seaforth who hung upon his arm, still sobbing hysterically from her fright ; and, he had supported her along for some distance before he sufficient'y collected his thoughts to question her as to the strange position from which she had been rescued.

"Tell me how it all occurred, my poor Agnes," he said, at length, "and how it was you came to be in this place, at this hour ? You surely did not meet Hatchitfess of your own accord ?" he added, a little sternly, a dark suspicion flashing through his mind.

"No, I did *not* meet him of my own accord, Mr. Vance," instantly replied Agnes, straightening herself up proudly, and dropping her hold of his arm. "I was returning home from my work, though a little later than usual, for I had been detained, and, unfortunately, passed this way, as it is so much shorter. How could you imagine such a thing of me ?" she continued.

Stopping short, she buried her face in her hands, and again the violent sobs shook her frame.

"I beg your pardon, Agnes, I imagine it no longer. I would never have thought of such a thing, but it has all been so strange. Forgive me, Agnes," he added, taking her arm, and gently drawing her on again. "But, work ! What was it you said about work, Agnes ? What work can you have to do that should so detain you ? Were you visiting a friend in illness, I can imagine nothing else," said Edwin, after a pause, in which he had been reflecting on her reply to him.

"No ! Mr. Vance, it was not that. As I told you, I was returning from my work. The work on which I am now dependent for my bread. I am a dress-maker," answered Agnes quietly.

"A dress-maker! Good gracious! Will you drive me mad Agnes! You are not dependent upon such work, for your support," Edwin exclaimed, impatiently.

"I have not got six hundred dollars a year, or any dollars, save what I can earn for myself. I cannot, and I will not, take your money, Mr. Vance, though I thank you heartily for all your generosity. I prefer to be independent."

"What nonsense, your independence came near costing you very dear this evening, Agnes. The money is yours, and not mine, and take it you must. You cannot help it now, at all events, for the annuity is purchased in your name, for your life, and the money will be paid to you, whether you like it or not. But what in the world is all this?"

They had now approached the gate of the college grounds, with its bright gas lamps, and a singular spectacle met their eyes under the blaze of light.

The wretched Hatchitfess, in an agony of affright and pain, had sped along the road under the enlivening influence of the sounding kick he had received, and in his blind haste had run full into the arms of a gigantic medical student, very considerably inebriated, who had just entered the gate, and who, now, holding him at arm's length and dangling him like a baby, was apostrophising him in an affectionately maudlin style, for while the powers of his herculean frame did not appear to be impaired by the alcohol he had imbibed, his intellectual faculties were decidedly in an intoxicated condition, as his speechifying testified.

"I say! Hatchy, whas'er marrer? Whas'er marrer with 'er nose? Its all bood, I say! Seen ghost'n fell down, eh, Hatchy? Won't wash that. 'Ere's no ghosts. D'ssected lots of f'lers, and never could find any ghosts. No ghosts, I tell yer! Don't squeal, Hatchy! Its your Goochy's got you. Safe now wiz Goochy. Come 'long down town, Hatchy, an' have a little drink

wiz old Gooch. Feel bezzer, Hatchy? Wha's marrer with little nose? Wha' broke it?

All this while the unfortunate Hatchitfess was struggling frantically but uselessly in the hands of his huge captor, screaming and imploring to be let go.

"Let me go, Gooch! they're after me, I tell you. I'll be killed if they catch me. There were a thousand of them kicking me in the park. Let me go, I say! Oh! I'll be murdered, here they come," and yet more frantically he writhed in the grip of Gooch, who, wholly oblivious to his screams and struggles, continued his interrogatories as flowingly as his muddled speech would allow him.

"Been fighting, have you, Hatchy? an' got little nose broke. Never mind! Goochy 'ull give it 'em when they come. Goochy 'ull fix 'em for kicking little Hatchy. Come 'long! I say. Hello! what's the marrer now," as Hatchitfess, seeing the approach of Vance and Miss Seaforth, made a despairing clutch with his nails at Gooch's face and succeeded in tearing off his collar and cravat. "Must'nt scratch, Hatchy, or Goochy 'ull shake you. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," he continued, turning his watery eyes towards Edwin as he came up. "Wha' you want? Little Hatchy's drunk, you see, and got little nose broke. Wha' shall I bezzer do with him, you think?"

"Mr. Gooch! For if I am not mistaken I have the pleasure of addressing that gentleman. This man——"

"Yes'sr; Gooch's my name. Erastus Gooch, T'ronto U'versity. You're Misser Vance, I think, interrupted Mr. Gooch, anxious to do the polite thing.

"Yes! sir; my name is Vance. I am very glad to have met you under these circumstances, as this man Hatchitfess, who is performing such antics in your powerful grasp, has committed a most villainous attempt at the abduction of this young lady in the college grounds just now, with the aid of his cowardly companions, but in which he was happily frustrated by the young

lady's courage and my timely arrival. Might I therefore request you to oblige me by continuing your very capable detention of the scoundrel for a few minutes until I can find an officer to convey him to the police station."

"Wha's this you're telling me, Misser Vance? Little Hatchy's been trying run away with young lady. F'shame! Hatchy, say. Wha' you'll say to the Beak 'morrer morning. And young lady broke yer little nose, eh! Hatchy. Serve you right, Hatchy. Dirty Hatchy. Bezzer leave young ladies 'lone nex' time won't do t' get little nose broken and go up before Beak."

"That is true! Mr. Gooch," said Edwin, laughing in spite of himself at the absurd scene. "And I propose that the Beak, as you call him, shall teach him a lesson to-morrow. Will you hold him until I can get a police officer."

"Oh! pray don't, Mr. Vance," exclaimed Agnes. "Pray let him go! For my sake! I could not bear to have my name dragged up into court. He has met with some punishment already. Let the wretch go!"

"Tha's so! madam," put in the irrepressible Mr. Gooch. "Got his little nose broke; pretty bad to have his little nose broke by courageous young lady. Boys'll all laugh at him. Let poor devil go! and Goochy 'ull kick him through the college grounds and start him home."

"Well! perhaps it is best so, though the villain deserves a heavier punishment. 'Good evening!' Mr. Gooch, and much obliged to you. You need not kick him, though, unless you wish it very much. Shall we go on, Miss Seaforth?" and without vouchsafing a glance at the wretched Hatchitfess, who still continued his futile efforts to free himself, they proceeded on their way.

"He should not have been allowed to escape so easily, Agnes. I am sorry that you interceded for him, though he is not out of the medical student's hands yet. But you have not told me the

circumstances of the attack upon you. Have you been annoyed by him before this?" asked Edwin.

"Yes! I have been persecuted by him each time I have met him, in spite of repulse and even insult. I have, however, seen nothing of him for some weeks until he and his man seized me this evening and attempted to force me into the carriage. They had evidently been waiting for me, knowing that I pass through the college grounds, though always in daylight. I remember now that he threatened me the last time I met him, though I made light of it at the time."

"Well! It has become quite certain, my dear Agnes, after this affair, that you must give up this employment, for which you have no necessity; which you have proved to-night to be unsafe for you, and which, pray allow me to observe, only a feeling of false pride compels you to undertake. You are provided for by my father's legacy to you, and you have no necessity for this employment, respectable enough, I have no doubt, but needless on your part. For your own sake, and that of your helpless old aunt, you ought to cast aside the feelings of pride which refuses that which my father owed you, and which he wished to pay you. I cannot feel that I am doing my duty to him, and it is a great unhappiness to me, therefore, that you thus persist in refusing me the opportunity to fulfil my obligation to him. The annuity is yours. I cannot be happy unless you take it, my dear Agnes," said Edwin, and forgetful in his earnestness that he spoke in the public street, he had raised his voice to unnecessary loudness.

Broken faces were to be the order of the day with him, for he had hardly uttered the last words when he received a violent blow on the forehead, almost throwing him backwards, while a voice, familiar enough to him as Reginald Mordaunt's, but distorted with rage into a discordant scream, exclaimed—"You scoundrel! do you dare to flaunt your perfidy in my very face."

“What do you mean by that, Reginald Mordaunt?” he shouted, but Agnes’ scream of affright at the sudden assault restrained him, while a gentleman who was passing, and had witnessed the scene, seized the excited Reggie and pushed him violently backwards. A crowd was collecting, and too chivalric to expose his charge to further annoyance, of which she had certainly had sufficient, Vance called a passing coach, followed her into it and gave the order to proceed to Miss Seaforth’s home.

“What can he have meant by striking me thus?” he said, audibly, “There is something wrong at Lake Mordaunt or he would never have done such a thing. Whatever can be the matter?” he exclaimed aloud in perturbation and utter bewilderment.

“How horrible! The very streets are not safe. Who is the young ruffian that assaulted you?” said Agnes, gaspingly, for she had been terribly alarmed.

“He is the brother of the young lady whom I am to marry and there is something wrong, I am certain, at Lake Mordaunt. I have felt a presentiment of it all day,” replied Edwin, throwing himself back in his seat in despair.

“Brother of the young lady whom you are to marry!” echoed Agnes, in surprise. “Then you are engaged, Mr. Vance. I did not know it, and I congratulate you sincerely, though hardly upon the somewhat unfraternal conduct of your future brother-in-law. Yet the very fact of your engagement may probably explain the affair, for you were talking too earnestly and too interestedly to——” But here Miss Seaforth’s speech was arrested; her proud sense of self-respect becoming alive to the repugnant nature of the explanation. “I wish I had known of your engagement,” she continued, involuntarily.

“Then you must have forgotten, Agnes, for I told you in my reply to the letter I received from you at Lake Mordaunt.”

“But you never answered my letter, Mr. Vance. Or rather, I never received your reply,” she continued, correcting herself;

"and have been aggrieved against you that you did not reply to me under the peculiar circumstances."

"I certainly wrote and sent the letter for mailing with another which, to my own knowledge, reached its destination, for I have heard of it," he replied.

"It is very strange then, that the one to me should have gone wrong, but I am glad of this explanation, for I had, not unnaturally, yet unjustly, it would appear, imputed to you a carelessness as to the cruel state of suspense in which I was placed."

"You may be sure, my dear Agnes, that I never could have been so forgetful of anything in which you were concerned. I shall have this matter enquired into, and shall see you again concerning the affairs to which the letter referred. To-night I cannot. I am too anxious and disturbed," replied Edwin, and they relapsed into silence until the coach stopped at its destination.

"Will you come in, Mr. Vance?" said Miss Seaforth, as they alighted.

"Not to-night, Agnes. I am not fit for anything, and I expect not presentable either, for Reginald's hand is not a light one. The blow, however, affects me more mentally than physically, and I am sick at heart with anxiety. There must be some dreadful, though to me unknown and incomprehensible reason, which prompted the attack."

"I hope—I sincerely hope—and trust that there is no foundation for your fears. The assault upon you was, I suspect, prompted merely by some absurd whim on the part of a very young man. In any event, if you and your betrothed are true of heart to each other, all will come right in the end."

"That something dreadful for me has occurred, I am certain, his very words would shew it, and yet I have given no cause; while of Ethel's sincerity I am as assured as of my own existence. And now I must say 'good night,'" he replied.

"Good night, Mr. Vance," she said. "I cannot express by

words my deep sense of the vast service you have this evening rendered me. It is another to the many obligations I am under to you and the greatest of them all. An obligation that I can never repay, and one which I shall the more willingly owe you that there may ever remain in my heart its deep debt of gratitude. You are a hero to me now—a friend you have ever been."

"An unwitting hero, then, for I did not know it was you, but certainly your friend," he replied. "You owe your gratitude to your own courage; the part I had in the battle was very limited—the mere arrival of a reinforcement. But if you choose to consider that worthy of gratitude," he continued, laughing in spite of himself, "you can very easily wipe out the debt by withdrawing your refusal, an useless refusal now, at all events, to the last wishes of my father, which, as he was your father's dearest friend, you might well look upon as addressed to a daughter. And now 'good night,' dear Agnes."

He shook her hand as the door opened, and jumping into the cab, was driven home.

The experiences of Mr. Edwin Vance's day had been at least varied, if they had not been agreeable, and it was in anything but a happy frame of mind that he reached home.

Hastily entering the drawing-room, where a handsome old lady, his mother, sat busily engaged on a piece of light embroidery, and weaving over her permitting occupation a train of the quiet thoughts and soft retrospections that sweeten the hours of age—he bent over her and kissed her with fond affection, as he enquired—

"Any letters for me this evening, mother?"

"How late you are, Edwin! Why, what is the matter with you? You are hurt! Whatever has occurred to you?" she replied, as she looked up at him after her warm motherly kiss.

"Oh! that is nothing! A mere contusion. I'll tell you of it after, but are there any letters for me?"

"They are in your study, but there is none from Lake Mor-

daunt, Edwin, I am sorry to say, for your sake. It is very strange your Ethel does not write to you, but then they live in a country place and letters often miscarry and are delayed," said his mother, watching his troubled face with anxious interest.

"That is true enough, mother, but cannot apply in this case. Something inimical to me has occurred, I am certain. I have had a proof of it to-night. I shall get Ferretout to take charge of my pressing business, and I'll run down to Lake Mordaunt to-morrow evening. I can bear this suspense no longer, and will learn the worst."

"Is that step necessary, Edwin? Are not your fears exaggerating a little delay in receiving a letter?"

"Not so, my dear mother, I wish I could think so; after the occurrence of to-night I can no longer shut my eyes. But let me have a cup of tea, and I'll relate my adventures, and ask your advice and aid in more than this matter, for I have had more than one adventure this evening."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE GATES OF DEATH.

When Ethel Mordaunt awoke to conscious life, and her blue eyes opened again to God's bright sunlight, she found herself lying stretched upon a sofa, in the room where her bitter interview of the morning had taken place, and bending over her, with terrified face, anxiety and fear in every lineament, stood her mother, watching with the intense longing, the fearful suspense that draws out the passing minutes into illimitable periods, in which the dread and horror of years might well be compassed, for the first faint signs of returning life; while, with his finger on her pulse, and his eyes fixed on the dial of his watch, stood Dr. Streatham, his grave face betraying more anxiety than he would have liked to be so plainly visible.

As the trembling lids slowly opened, and the wandering eyes lightened with intelligence, they fixed themselves on the loving face bent over her with such infinite tenderness and a faint smile—the sweet smile of an answering love and recognition—irradiated for a moment the tremulous lips. Feebly and with ineffectual effort she essayed to lift her hand to place it within the tender and comfort-giving grasp of her mother, but upon her lay so unutterable a sense of weakness, of languid weariness and incapability, that the accomplishment of the little movement of affection was impossible to her, and the weakened and nerveless hand would have fallen back to her side had not the anxious perception of the watching mother divined the wish, while the heart, strained during the long hours by its dire forebodings, beat faster with the flush of joy which the little action prompted.

“Thank God! Oh! thank God! She is better. Oh! Ethel, my darling! my first born! You are restored to me. Thank God for all His mercies,” and Mrs. Mordaunt, the tears of gladness in her eyes, bent down and kissed her daughter with the long, warm kiss of the mother’s heart.

“Dear mamma!” she whispered, as she returned with loving effort the soft embrace. “Have I been ill and frightened you? I’m better now, but I am *so* cold,” and as she spoke she shivered from head to foot, although the afternoon was sultry and oppressive as an unclouded summer sun could make it.

“You must get her to bed at once, Mrs. Mordaunt,” whispered Dr. Streatham. “She must be kept warm while the attack of shivering is upon her. It will not last long, and will be followed by an accession of fever, slight I trust, but I must warn you that she is not better as yet. Has she received any great mental shock do you know? for, if I understand you aright, she was well enough this morning?”

“I do not think so! To my knowledge nothing has occurred. I found her lying senseless on the floor of this room when

I came down stairs about noon. I will endeavour to find out, though."

"Do so! if possible, but do not excite or annoy her. She must be kept quiet. I will return this evening, but I must go now. You need not be alarmed, Mrs. Mordaunt, but you must take all care. Good afternoon," and Dr. Streatham took his leave.

For the remainder of the afternoon Ethel lay weak, shivering and torpid, unable to speak or even to think, further than to complain of cold, and in feeble whispers ask for more coverings, though her anxious attendants kept heated blankets constantly wrapped over the shivering form, and tried every appliance their loving sympathy and skill could suggest to chase away the numbing chill. She was conscious, that was evident, but that was all that could be said, and Mrs. Mordaunt saw that for the present it was utterly futile and worse than useless to think of endeavoring to question her daughter, to get a clue as to the cause of her illness. She was much too anxious also; she recognized the alarming fact that Ethel was ill, the cause of the illness was, for the time, a secondary consideration. That would do when danger was passed. The present moments were for action: to help her suffering child, and not, as she saw it, for mere speculation into the cause of her sufferings.

But at length the fits of shivering ceased. She no longer complained of cold, and gently fell into calm and easy slumber until the evening. She awoke from it feeling brighter and stronger, fully in the possession of all her senses, but flushed and feverish. Instead of the former cold, she now complained of too great heat, and essayed to remove the load of wrappings with which she was encumbered.

Mrs. Mordaunt, only too delighted at the apparent improvement, a heavy incubus removed from her heart, sat down beside her beloved child, eagerly pressing her to partake of some of the dainties that had been prepared for her, hoping and trusting

that the evil and the danger had passed away. But Ethel declined to eat—after vainly attempting, that her mother might be pleased—a morsel of the tempting delicacy before her.

“You are better, my darling child, I think, but I am sorry you cannot eat. Oh! Ethel, I have been so alarmed and anxious. I found you fainting upon the floor. What caused it? Do you remember? Tell me, Ethel, if anything unpleasant has happened to you.”

As her mother's words fell upon her ear, the full flood of memory, the bitter tide of recollection, flowed back upon Ethel's soul. Her bright *Past* that had so overwhelmingly sunk into the dark blank of the terrible present. Her hero, for whom her days had brightened—downfallen and lost to her—a broken and defaced image, once so adorable, still so dearly but so bitterly loved, thrown down to earth, and hers no longer.

Her love that had grown with such sweetness and such strength into her daily life, that had taken possession of all her being, its hopes, its joys, its earthly future, budding in scented beauty, the flower of her youth, all changed by dread storms and withering frost, to wreck and devastation—a ceaseless torment, an unending winter, a love shorn of its sweetness, its flowery hope and its beauty. As remembrance bringing back to her the crushing sense of all its happiness for a few brief days, with the splendid charm, wherein her earthly hope, all joy, all aspiration, lay absorbed; of the dire extinguishment that had left her nothing; of the drear years, befogged and clouded, that lay before her, with dripping rains and moaning blasts, all-sorrowful; she turned her pained face, all wrenched in the freshened agony, to her mother, with the gasping cry,

“Don't ask me, mother! Oh! don't ask me! Leave me to my misery. There can be no help!”

“Oh! Ethel! What has come to you?” exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, springing up and throwing her arms around her daughter, as if by the protecting shield of a mother's breast she

could keep away her darling's evil. "Tell me, Ethel! Tell me what is this dreadful thing. There may be help. God can help. He is the help. Oh! Ethel, my poor darling, is it about Edwin Vance? Is all right with him? Oh! tell, me, Ethel!"

"It is all over, mamma! He is false to me," and with a shuddering sob that told too well how the very wording of the thought wrung her heart, she pressed her face closer to her mother's, and together their tears mingled.

"Impossible, Ethel! I cannot believe it. You have been deceived. I would answer for the depth of his love for you," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt.

"It is too true! for I have the proofs," she said, her voice broken by sobs. "Oh! mamma, I am so miserable."

"He dare not do it! He would not do it! for he loves you, Ethel!" said her mother, rising quickly to her feet with the action of her thoughts. "I do not believe it! I cannot believe it! Ethel! Was Emily Dearborn here this morning? I heard one of the girls say something about her being here. Was it from her that this came?"

"Yes, mamma! It was she who brought the fatal letters."

"Then, there is hope still. I would not believe——" but her sentence was arrested by the entrance of Dr. Streatham, shewn up by a maid to the room. With a grave bow to Mrs. Mordaunt he walked up to the bed, looked for a moment at Ethel's flushed and heated face, and, after feeling her pulse, said in a low voice:—

"I must forbid any further conversation, either with Miss Mordaunt or in the room. There must be perfect quiet. Open a window and get the temperature down to sixty, and keep it at that point. I wish to see you, Mrs. Mordaunt," and with these words he withdrew from the room, followed by Mrs. Mordaunt.

Before the morning had dawned, the beautiful Ethel Mordaunt, poor Edwin Vance's sweet love, lay delirious, uncon-

scious and wildly raving under the violent fires of a brain fever.

The strain upon her had been too great. The blow, roughly and cruelly struck at her pure affections, had been more than she could bear. Her refined and elevated mental organization that held the Good so immeasurably apart from the Evil—that endowed the loved object with the ennobled attributes of its own high ideal, had been too severely shocked by the illimitable descent to falsehood, baseness and cruelty.

Ethel Mordaunt was very ill. For many weary days she lay on the dread brink of the valley of the shadow of Death. Day after day passed and still the same ceaseless delirium, unmitigated and unchecked, the disease running its course with unabated violence, while the poor sufferer wasted away beneath its consuming breath.

On the morning of the tenth day of the illness, Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, for the first time since its commencement, met to take their breakfast together.

"You down to breakfast, Florence ; there must be good news then. How is our poor darling this morning?" said the former, as his wife entered the room.

"She is asleep—the first time for days. When she awakes in all probability we will know, my dear husband, whether our daughter will be spared to us, or whether God will take her to himself. Oh ! that it be His good Will that she be granted to us."

"She is young and strong and we have every reason to hope. God grant her to us ! Life would be very bitter if Ethel were taken from us. How is Ally this morning?" said Mr. Mordaunt.

"Much the same ! Well, apparently, were it not for that unabated drowsiness. I do not like it, and yet it may be only weakness. Dr. Streatham is treating her still, but he says nothing about her, and his reticence alone alarms me. Ethel's

more alarming illness has too much distracted me from poor little Alida," replied Mrs. Mordaunt. "I wish Reggie were here. It is so strange that the message could not find him."

"I ordered a messenger to follow him into the woods with the last telegram. He will be here in a few days, at all events. Horton I cannot hear from. He is not at home, nor do they know whither he had gone. There is another thing which should be attended to at once. Vance should be written to; it is not fair to him, in any case. If innocent, it is most cruel to leave him in ignorance, and I certainly do not believe him guilty. Some devilish machination of that detestable Dearborn girl is at the bottom of the affair. You should write to Vance. You will do it better than I could."

"I cannot write to the man; it is impossible. So far as we know at present, he is the direct cause of our darling's danger, and deserves no consideration from us. If he is innocent—which is very doubtful—for Ethel told me the day before she was taken ill that she had proofs, certain proofs of his guilt—why should we harrow his feelings?" answered Mrs. Mordaunt, decisively.

"Proofs can be manufactured, my dear Florence, and Miss Emily Dearborn is capable of anything. Certainly his two letters, which I took the liberty of opening, since Ethel's illness, bear no evidence of guilt about them. They breathe the most devoted love, and he will get so anxious at not hearing that we may expect him at any moment."

"Well! He had better not come, unless he brings his vindication with him. I shall not see him, at all events," said Mrs. Mordaunt, and the conversation closed.

But Ethel was not then to die. It was otherwise willed. Her earthly probation was not passed. For her this world, with its pleasures and its pains, its lights and its shadows, its vain affections and its hollow joys, was not yet to cease to be. To her the lesson was still to come, the bitter knowledge, born of the

painful years, the lesson which to bright and hopeful youth is so hard to learn—that all of this life is vanity, the vanity of vanities.

That, based on things of this world, happiness cannot be secured. The dearest hope, the proudest ambition, the fondest love, the tender ties of unselfish affection, power, pomp and riches, as a dream dissolve, even when most they seem secure. A bitter void to mark that such had been.

But not all bitter. One half the sum of human life is happiness, pure and unalloyed. Such may not so appear to us, for pleasure is not counted as is the pain—it leaves not the same strong impression upon the mind. Who that has revelled in the priceless joy that exists for him in his little child, counts that joy when his heart is wrenched with agony at its loss? We look upon it that we are entitled to the happiness, and are hardly used when we are called upon to bear the pain. Life is not all bitter if we are content to accept the bitter as we enjoy the sweet.

When Ethel awoke from her calm slumber the feared crisis had passed. The fever that had raged in her veins so fiercely and so long had left her, but it left her worn by its fires to the verge of dissolution. Weak, wasted, nerveless and scarce alive: for hours her life hung trembling on a point; undecided to mortal eye the battle between death and struggling existence. But at length the anxious parents received from the physician's grave lips the joyful assurance that the worst danger had passed away.

Days of anxious care and unremitting attention must elapse before she would be safe, but the grim shadow of Death no longer hung over their fearful hearts. Their child had come back to them from the very confines of the grave, and the hours were to them a thankful joy. How sweet for them to watch, as the hours flew on, the fluttering life strengthening little by little the beloved form. The beloved form which with

dread horror and fear they had been forced to picture to their shuddering hearts as but too probable in a few short days would lie enshrouded in the silent tomb—gone from their eyes for this earthly for-ever.

To Ethel herself, lying in the unutterable languor of her weakness was mercifully spared the sense of the great sorrow that had fallen upon her. For her there were yet no remembrances to torture, no sorrows to grieve. A dreamy mist enveloped her wakened consciousness, the pleasant listlessness that asked not thought or motion. To her it was enough that her languid eye could rest on her mother's face as she sat in her patient watches before her; enough to answer with faint but sweet smile her mother's loving gaze bent so often in anxious care upon her. But though her convalescence was slow, it surely progressed. Little by little her strength came back to her, and all fears were at rest. The stern prohibitions of silence and absolute quiet were by-and-by removed, but all exciting topics were to be forbidden in the sick-room.

She began to speak and take interest in the little things of her past daily life; her flowers, her birds, her favorites of the barn-yard, but made no attempt to refer to her engagement, or its unhappy end. She asked for her brother, Reggie, but Reggie had not come home, though a fortnight had passed since he had been telegraphed for, the day after her illness had commenced, and letters, without number, had been sent to every place likely to find him.

However, the succeeding afternoon brought the wanderer back. He drove up in excited haste, almost frenzied with anxious fears. His mother had enough to do to get down-stairs on hearing his voice in the hall, and keep him from making his hurried way to the sick room. He had met the messenger bearing his father's telegram as he was returning with his college friends from a shooting excursion far into the woods, and had started home with the utmost speed that steam could carry

him, almost frantic with grief and fear that he might, from the long delay, see his sister no more. He had received, on arrival at Hamilton, the first letter sent him with the few particulars of Ethel's illness, and its cause.

But his mind made easy by the joyful news that Ethel was over her dreadful illness, his thoughts took a new direction, and flew with fierce indignation against the unhappy Edwin Vance, the hated cause of all this misery. And he had a story to tell his mother, which was conclusive against that unlucky individual. Conclusive to Mrs. Mordaunt's mind, its details, confirming with startling force the few words she had heard from Ethel. A foregone conclusion with Reggie, to whom anything emanating from Emily Dearborn, carried perfect conviction; his story was only an additional evidence, a further proof of his fair one's immaculateness, and he told it to his father and mother with the hotter indignation against poor Edwin Vance, that he should not have to think treason against that immaculateness. To him it was very plain that Vance was guilty, for did not Emily Dearborn avouch that guilt, and in his version there lay the unconscious vein of exaggeration, which is drawn upon so naturally, yet so heavily, by a narrator, to make his tale as effective as possible to the listener's ears.

"I arrived in Toronto," he said, "too late for the afternoon train for the east, and had to wait four hours for the next; a special with the mails for England. This opportunity was a great relief to me, in my anxiety and impatience, as otherwise I should have to wait until the morning. But even this brief delay was torment to me. I was in a fever of restlessness, as you may suppose, and could not remain quiet in any one place for a moment, for I would have to think of poor Ethel's illness, and that I could not bear to do. So to pass away the time as easily as possible, and keep my attention distracted, I had nothing left but to roam about the streets until train-time should arrive. But even constant movement amid the busy throngs and

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stirring life of the city, could not allay the fevered impatience of my thoughts. I hated the smiling faces around me, for the smiles that so illy-consorted with my own miserable suspense. I hated myself that I was among them ; that I was there at all, when I should have been at home ; or that I should have placed myself, through that abominable hunting party, so far out of reach that my sister might, even then, for all I knew, have passed away. I was not in a fit mood to encounter that which now came across me. The letter I had received that morning had given me the first intimation of the real cause of Ethel's illness, and with its bitter impression fresh upon me, you can easily imagine the sensations with which I perceived, almost upon me, as I chanced to lift my eyes to his face, the perfidious scoundrel, whose base treachery had brought down the evil upon us, smilingly advancing, with the girl for whom our poor Ethel was sacrificed, clinging lovingly upon his arm ; her eyes eagerly turned to his, as she listened, with excited face, to the villain's soft declarations—

“ ‘This heart is yours. I cannot be happy without you, my darling Agnes.’

“ I heard the scoundrel's very words, as they approached. Flesh and blood could not stand it. I heard this from the man for whom my beautiful sister lay on her death-bed at that very moment. Uttering them, too, the hateful villain, all reckless, and uncaring for the ruin he had caused.

“ The words had hardly passed his lips, when I had struck him in the face and knocked him off the curb into the roadway. That is all I saw afterwards, for a gentleman passing seized me and pushed me back, and when I escaped, they had disappeared. But that little scene, I should imagine, should be amply sufficient to convince the most sceptical as to what manner of man is Mr. Edwin Vance, and forms a striking corollary to the statements adduced by Miss Dearborn, to whom, for her brave aid in unmasking a villain, our thanks should be due, in

place of suspicion of her motives, and disbelief in the plain facts she brought forward, which some of us seem inclined to foster."

And, as Reggie said these last words, he looked at his father.

"Whose judgment has not been blinded, Reginald, you might have added," replied Mr. Mordaunt, quietly. "Another thing, I must remark, in connection with the story I have just heard, is also not to your credit. That a son of mine should have shown himself so wanting in the spirit of a gentleman, as to attack, under what provocation soever, the escort of a lady, passes my belief. An assault the more cowardly, as retaliation, under the circumstances, would be impossible. In this instance, at any rate, Mr. Vance shewed himself to be a gentleman, which, I am sorry to think, you did not, Reginald. I am inclined to think, also, that the person, whose control over his passions can so little be depended upon, is no more to be depended upon for the accuracy of description of a scene, evidently viewed through the exaggerating medium of such unbridled rage. Were these words which you ascribe to Mr. Vance, the very words he used, neither more or less, and without the hostile colouring of your own mind?"

"You are very hard upon me, father. Why should I wish to give a false colouring to them? What I overheard was little enough for the purpose, I should think," answered Reggie, flushing with vexation at his father's reprimand.

"Too few! It is quite possible that if you had heard more, the meaning would have appeared in a very different light to you. I wish to know if these words, as given by you, were exactly as he used them?"

"Well, yes; that is, I think so. If not his exact words, something very like them," replied Reggie, with some hesitation, and sulkily enough.

"Something very like them, you think? Or, very unlike them, for all you know. By your own shewing, you were not in a con-

dition to coolly understand that which you heard and saw. You are not even sure of the words, and have certainly placed yourself in a false position ; simply made yourself ridiculous."

"I think, my dear, that you are a little unjust to Reggie," said Mrs. Mordaunt to her husband. I acknowledge that he was very much in the wrong to interfere in the manner he did ; to soil his fingers on the wretch. But I think it highly probable that he gives us a true version of what passed. To my mind it proves the truth of everything alleged against Mr. Vance, even though Emily Dearborn, for no good motive, it is true, brought the matter forward."

"Tut, tut, Florence, don't jump to your conclusions so hastily. From what I know of Edwin Vance, from all I have seen of his character, and of his strong devotion to Ethel, you cannot expect me to believe that he was making love to this young lady, whoever she may be. Such is by no means probable. You must remember, too, that Vance has most culpably been left in ignorance of Ethel's illness, and that he should be escorting a young lady through the streets, or even conversing with her in an animated manner, is surely no great crime ; certainly not one to have brought down upon him this savage attack, which I bitterly regret. The more I think of the matter, the more I am convinced that the whole affair is a scheme to ruin Ethel's happiness on the part of that very clever, but thoroughly detestable young lady—Emily Dearborn, and such, sooner or later, it will turn out to be," said Mr. Mordaunt, who, as he concluded, rose to leave the room.

"It's a shame ! I declare, a burning shame that Emily Dearborn should be spoken of in such terms. She's utterly incapable of that which you lay to her charge. What has she ever done that she should be treated as she is, and hated as she is by everyone here ?" exclaimed the rash Reggie, with flushed face and excited eye, as he sprung from his seat, and rushed out of the house.

"Stay, Reginald!" sternly said his father, but in vain, for the impulsive and headstrong young fellow had placed himself out of hearing.

"I should expect trouble then," continued Mr. Mordaunt, "did I not think that Miss Dearborn is too ambitious, too knowing altogether, to marry a boy like him, with his own way to make in the world, and nothing but expectations. He will soon grow out of it, too. I shall have a serious talk with him when he returns."

Mrs. Mordaunt had felt more alarm than her husband, from Reggie's open outburst. Her mother's pride would not allow her to think that Emily would not be only too happy to marry her handsome young son; she considered that the young lady was quite astute enough to know that even if the marriage would be a very bitter cup for the parents' drinking, yet it would, for their son's sake, be forgiven, and Reggie's heritage but little endangered. But she said nothing further, and with an anxious heart went to her daughter's room,

During the afternoon, Ethel, who had sufficiently regained her strength to sit, supported up with pillows, upon the bed, and whose sorrowful face shewed that with her improved health, her sorrow had come back to her, turned to her mother, and said—

"Mamma, please bring me my writing desk. I wish to write a letter."

"Oh! Ethel, are you able to do it?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, looking up quickly, as the sad voice reached her. "Are you well enough yet for the excitement? It isn't to him, is it. Ethel?"

"Yes, mamma; I must write to him. I am well enough; I shall feel better that it is done. He loves me, I know, and I—Oh, God help me!—I love him but too well. But it is all over, and the sooner he's told, the better," said poor Ethel.

Lifting her thin fingers to her white, fever-wasted face, she burst into a passion of tears.

"Ethel! My poor, ill-used darling! Do not give way like this," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, running over to her daughter, and throwing her arms about the weeping figure. "He is not worthy of a tear. Do not excite yourself, Ethel, or you will be ill again. For my sake, Ethel; for all our sakes!"

"Yes, mamma; I shall be better directly, and you shall not see me give way again. But it is so dreadful, and I was so happy," said Ethel, between her sobs. "You must let me write my letter, and be done with it all. I will then have nothing to do but look my life straight in the face!"

"You are not well enough, yet, Ethel. Let him wait for his letter; I suppose he will be only too glad to be freed. Let him wait," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, indignantly.

"No, dear mamma, let me write my letter. He will not be glad, for he loves me. But his love belongs to another, and it is all over."

"The villain! to bring his treacherous love to your happy, young life. We very nearly lost you, Ethel," said Mrs. Mordaunt, unable to control the bitterness of her feelings, as she thought of the sorrowful years lying before her daughter; the years whose prospect had been so bright.

"No, mamma, he is not a villain. I could not have loved a villain! He may have been wrong and cruel in keeping back that which should have been made open; for loving me when it was not competent for him; for deceiving me into loving him. But not a villain."

"Then, Ethel, if it is that he loves you, and you love him, you must not give him up. Your happiness must come first. Write your letter, and bring him to your side," said Mrs. Mordaunt, whose thoughts had carried her into an intolerable future of misery for her Ethel, a future to be averted by any possible means. "Your father, Ethel, will not believe in Mr. Vance's guilt; he maintains that it is all a plot of Emily Dearborn's to separate you. It may be so, but he has not seen the letters

you spoke of to me, which prove his falsity. Where are they? I have never seen them yet."

"That one which was written by him to that girl, I tried to tear up, in my agony, but could not; the other, I have, but I do not remember where. But papa is wrong—there can be no doubt. Though Emily Dearborn hates me, her proofs were all convincing. I could never take the love which belongs of right to another. Let me write my letter, mamma," continued poor Ethel, her mouth quivering at her sad recollections.

The letter was written; written with the feeble and trembling hand that had been down almost to death's door, that it had become necessary to write it. It's thoughts—the pale flashings of a brain which had so lately waked almost from the last long sleep—few and simple. It's words, few and simple, also, were the death of hope to the heart from whence they sprung; a sad ending that was all unending—ending as to life's bright hopes—unending as to life-long drear memory. The faint and irregular characters—changed, as was all changed that belonged to Ethel Mordaunt—carried in their blurred weakness their own pathos, and, if a tear had not blotted the page, it was not that they had not fallen, but had not been let to fall upon it.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, Sept. 30th, 1873.

SIR,—All is ended between us. All has been made known to me. When you receive this, you will be again *free*. Free in so far as I am concerned, and free to return to her, to whom your love is due. Why did you come to me with your cruel love? Did you expect that it would be so easily the same with me, as it was before?

I have been very ill, or you would have heard from me sooner. I send your ring, letters, &c., which have not been mine. Which ought never to have been made supposable to me to be mine. Why should you have so deceived me? You are to blame. In that, all cannot be wiped away, as is your engagement with

ETHEL MORDAUNT.

EDWIN VANCE, ESQ."

Poor Ethel addressed and sealed her letter, though with trembling hands, while her tearful eyes and quivering lip attested that, though the will was firm to act, it was very bitter to have to act.

"Will you let me see it, Ethel?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a voice that quivered as mournfully as did her daughter's.

"No, mamma. I would rather not, if you do not care much," responded Ethel, in the gentle sad tone which her voice had of late assumed, so pitiful to hear. "All is ended, but I would rather you did not see it."

"My poor darling! Your grief is sacred to me. It was thoughtless in me to ask it," returned her mother. "It is all so cruel, so cruelly hard to you, but God in His good time will send His helping strength, and I shall see my own bright happy Ethel again."

"Never the same again, I fear, mamma, but I will strive to be happy, if I can, with His good help."

She then took off her ring, which had remained on her finger through all her illness, gazed at it for a few moments, kissed it again and again. "My love faileth not," she repeated. "But oh! how his has failed for me."

She handed it with her letter to her mother. "You will find in my little cabinet all his presents, and his letters in this writing desk; put them up together this evening for me, mamma, please, and send them to him. I could not bear to do it myself."

Ethel Mordaunt—the bright, the happy and the beautiful—ended thus, wasted by sickness and worn in spirit, beautiful still, but with the mournful touching beauty, that when it drapes with pale flowers the fresh bright garlands of youth tells the sad tale that has already come home, the bitter finding that the joyous hopes of the beautiful earth are but the mockeries of a dream; ended thus her first bright dream, and from her pillow

watered the beaten down and sodded grave of her brief love with fast falling tears.

CHAPTER II.

EMILY'S PATH TO SAFETY.

Miss Emily Dearborn, very contrary to her expectations; derived but little satisfaction from the success of her scheme against the happiness of Ethel Mordaunt. In place of the harvest of exultant triumph she had promised to herself, as she prepared her sowing of malice and falsehood, she had as yet reaped but a bitter crop of mortification, while ready to her hand had sprung up a heavy aftergrowth of uneasiness and sense of personal danger: for had not she been almost directly accused of forging the letters by Ethel Mordaunt herself, and had they not been retained by her avowedly to bring the authorship to light. Where was her triumph?

Instead of seeing her crushed to the ground by the blow, bowed down with grief and humiliation, had not her hated enemy told her that she did not believe a word of her evidence; that in all likelihood she had forged it herself, and it should be brought home to her. As day after day flew by her thoughts, ever bent on the one theme of fear, morbidly pictured to her mind the slow linking together of the chain that was to bind her down to disgrace, and worse still—a prison.

“What a fool I was! How could my usual cool judgment so desert me that I should have written that hateful letter? What insanity possessed me to use the real name of the old aunt which Sidney sent me? And slandering the niece, too, as I did. It will be bad enough if the Mordaunts discover the imposition. Bad enough the shame and disgrace, though that I might possibly brazen out. But if it should come to the ears of that Seaforth girl or her aunt, I may look for no mercy, and the terrors of the criminal law are before me. Something must be done, and that, too, quickly.”

As Emily's soliloquy thus defined it, she had found her Nemesis in her fears. Already from the morbid terrors of her mind had sprung the Avenger; lashing her with her own tormenting thoughts from which, day or night, there was no escape.

Always present! goading her with the stinging remembrance of the fatal error of her work—the fatal miscalculation—the too confident boldness which gave to her enemies the clue which led to her guilty self; spreading before her the frightful vision of the grated cell; the crowded court room, in which stood the convicted forger and slanderer—in shame before the world—herself.

Always present—the stern Avenger. In driving ashore the bark of other's happiness, what fearful shipwreck had she brought to her own.

And there was no softening repentance to allay the hard torment of her spirit; no search of forgiveness for her sin—whence cometh help; no thought of reparation to the injured—in which hidden lay safety and peace.

No! In such ideas her tortured mind, intent on her personal security only, did not seek its refuge. The gulf that stretched between the good refuge and her evil had become too broad for her wordly eyes to recognize the port of safety.

"But something must be done, and that, too, quickly." But what was to be done? To whom should she turn? She had not dared to let her visit to Ethel Mordaunt or its purport be known to any of those surrounding her. Instead of returning from that visit with the self-satisfied smirk of triumph on her smiling face—the "I told you how it would be" upon her lips, as she had exultantly anticipated, she sneaked back discomfited to her father's house and sought to cover up her tracks with ignominious silence. Even though she knew that, whether or no Ethel Mordaunt's engagement were broken, her connection with the attempt must sooner or later come to light, yet she dared not anticipate the disclosure. She was alone with her guilt and

her fears, with none to whom she could look for aid : if indeed she desired such—unlikely enough for Emily Dearborn, even in her pressing strait.

As it appeared to her own mind, her strait was a pressing one.

When, after the lapse of some days, the news of Ethel's dangerous illness reached her ears, with the exaggeration, usual in such cases, that her recovery was impossible, her fears swelled to a culmination ; for she was well aware that Edwin Vance, in the event of a fatal termination, would leave no stone unturned to clear up the matter, for the sake of his own good name as well as to punish the guilty party who had brought a disaster so horrible upon him. And, again, matters were too quiet at Lake Mordaunt—suspiciously quiet. Notwithstanding that her ears were always open to such news, not a word had reached her as to the ending of her engagement. It might not have been ended, and, in such case, the greater danger was presaged to herself.

In whatsoever light she viewed the matter, and her reflections upon it were increasing, her guilty fears saw nothing but menacing danger ahead. At length the wearing anxieties of the position became almost unendurable ; her spirit, her ambitious plans, and her sarcastic temper even, had all melted away before her selfish fears for herself. She would have adopted almost anything with the appearance of feasibility to have freed herself from the incubus that oppressed her. But not a light could she discern in her mental prospect. Not a glimmer of hope to be derived from any plan she could conceive.

The two fatal letters were in the possession of the enemy, and she could imagine no possible means to recover them. Until they were again in her own hands, she felt herself in danger.

Even Reggie, her admiring young lover, had deserted her to all appearance, for a fortnight and more had elapsed since his

sister's illness, and he had not come near her, though he certainly, she thought, must be at Lake Mordaunt.

"There is a way!" she suddenly exclaimed, springing up from the sofa on which, reclining, she had been pondering over her difficulties. "A clear way! An open way for me, and triumph also. If he were but here. But I can bring him back to me," she continued. "No matter what pressure is forced upon him against me. A word! and he is here. I'll drop a note to him, at the Lake, at once.

As she set about this task, a ring came to the door, and in another moment Mr. Reginald Mordaunt was ushered into the drawing-room beside her.

"Good evening, Emily! How do you do? It's a long time since I've seen you, and I suppose you did not expect me to-day. I only returned to Lake Mordaunt this afternoon," he said, as he shook her hand with lingering pressure.

"You only returned to-day. Well! you are very good to come to see me so soon, and I'm delighted. But how is dear Ethel?" responded the young lady—her delight at his appearance real enough.

"Oh! she is getting better fast, but has had a terrible illness. She is out of danger though, I am happy to say. Poor little Ally's not at all well, though, and my mother is alarmed about her," replied Reggie.

"You are as lovely as ever, my beautiful Emily," he continued, his love-sick young eyes fixed upon her face.

"Ally ill too. How strange! What is the matter with her?" exclaimed Emily. "I never heard of it," she continued, and her danger-haunted brain brought her torments back to her, as she reflected how unlikely the succeeding illness was to be a mere coincidence. "No!" she thought to herself, "Ethel's illness, in all probability, was not caused by mental shock from her lover's falsity. It is a mere contagious disease, or why is little Ally ill also? The engagement is not broken off, and my

danger is all the greater. Vance will see the letters, and instant discovery results."

"Is poor little Alida dangerously ill?" she continued aloud.

"My mother thinks so, but to me she is only feverish and sleepy. I hope nothing is wrong with the little darling, though," he returned.

"But, Emily, I have been a long time away; have you nothing kinder for me than a formal hand-shake?"

"There take your kiss. I suppose I must not refuse you now that we are engaged, even though our engagement promises to be so very protracted."

"Yes! Confound it!" he replied. "If the length of our engagement has to depend on my father's consent, it will be long enough. But it shall not depend upon that. I don't see why it is they should hate you as they do, my darling. I don't see what you have done to cause their unreasonable dislike. Even Ethel too! And I love you so dearly. They ought for my sake to——"

"Yes! It has made me very miserable, Reginald," she interrupted. "I am sure I have done nothing to cause their dislike, unless it is that I love you so well," answered the fair Emily in sorrowful tone. "And dear Ethel I suppose hates me now that I undertook the very disagreeable task, which nothing but true friendship for her would have induced me to accept of opening her eyes to her lover's falsity. It is very hard upon me."

"It is a shame and a disgrace, and most cruel in them all. I will not stand it longer," replied Reggie, with heartfelt indignation at his fair love's well simulated distress.

"My own Reggie! much as it pains me to say it, I can see nothing for us, under the circumstances, than to break off this engagement. It cannot end happily for us. My parents will never give their consent to the marriage, unless your father and mother freely accord theirs also, and of that there seems to be

no prospect. Better for us then, at any rate for the present, to give up the idea and separate, though it is very hard," said the perfidious Emily, as, bringing her face down into her hands, she burst into a flood of tears.

"No! No! A thousand times no!" ejaculated the excited Reginald. "That will never do. How could you speak of such a thing, Emily? Anything but that."

"It will be better, Reggie. Better for us both; but oh! it is very hard. Why should fortune be so very unkind to us? It is cruel! cruel!" sobbed the tearful Emily, raising her eyes, glistening with their pearly drops, to her young lover's face.

"I will never resign you, Emily, my own beautiful love. never! For I know now that you really love me. It would be destruction to me; I could not live without you. Oh! Emily, let us help ourselves, now! at once! Why should we not be married at once; even without the consent which our parents cruelly withhold from us? Without delay, Emily, without a day's delay?" exclaimed the frantic young man, lured on by the syren's mock tears to his ruin.

"Oh, Reggie, impossible! I could not! I could not! And what could we do?"

"You can do it, Emily. It's not impossible! It's feasible enough!" he responded, energetically. "When once we are married, and it is irrevocable, my father and mother will not long stand out against us. I am too much to them for that—their only son. They may be angry for a few days, but they love me too well to hold out against my happiness, and, when they know her properly, they will be proud of their beautiful new daughter."

"If I could but think so," she said, softly and then she continued—

"But how are we to be married? You could not get a license here, without discovery?"

"You consent then, Emily?" he joyfully exclaimed. "Oh!

how happy you make me. Never mind the license. We will go to a distance, or cross over to the States, no license is needed there. But when shall it be, Emily? When can you get away?"

"Oh, Reggie! I'm afraid its very rash of us. However am I to get away?"

"Now, Emily, you've consented, and its all easy enough. If you go out for a walk after breakfast, to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, I'll meet you with a pair of our horses and a carriage, at the junction of the Cascade's roads. We'll catch the two o'clock down-train, cross over to Rochester, or Oswego, and then, my darling, we'll be married at once—to-morrow evening—and our happiness firmly secured for ever! Will you be ready, my own beautiful bride?"

"Oh, Reggie! Reggie! It is very wrong of us, I fear. But I love you so dearly, and my heart would break to lose you. Yes! I will be ready," responded Emily, her bird so well limed that she did not care to give herself further trouble to produce affected hesitation.

"You must be very good to me, Reggie, for I give up parents, friends, everything, for you," she continued, with soft appealing in her lovely eyes.

"My darling! my own love! Who, that has not a heart of stone, could be other, Emily? If you could but know how happy you have made me. To-morrow, you will be my wife. I can hardly realize my perfect bliss."

"I am as happy as you can be, Reggie; if only to-morrow were safely passed," she answered him. "But you mustn't stay here longer to-night. We must avoid all suspicion, and I must get ready. Good night, Reggie, my husband, soon to be," and after a highly dramatic parting, too sweet for transcription, Mr. Reginald Mordaunt, full of illusory bliss, wended his way homewards.

And this was Emily's escape from her difficulties. Hunted,

hounded, hard-driven by her fears ; her cool judgment subverted, her proud ambition degraded by the wearing mental torture of a few days, to the seeking of a temporary safety, from its sin-imagined danger ; a superb intellect, which, had its aims been as pure as they were powerful, could have commanding power, lending itself to the day's expediency ; brought down from its ethereal heights to the grovelling terrors that her sin had induced. Could it be said that to Emily Dearborn her Nemesis had not come? To marry Reggie Mordaunt, a mere boy, scarcely out of his teens, whom she did not love, whose worldly wealth—to the Emily Dearborn of a few days ago so great a consideration—lay in his expectations solely. The expectations of an only son, it is true, and of wealthy parents, but wholly dependent on the will of those wealthy parents, who hated her with good reason ; hated her, and to whom the marriage of their son would be a hard thing to forgive. Such was Emily Dearborn's alternative—the Hobson's choice left to her—or the imagined prison.

But this alliance into the family of the Mordaunt's would secure her from the chief menace of the evils she had brought down upon herself, for it was not to be supposed that any other result could follow the unguiness of those fatal letters than the suppression of such damaging evidence against one so very closely connected with themselves as Reggie's wife ; and, further, the enquiry into the matter would of necessity be much more cautiously conducted, if not stayed altogether, from the danger of scandal it might create. It was quite clear to her that neither Ethel, her parents, or even Vance, would allow the letter, which libelled Agnes Seaforth so atrociously, to reach her, or her aunt's cognizance. To her the marriage would be the ending of her tormenting fears.

But what had become of her darling aims—the ambitious hopes nurtured with so unwavering persistency ever since she had been capable of thinking for herself—of the wealth, social

distinction and power which her beauty was to command for her through a rich marriage ?

For this marriage with Reggie was not a rich one. For many years to come in all probability it could not be, and the brightest days of her life would have to be passed without those things which she so much coveted.

What had come to her that all her aspiring plans—for whose successful pursuit she knew herself so well fitted—were so suddenly ended, that she rushed into a marriage looked upon merely as a 'dernier resort'—or at best, to become a match for her consideration if it were likely that the heir should come into his heirship ?

A few days of wearing mental torment—a few days of guilty fears had dissipated all into thin air—save the frantic desire to save herself from the dangers which the stern Nemesis of her sin held up in frightful aspect before her cowering vision.

But although in these things Emily Dearborn might be changed, she was still Emily Dearborn, and this marriage into the family of the Mordaunts contained an element of sweetness for her that it would be so very bitter to them. Triumph in the thought that she, whom these people so hated ; to whom she was so unutterably intolerable ; whom she had injured and through whom, they would have to look away, in their very midst, the ghastly skeleton of her crime and their great wrong ; who would, in spite of themselves, as the wife of their only son, and brother, be one of themselves, a Mordaunt, an important personage to their future.

The mortification and dismay ; the agony, and grief with which the news of the morrow's event would be received by them, she pictured to herself with malicious delight.

What a victory to her would be the prospect of the hard battle between their loathing dislike of her and their love for Reggie ; the striving for conquest over themselves for his sake.

against the shuddering memory of their bitter wrong and the disgrace of his wife.

"I shall, at all events be safe ; and, though my sphere be more limited, yet it has possibilities. I shall fight within my own lines, for objects that are, too, very desirable, for attainment. Reggie is well enough, and at any rate he is the dearly loved only son. I can play my cards—and have I not my triumph over Ethel and all of them?" Saying this to herself she went to her own chamber, to secretly make her preparations for the morrow.

* * * * *

Mr. Reginald Mordaunt, wending his way home in his fool's paradise was compelled nevertheless to bring his thoughts down from their heights of bliss to certain sublunary considerations.

It may be easy enough, supposing the lady is agreeable, to arrange an elopement, and it doubtless may be very pleasant so to do, but to get through with it ; do the actual running away ; get the marriage performed in the strange land, and be happy according to programme, requires the considerations of hard worldly matters of fact.

An elopement with a stylish young lady is an event which may naturally be expected to kick up a tremendous dust, and the gentleman concerned will find it necessary to observe an indispensable preliminary requisite ; to wit—raising the wind. Of this startling fact Mr. Reginald Mordaunt suddenly became conscious ere he had reached the paternal mansion.

There was a predicament ! He had something about a hundred dollars in his possession, and he was to run away with, and be married to a very divine creature—of gorgeous tastes—this next morning ; a very small puff of wind that, to the spiced, yet powerful, gale of Araby that should fill his sails when shaping his course for the port of Hymen, where banners wave and streamers fly, regardless of expense.

During the sweetness of that happy '*tête-à-tête*' with his Emily, when the voyage of rapture was so charmingly inaugurated, his soul had been above the base and paltry ideas of dollars and cents. But he thought of them now though ; and very stubborn facts indeed he found them.

Very stubborn facts when one has not a sufficiency of them in one's pocket, though how facile and consonant to one's wishes when once they are safely conjoined into that magic receptacle.

But in the few moments left him, to call up the witches, collect the newt's eyes, the toad's teeth, dead men's fingers, and the other desirable ingredients for simmering the broth that should evolve the charm for him, the charm which should raise the wind as it should be raised, required prompt and effectual measures, and Reggie was not very long in deciding upon the course to be pursued.

Of course his father must raise the wind for him. His thoughts turned to that question at once. But there were difficulties in the way. Although Reggie had always been very liberally supplied with money, he was well aware that in asking for the comparatively large amount his new-born necessities compelled—questions would be asked, which might not be very convenient for him to answer ; and as it was obviously impossible that he could explain the real object for which he required the money, it was equally manifest that he must assign that which was unreal.

He must deceive his father.

The sad consequence of the committal of one wrong act is that it necessitates and makes so easy, the committal of many others that follow in its train.

And Reggie was even already to prove the truth of this.

As he pondered and wondered how his aim should best be accomplished, a thought, which a few days ago would have been

to him impossible, took possession of his brain and as it conveyed the pleasant idea of feasibility, it remained a fixity.

"The money I must have—and that's the very idea that will procure it. But it's a great shame to tell him such a whopper ; and to use such deception too. I cannot help it though. He'll feel more about that than the other ; and no wonder. But the money I must have to-night," saying which Reggie entered the house and sought his father's presence.

He found him alone in the drawing-room, seated at a table ; engaged in reading. As Reggie entered he raised his eyes from his book and said gently,

"Where have you been all the evening ? Reggie."

"I have been out ! Sir ; and have brought you your letters," was the response.

"Then you have been at Ten Lakes," and Mr. Mordaunt looked inquisitively at his son.

"Yes ! I have been at Ten Lakes," was the reply. "But I wish to speak to you, father" and Reggie seated himself opposite, but kept the lamp between himself and his father.

"Well ! what is it ? Reggie ; I am not engaged at present."

"I have been thinking over the matter of which you spoke to me, father, this afternoon ; and have come to the conclusion that in order that it may be possible for me to fulfil that which you wish, I must get away from home and this neighbourhood as soon as I can do so. To remain here, will simply result in my failure to do that which you so desire. Therefore it is better for me to go away at once. That I may obey you, I feel that such is the best course, and I wish it myself ; that I may obey you. Not though that I think I am in the wrong in my affection for Emily Dearborn, nor do I give it up. I do the best I can to meet your wishes by leaving this vicinity for a time.

"Ethel is better, and out of danger, so that there is nothing to require my presence here. I wish to go to Hamilton again,

until it is time to go back to college. Is this agreeable to you? father?"

"Well! Reggie. In so far as my wishes are concerned, I should of course have wished you to stay with us until the term opens. It would be so much pleasanter to us all. But as you think it is the easier for yourself, I certainly cannot object and that which you have told me gratifies me more than I can express. Is there anything I can do to forward your views? Reggie," replied Mr. Mordaunt, with pleasure in his tone at his son's almost unhopd for acquiescence in his wishes.

"Yes! father, I want some money. A good deal too. Travelling is costly and I wish to send in my fees for lectures, etc., for the coming term at once, and I have some accounts to pay," answered the son, inventing his items as he went along.

"Name the figure, Reggie, and you need not cut yourself down too much. In that you desire to do as I wish you in a matter difficult enough to you to be obedient, you have shewed yourself a good and dutiful son. You have not found me an unkind or exacting father, and in this affair it is your best interest that I am consulting. I am very glad you have come to me in this spirit; as I could have wished my son to do. It is appreciated Reggie. And now how much shall I say;" continued Mr. Mordaunt as he opened his cheque book.

His father's words were very bitter to Reggie; they stung him to the soul despite the accomplishment of his desires. It was very painful to him, very humiliating and, as he felt it, infinitely shameful, to sit and listen to, to take as his due, his father's praises; knowing that it was all a lie and gross deception. But he felt himself too far gone to retreat and, lucking up his spirits at the thought of his happy morrow, he replied:

"Let me have six hundred dollars, father. It will do for the present."

"Here is a cheque for a thousand; the difference you can

use as you please. Give up this absurd fancy for that girl, my dear son, and anything you can ask me to do, I will do."

"I will do my best; father. I can say no more," replied the shameless Reggie. "Thank you much for this money. I will put it to a good use; you may depend," his thoughts flying to his Emily.

"You will not go for a day or two, Reggie, we have seen nothing of you yet."

"I wish to go to Cascades to-morrow; father, and would like a carriage and horses early." "But I will be back again to-morrow evening early," he continued, seeing his father's eye bent upon him in expectation of his answer.

"And now I will go up and see Ethel, before it is too late."

* * * * *

At ten o'clock the next morning, a young gentleman driving a fast pair of horses, drew up at the junction of the Cascades road, and looked earnestly along that stretching towards Ten Lakes. He had not long to wait. In a few minutes a well-known figure came in sight. He was beside her in a moment.

"My darling! My own Emily! Mine at last," he exclaimed rapturously, as he stopped beside her. "I have frightened myself all the way lest there might be something wrong. How did you get away? Is all right at home? and no suspicion?"

"All right! Reggie, so far as I am concerned. They think I am out for the day, but we must get away from here. You will have to drive to the next house for my trunk. I got it out nicely last night, and the people of the house think it is for Lake Mordaunt. I'll walk on in advance," said the practical Emily, who could not get along without finery.

"All right." I'll get it! But I hope it's not heavy. How in the world did you get it out here?"

"Oh! I managed it! But don't delay, Reggie, I don't like staying longer than I can help so near home, with you." Reggie drove up to the house indicated, a small farmer's, asked for

the trunk of a man lounging about the door ; who put it in the carriage for him. Reggie handed him a dollar, and wished him "good morning."

"Good morning ! Mr. Reginald. A pleasant drive to you both and soft words from the parson," he replied with a grin, which stretched his mouth back under his ears.

"What's that nonsense you're talking? Take care your tongue does not get you into trouble," said Reggie looking round with a face in which the annoyance was as palpable as the anger, and he drove off, to rejoin Emily, the loud guffaw of the too observant bucolic following him for the next hundred yards.

"Let me help you up ! my darling," he exclaimed as he jumped to the ground. In another second they were off as fast as the horses could speed on the road towards Cascades.

The man lounging about the house door watched them amusedly as they drove away at the unusual pace.

"Plain as the nose on a man's face ; jumping the fence when they can't open the gate ! Whether will I go now—to old Dearborn at the Bank, or to the Lake. "Dearborn's too stingy though, and I'll knock a V spot out of the old gentleman at the Lake for carrying up the news of this scrape ; see if I don't. But I'll give them a start any way, and I won't go up till afternoon. Won't old Mordaunt rave though, when he hears of his young spark cutting off with that Dearborn girl ; she's mighty pretty ; that's a fact. But if ever there was a consarned young foci in the world, Reg. Mordaunt's him, to shine up to that tearing limb." And giving vent to his houghts in such manner, the honest agriculturist departed about his business.

CHAPTER IV.

MINE STILL ! I WILL NOT GIVE HER UP.

The heavy gloom which had fallen upon the family of the Mordaunts, by Ethel's illness and her unhappiness, had lifted to

all appearance, and to them, had seemed wholly to have passed away in the joy of her happy recovery. Their horizon had lightened up to them again, and the father and the mother, with thankful hearts recognized the mercy which had come to them. The deadly fear which had struck cold to them had been dispelled and their days were again brighter for them.

But the dark cloud had but lifted for a while, and its descent upon them, all too soon, in heavy blackness was the more sudden and remorseless, that their brief gleam of sunshine had so apparently cleared the air from grief for them. Where a great misfortune that bears down the spirit to the limit of the endurable, as we think, has come to us; how bitterly hard and unjust seems to us the approach of a new storm; the still palpitating and quivering heart-string to be wrung afresh by anguish and intolerable sorrow.

"We have had our cruel wrong—the cutting down of life's dearest hope, surely for us shall be no more misfortune," we cry, storm-wrecked and broken and tried to the uttermost. Wounded almost to death, as we imagine, for us no more smooth seas or illumined skies, halting painfully on our path, as we seek our strength again—"Truly we are protected from further harm."

As Dr. Streatham leisurely made his way towards Lake Mor-daunt about noon of the morning on which Reggie had made his early departure on his sad wild goose chase, he was suddenly awakened from the reverie into which country doctors on their long drives are so apt to fall, by the appearance of Barney driving his horse at break-neck speed along the road towards him.

"Docthor!" he shouted, as he drew up his foaming horse as they met. "For the love av Heaven, stir up that great baste o' yourn, and get along till the house as fast as if the ould Harry wor afther ye. Little Miss Ally—the Lord presarve her the precious lamb—is taken mortial sick, and its crazy they are waitin' fur ye," and Barney, turning his vehicle in the road with a sudden and sharp manœuvre that effected his purpose with a

promptness that was no good for his springs, was close behind the other in a moment.

"What's the matter with her, Barney? What symptoms does she exhibit," roared the doctor, turning round in his carriage, as it flew over the stones.

"Och! the sorra a bit av me knows av her symptoms. I didn't wait till hear, but kem afther ye hot fut, but I heard wan av the gur-rels, bad cess till their long tongues, they're always talking, a sayin' that the darlint little pet didn't know any wan, an' that her eyes wor squintin' like," returned Barney.

"H'm!" and the doctor turned his face round again, and said no more, but whipped up his horse to its best speed.

Little Alida Mordaunt, the bright little sunbeam of the house, the pet and the joy alike of father and mother, brother and sister, had never been well since the fearful whooping-cough had come to rack her delicate little frame. She was a beautiful child, too precocious and advanced for her years, too fastidious and refined in her little ideas of dress, and the extreme neatness which could not bear a soil on her pinafore, or a stain on the taper little white fingers. So affectionate, so winning and attractive in all her little ways, she was the delight of all around her, but her clever little sayings, her advanced little refinements, as much as the extreme delicacy of her beauty gave many a pang to her idolizing mother's heart, to be comforted only by that vain but natural outspring of hope, "It is impossible! God will never take my darling, my beautiful little sunbeam, whom I love so, from me. I could not survive it," and as she would watch the sprightly little child, who hardly ever left her side ("Mamma's little pollow tat—mamma's little shadow," she would say to herself,) occupying herself with the amusements of seven instead of three years of age—gravely sewing a hem in her little dress almost as straight as her mother could do it, repeating her letters or singing the little hymn tunes that the brain of three years should never have known; watching the conversation of

those around her with the keen understanding of it all, that should not have been! asking questions that were not of her years, with a passion for flowers and beautiful things not natural to a child, the fond proud mother would think, with swelling heart. "God will not take my darling from me! She has such interest, such enjoyment in her little life; she is so clever and so active, and she knows so much. It is impossible! She would never be meant for death."

The eager lovely dark eyes, contrasted with the transparent white skin, fair as a lily, the animated speaking look of the bright face, the broad brow wherein the tender young brain was too entirely at work, betrayed a highly nervous and sensitive organization, as it did the inherent delicacy of frame of such. Too much of the mind—too little of the animal.

Such are God's children, whom He loves so well that He takes them to Himself from the world for which they are too beautiful, too pure and too bright. For these He makes His probation short. To be loved intensely by those to whom they are given, to live their few bright years in love and the pure sweet joys of innocent childhood.

Happy, charmed and interested, their little lives to which comes not sin, or trial, or grief, and the pure spirits are called from the lovely clay, which fittingly clothed the ethereal beauty to rest in the Saviour's arms who loves them in Heaven for ever.

The terrible paroxysms of the whooping-cough had been all too severe upon the delicate and nervous little Alida, and had wrought insidious mischief that showed no sign of its presence. The cough had ceased too suddenly, and had left her worn down in strength, wasted and emaciated. And she had not improved.

Now and then there would appear a flash of her former bright self, to be followed by depression, weakness and utter weariness.

Her appetite failed, and she could not be tempted to eat; her strength and her never abundant flesh wasted day by day.

During Ethel's illness the increasing weariness and continued drowsiness more and more alarmed her mother, and for the last few days she had given up all her former activity.

"Take me up, mamma! Ally's tired," was her constant petition, and she lay for hours, resting her weary heavy head upon her mother's shoulders, or slept away her mother's absence on her nursery sofa.

But, on this morning, she had insisted on lying down immediately after her daily bath, and she had lain with painfully large bright eyes, gazing fixedly about the room, and her mother became anxious for the Doctor's visit, if not specially alarmed, for her little darling, though evidently ill, continued to ask her interested questions concerning the welfare of the out-door objects of her daily solicitude, and when the instant reply was made, the pleased smile on her white little face, told that the pleasurable tide of her innocent life's associations had not been effaced by her illness.

At length, however, the loved little voice ceased its prattlings, and Mrs. Mordaunt, bending over her child, noticed a strange, fixed look of the wide-open eyes, the dilatation of the pupils, and a slight, but perceptible squint. Her little darling no longer recognized her, and was unconscious.

In a state of terrible alarm, she rang for help, and Barney was dispatched with orders to use the utmost speed for the doctor.

The latter, on reaching the house, stood upon no ceremony, but made his way directly for the nursery, and, with a quick "good morning" to Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, who stood with perturbed and grief-stricken faces, watching their poor little darling, who no longer knew them, approached the sick child, and looked closely down into her face.

"Oh! What is the matter with her, Dr. Streatham? She has

been unconscious for half an hour, and look at the dreadful expression of her eyes. Oh! my darling! my darling! Is she in danger, Doctor? Will she get better from this?" exclaimed poor Mrs. Mordaunt, giving way in spite of herself.

Dr. Streatham did not at once reply to her, but went on with his examination of the little sufferer, gave some directions to the attendants, prepared, and himself administered, with great difficulty—as the poor little child's teeth were firmly clenched—a very carefully weighed-out remedy; then, turning to Mrs. Mordaunt, he said, gently and sorrowfully—

"Yes, madam, there is danger—very great danger. Your little child is very ill, indeed. She is alive, it is true, and while there is life, there is hope; but, I must warn you not to build too much on hope. I have foreseen and battled against this for some time. Unfortunately, the little child has had no strength, and powerful medicines could not be administered. While there is life there is hope, but you must prepare yourselves to bear either result. Your little daughter is attacked by hydrocephalus, superinduced by whooping-cough, and I need not tell you that, weakened and emaciated as she is, she is in the very greatest danger."

He gave some further directions, and then continued to Mrs. Mordaunt, "I need not impress upon you, madam, the necessity of the persistent and exact fulfilment of these directions. The little child must be very closely watched, never left a moment alone. I shall remain some hours here, and will return for the night, and so will go to see after my horse." He then left the room, after quickly signing to Mr. Mordaunt to follow him.

When they had reached the library, and Mr. Mordaunt had given orders for Barney to attend to the horse, Dr. Streatham turned to his companion and said—

"It is necessary that I should, at once, tell you, sir, what I could not do directly to the poor mother, that your little

child's case is, I fear, a hopeless one—absolutely hopeless. She has not two days to live. Her——”

“Oh! do not tell me that, Doctor, that there is no hope,” interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, his face showing his perturbation. “I cannot lose my little darling! Oh! Doctor Streatham, can nothing be done to save her?”

“All has been done that is possible, Mr. Mordaunt,” gravely replied the Doctor. “For some time past, I have been battling against the approach of the terrible disease, but unavailingly, I am sorry to say. The delicate, and too active little brain has been unable to withstand the violent paroxysms of the cough, and the effusion has been steadily increasing, notwithstanding all my efforts. Later on, you must gently break the sad news to Mrs. Mordaunt, for which the way is already prepared. But it must be kept from Miss Mordaunt, who is unable yet to bear such tidings. If God so wills it, your little darling will be restored to you. I can give you no hope. No earthly power can save her.

* * * * *

A heavy gloom, indeed, had come to overshadow the lives of this poor father and mother. Their eldest daughter in unhappiness and bitter sorrow, awakening to them so slowly from an illness that had so nearly been fatal—awakening, too, not to a new lease of joy and hope, but one of dark grief and regret—and now the hand of Death was upon their bright and lovely little youngest child. Theirs for two short days more, and then, to be God's own for ever. No more theirs, no more on earth. Never again to hear the sweet little loving voice—never again to clasp, with yearning intensity, the beloved form to their hearts—never again, with fond, proud delight, to note the progress of the active little brain—to mark the budding beauties of their little darling—never again until—their last breath of earth drawn—like a flash, the joyful recognition in Heaven restores to them, for all eternity, the loved and the lost.

On earth, she was to be for them but a memory ; their little Alida, in two short days, to be nothing more than a memory.

No wonder the poor parents' hearts lay frozen within them, this terrible day, watching their little child fading away from them into the tomb. Their grief was great enough for them ; and, happily, they were, as yet, unconscious of another evil preparing through their son, for the further wringing of their hearts.

They passed the hours of that bitter afternoon by the bedside of their dying little girl. Bitter hours that are common to every life, every day occurrences, yet how horrible is their freshness. Use—that so deadens the palled senses to most things of this earth, lessens not the terrors of death, that so continuously assail poor humanity.

The afternoon wore on for them in their sorrow. A sorrow further embittered by the sad reflection of the cruel necessity that, for poor Ethel's own sake, she must be kept in ignorance of her little sister's illness and coming death ; could never see her again in life, nor even have the melancholy satisfaction of bidding the last "farewell."

And why was Reggie away to-day, of all days ? But he would be back ere night, and see his little darling sister again. But, oh, how short the time ! Two days ! One almost passed, and then ?

But they enjoyed one sad satisfaction. Their little Alida came back to consciousness, and recognized again the loving faces that watched with such fearful hope for that coming back. She recognized them again, and though evidently much weaker, had spoken and told her mother that "she loved her."

Oh, precious words ! To be treasured in tearful joy in that loving heart which heard them, until its last beat on earth. Precious words ! That made the bitter trial still more bitter, though they would not have been surrendered though they cost millions of agonies.

The gleam of hope, which had sprung to their anxious minds that their darling had spoken again, and was conscious, was dispelled by the grave, sad shake of Dr. Streatham's head, and he had shortly afterwards taken his departure, promising, however, to return for the night, and the grief-stricken parents were again alone, dividing their time between the equally terrible alternative of watching the ebbing hours of their dying child's life and short visits to the bedside of the all-unconscious Ethel, who had to be kept in ignorance, and before whom their faces had to be smiling while their hearts were bursting.

Another half-hour passed, and a carriage was heard rapidly approaching the house. "Can it be Reggie," was the hope that sprung up to them. In a few minutes a servant entered the room, where they sat with their little Ally, and with large surprised eyes, said—

"If you please, ma'am, Mr. Vance is downstairs in the drawing-room and wishes to see you. He asked for Miss Ethel, but I told him she was ill, and he wants to see you very particularly."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Mordaunt, before his astonished wife could speak. "That will do. Please to come back in five minutes."

"What shall we do, Florence?" he continued to his wife.

"He must go away," she replied. "I cannot see him, I cannot leave my poor little darling, whom I have for but so few hours, and I cannot see him. We have suffering enough, and of his causing. That my poor Ethel cannot even give her last kiss to her dying little sister. Let the man go away. I will not see him," continued Mrs. Mordaunt, with heat, though her voice was broken by her grief.

"Don't speak in that manner, my dearest Florence. Our trouble is sent us by God," replied her husband. "I will go down to Vance, and get him to go away. This is no time for

explanations. Should Ethel know that he is here?" he continued.

"No, better not, I think, Henry. We can tell her of his visit later on, when she is stronger. It will be too exciting for her. Go down to him and ask him to go away now, at any rate, and don't stay long," responded Mrs. Mordaunt.

Edwin Vance looked up as the father of his Ethel entered the drawing-room, looked up with an anxious face, that was haggard and pale, and on his forehead was distinctly visible the bruise made by Reggie's fist three days before in Toronto.

He advanced a step forward, and his lips moved as if he tried to speak, but could not.

Mr. Mordaunt, however, who generally went direct to his point, forestalled him in what he was about to say. Advancing quickly into the room, he bowed gravely, and, motioning Edwin to a chair, while taking one himself, proceeded—

"Mr. Vance, I do not bring good news with me, either for you or ourselves. My poor little Alida is lying on her death-bed, passing away from us; we shall have her but a few hours more," and the grave, composed voice quivered as he said the words. "And our interview, to-day, must necessarily be a short one."

"Alida dying!" ejaculated Edwin, horror-stricken. "Dying, did you say? Surely not that, Mr. Mordaunt. The servant told me just now, the first time I had heard, that Ethel had been ill, but was recovering. I had never imagined this, though. How very terrible."

"My poor little bright Ally," said the father, but more to himself than in answer, and with broken voice. "Ethel, too, has been very ill, and is but slowly recovering from that which has nearly brought her to the grave. For many days, there was naught else before us for her than the grave, but, by God's mercy, she has been restored to us from its very brink. Our troubles are very heavy."

"Great Heavens! But why was I not told? Why have I been kept in ignorance of all? If Ethel had died! Why was I not told, Mr. Mordaunt? And, poor little Ally, too, dying? It was not right."

"You should have been told, Mr. Vance. I am sorry that you were not told, especially—it is but right you should know—that you are charged with the cause of Ethel's illness," returned Mr. Mordaunt, looking him firmly in the face.

"What do you say, Mr. Mordaunt? That I am charged with being the cause of Ethel's illness? I do not understand. How could I possibly have anything to do with it? What is the meaning of all this?" responded Edwin, excitedly, but evidently much mystified.

"Simply, what I have said," answered Mr. Mordaunt. "Personally, I know but little of the affair, and can give you but few particulars. One morning, over three weeks ago, Ethel was found fainting upon the floor by her mother, and when she had come to consciousness, and was questioned, she told her that you had been false to her—that you had a prior engagement to another young lady, to whom you had behaved very badly, and that all was over.

"That there was written proof against you—a letter from yourself to this young lady, and another from some relative of the latter, denouncing your conduct. These I have not seen, nor, I believe, has Mrs. Mordaunt. That night, Ethel was seized with brain-fever, and we know nothing more of the affair. Mrs. Mordaunt, however, feels convinced of the truth of these charges against you, I may as well tell you, and so, likewise, does Ethel."

"Mr. Mordaunt!" exclaimed Edwin, in much excitement. "Is it possible that Ethel—that any of you can believe in such a monstrous absurd, and utterly unfounded charge against me? That I am engaged to another young lady? Who is this young lady, may I ask? I demand the names—her's and her relative?"

I am engaged to Miss Ethel Mordaunt, to no other young lady, and never have been. A letter of mine, one of the proofs!" he continued. "The thing is absurd. I have never written to any young lady in my life, except on the merest matters of business. Certainly, never anything which could be tortured by any possibility into an engagement. Let me see these letters? Can I see Ethel, herself? Is she well enough?"

"No! Mr. Vance. It is quite impossible that you should see her. All excitement is absolutely forbidden; she does not even know that her poor little sister is dying. She will never see her again. Can I say more," responded Mr. Mordaunt. "As to the letters, neither myself nor Mrs. Mordaunt have seen them; we do not know where they are, and we dare not ask Ethel for them yet. Neither can I give you the names you ask for, for I have never heard them."

"You must get them for me, Mr. Mordaunt; for I am innocent, and I will disprove these things against me, and clear my good name, if it costs me every cent of which I am possessed. Good Heavens! What has brought these terrible events to pass?" said poor Edwin Vance, standing before him whom he had so lately regarded as father-in-law, with pale face and white lips, with utter misery in his soul.

"But tell me how my poor Ethel is? Mine still, for I will never give her up. Is she really out of danger, and safe?" he continued, with anxious and melting eyes, as his thoughts flew back to his beloved, who had so nearly passed away from the world, and he unknowing.

"Yes! she is out of danger and improving; but she has had a terrible illness and it will be long before she is perfectly well again. She is greatly changed, you would hardly recognize her again. But she is out of danger."

"Thank God for that! Thank God for His mercy, that my darling is safe. I rejoice, though I am miserable enough. I wish from my heart that it was the same with your poor little

Alida," exclaimed Edwin, " I must not, for your sake, prolong this interview under the terrible circumstances, though to leave with matters as they are is horrible enough for me."

Then, after a second's pause, continuing—

" Mr. Mordaunt ! May I ask you, if you, yourself, believe these dreadful charges against me ? From the tenor of our conversation, I am inclined to think you do not," he continued, as he took up his hat to go.

" Well ! Mr. Vance, I must say that I do not wholly believe them, though, as I told you before, both Mrs. Mordaunt and Ethel hold a contrary opinion. From the simple reason that Emily Dearborn was the bringer of the charges against you, and produced the letters spoken of in proof, I am not inclined to put faith in them, altogether, as I have no good opinion of that young lady, and deem her capable of any treachery," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

" Emily Dearborn !" exclaimed Edwin, in astonishment, but at this moment a warning tap was heard on the door, and a second later it opened, and a servant entered—

" If you please, sir, a man, called Alonzo Rooter, a farmer, from the Cascades road, is in the hall, and wishes to see you particularly."

" Please to tell him I cannot see him to-day, on any account. He must come again. You should have told him that at once," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

" I did tell him, sir, that you could not see him to-day, but he said it was very important business concerning Mr. Reginald that he wanted to see you about," replied the girl.

" Concerning Mr. Reginald !" exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt. That is——"

" Yes, it's just that, Squire Mordaunt," ejaculated Mr. Rooter, showing himself at the door, where he had probably placed himself from the first.

" And I guess ye'd best hear my news, though how you'll like

them is another thing. It's kinder important, too, I reckon, and I've lost a good half-day's work from my crops to bring it to ye, knowin' ye to be a gentleman that won't let a poor man lose his time for ye. Worth five dollars, too, at this season of the year."

"If you have any news to tell, Mr. Rooter, pray tell it, and you shall not lose your time. What is the matter with Mr. Reginald? Out with it at once. Remain a moment longer, Mr. Vance, I still have something to say to you."

"Now your news, Mr. Rooter," continued Mr. Mordaunt.

"Oh! I'll tell you fast enough. I'm not scart to tell it," replied the free and easy Mr. Rooter. "Wall! the hull bilin' of the matter's this, that yer son, Reginald, and Dearborn's fly-away girl—the big one—took it into their heads to clear out this morning for the States, where the parsons aint as particular about licenses as they are in Canidy, and they're married by this time, I reckon. Any way they left this morning down the Cascades road as hard as his horses could pelt along, she with him, and got her trunk with her too."

"With Emily Dearborn!" gasped out Mr. Mordaunt, turning deadly pale, as he rose suddenly to his feet, and turned towards the unabashed Mr. Rooter.

"This morning! It is impossible. You are mistaken. My God! Let not this come to us. We have more than we can bear," continued the poor father, lifting up his eyes. "It's impossible! You must be mistaken, man."

"Oh! I'm a man for the matter of that, but my name is Mr. Rooter, though, squire," replied that gentleman with perfect coolness. "However, as ye've sickness and trouble in the house, and this is hard news for ye, I'll say nothing about the little trifle. But I'm not mistaken. It's true enough, squire, as ye'll find."

"Tell me all you know about the matter, Mr. Rooter, for Heaven's sake," replied Mr. Mordaunt. "And why, if this oc-

curred, as you say, this morning, did you not come before with the news, when something might-- Go on! Pray go on!"

"Wall! ye see, Mr. Mordaunt, I did'nt know myself what was up till nigh on to four o'clock," said Mr. Rooter, quite willing to make the story suit himself, regardless of the truth of his details. "But I'll tell ye the hull of it. Last night Em'ly Dearborn kim to our house and left a trunk with my missis, saying some of your people would call for it in the morning. That looked odd enough, but yet it might be likely enough too, and we thought it was for the house here. Wall! At ten this morning up drives your son Reginald and gets the trunk. I give it him myself, and five minits afore this I seed the Dearborn girl walking down the road past our house, but I thought nothing of that though, till, going on to four this afternoon, Jim Lakes dropped in on his way home, and he told us he'd met them eight mile this side of Cascades driving like mad, a little after twelve and him a kissing of her. My wife then allowed as how I'd better come up and tell ye, and that's ail. Got a fiver handy, squire? and I'll go."

Having received the required five dollars, Mr. Rooter departed, after leaving the following consolatory remarks behind him:

"Good day, Squire Mordaunt. I'm sorry for ye and for Mr. Reggie too. She's a mighty pretty girl, that's a fact, but oh! Moses, aint she a born devil though."

Mr. Mordaunt dropped into his chair and remained a few seconds with his head bowed down in his hands. Suddenly raising himself, he said to Edwin:

"You came from Cascades this afternoon, did you not, Mr. Vance? Have you seen anything of them?"

"Yes, Mr. Mordaunt, I must confirm the statement you have just heard, in so far that I met Reginald and Miss Dearborn in Cascades this afternoon at one o'clock or a little later. They left the hotel and went towards the station, and I was, I ac-

knowledge, surprised, but did not speak to him, for a reason of my own," answered Edwin, sadly, for the discomposure of the other was very apparent.

"Then I have another great sorrow to meet, Mr. Vance," he continued, turning himself towards that gentleman, "I have to express my sincere regret for the cowardly attack upon you in the streets of Toronto at the hands of Reginald Mordaunt, my son, whom I am now almost afraid to name as such, and I have to—"

"Do not mention the matter, Mr. Mordaunt. Think no more of it than I do myself. You—we both of us—have grief sufficient without taking concern of trifles," replied Edwin. "Of the attack itself I never again thought. It opened my eyes to the knowledge that something was wrong at Lake Mordaunt, which sufficiently excluded all else from my mind, and hastened my appearance here.

"But in my own miseries I must not detain you from your greater, and I must force myself to go, though more unhappy than when I arrived. You say that Emily Dearborn produced these pretended charges against me before Ethel. That is very strange, to say the least of it. But I can say no more at present, and I can only ask you, in justice to myself, since I cannot see my poor Ethel, to convey to her, when she is well enough to be spoken to upon the subject, the solemn assurance, which I now give you, of my entire innocence of these charges: that I have never in my life laid myself open to aught which could justify the breaking of our engagement, or of which she could reasonably complain, excepting one act brought by myself to her knowledge and freely forgiven; of my unalterable love and affection; that I will disprove these false allegations against me, and that I am as worthy of her now as she considered me to be before they were brought against me. Tell her of my visit here, of my terrible anxiety for the past fortnight when not hearing from her, and my deep sorrow and sympathy with her in her

illness. Will you promise me this, Mr. Mordaunt? and to procure me the letters or copies of them which have produced all this misery for us?"

"I undertake to give her your very words, Mr. Vance," answered Mr. Mordaunt. "And if possible I will procure the copies or the letters themselves. Such will be but fair towards you. And now I ——"

But his sentence was left unfinished, for the door opened and with a quick step Mrs. Mordaunt entered the room. She glanced, merely glanced contemptuously and coldly towards Edwin Vance, bowed gravely and in a tone whose chilliness was remarkably different to that which he had been accustomed from her, said briefly :

"How do you do, sir!" And, turning towards her husband, she continued :

"So soon as you can conclude your interview with this gentleman, I would wish to see you up stairs. Pray, my dear Henry, defer to a more suitable time your mere business matters," and Mrs. Mordaunt, with a strong accent on the last three words, looked meaningly at her husband.

"Our interview is finished, my dear. Mr. Vance sufficiently appreciates the sad circumstances in which we are placed. I have stated to him the events with which he is connected. He denies them fervently, and requires that the so-called proofs of the allegations resting upon him be produced. This I have promised shall ——"

"Mr. Vance does not require the production of proofs. They would be simply useless to him. We need not to prove the truth of that of which his own conscience convicts him. He can deceive no further, and I decline to hold parley with him or to furnish that which he requires, that he may destroy them, I presume. Mr. Vance had better return whence he came, to her, whom with us, he would deceive. It would be more becom-

ing than his present intrusion here," interrupted Mrs. Mordaunt, hastily and decisively.

"This letter, sir," she continued, "Miss Mordaunt has desired should be forwarded. I beg to hand it to you personally. It contains her last words—and our last words to you. For myself, and upon my daughter's part, I now intimate that we decline to hold further parley with you. Good afternoon, sir," and with another bow, Mrs. Mordaunt left the room.

Edwin Vance, who had listened to this address apparently bereft of his senses, attempted to speak at its conclusion, but Mrs. Mordaunt had closed the door behind her and was out of reach of his words as effectually as though a province separated them.

He had mechanically taken the letter handed him, and as the instant of his surprise was over, he tore it open and perused the words the reader has already seen.

By the events which had already occurred to him he was well enough prepared as to its contents, but this was a direct and palpable blow that brought home directly to him the fact that his Ethel would no longer be his Ethel.

His sensibilities had already been so worked upon that the new blow could not much further stagger him, but yet he was staggered, and he turned his agitated face away from his companion's view for a few moments of uncontrollable agony.

At length, mastering himself, he looked again at Mr. Mordaunt.

"This is my dismissal, sir. Ethel gives me to understand that all is over between us; that our engagement, our happy love is ended. What have I done that this misery—this destruction of everything—of every hope of my life should come upon me? Yet I will not accept the dismissal—my engagement I shall not consider at an end. It still exists. I go! I go to disprove the falsehoods which have come between us. I *will*

disprove them, and I know that my darling is just—to do me right.

“Her to whom my love is due!” he exclaimed, bitterly, throwing the letter from which he quoted down upon the table.

“My love is due to Ethel Mordaunt, and to no person else—never has been, and, God knows, never shall be. I love her! I love her! She alone, and I have never loved another.

“Will you tell her this, Mr. Mordaunt? You have promised, and you have also promised to get me copies at any rate, of the papers, forged as they must be, against me. That is but just. I am innocent of all this, and without them I have nothing to work upon to clear myself of this odium, and regain what I have lost. Will you get them for me, Mr. Mordaunt?”

“I will, if I *can* do so, Mr. Vance, but from that which you have heard just now, you cannot but see that I must not be sanguine as to success. Good-bye, Mr. Vance. I am sorry for all the unhappy events, and hope for both your sake and Ethel's that all will come right.”

“Good-bye, sir, for the present. Write to me as soon as you can to tell me of Ethel and poor little Ally, and send me the copies. Good-bye, Mr. Mordaunt,” said Edwin, shaking the out-stretched hand that was to have been his father-in-law's. “God send you strength in your griefs, sir, and me also in mine. I never thought to have left this house as I do to-day.”

In another minute Edwin Vance had driven away.

CHAPTER V.

THE DYING LITTLE PEACEMAKER.

Mr. Mordaunt remained a few moments immersed in painful thought, gazing after the receding form of the visitor who had just left him, who carried away with him grief almost as bitter

as his own, and turned to make his way again to the room where lay his dying little daughter—the present and heaviest agony, to which was now added another that would have been keen and intense were not its aspect so overshadowed by the heavier horrors in which Death encompassed his house.

As he entered the room, his wife, sitting by the side of her unconscious little darling, weeping a mother's bitter tears, looked up as he approached.

“Is there no hope for us, Henry? It cannot be that I am to lose my little Ally.”

“It does not rest with us, my poor darling. If it pleases God to take our little child we can rest very sure that it is better for her—better for us, also, being His will, he replied, and as he looked on the convulsed form that addressed him, his half-formed resolve to tell her the new trouble that had fallen upon them melted away.

“She has enough to bear for the present. I shall keep that sorrow from her as long as it can be kept away,” he thought.

“Oh! Henry,” continued Mrs. Mordaunt after a pause, “Ethel has divined by some means or other that that man has been here, and she is excited. Could you not go to her for a little while?”

“Yes! but I am sorry she knows that. Who could have told her?”

“No one has told her. I took all precaution. But go to her and try to comfort her; she is weak and ill yet,” replied Mrs. Mordaunt.

“How am I to comfort her? Though I am now more than ever convinced of Vance's truth, yet she will not, it would appear, believe it.”

But when he had seated himself by Ethel's bedside, the first question she asked him was on another and very different subject.

“Papa! why do you all keep it so secret from me? Why

cannot I see poor little Ally before—before—when she is so ill?”

“Oh, Ethel!” exclaimed her father, horror-stricken, for he had not in the least expected this, and for a moment he could find no other words. But his daughter’s eyes were fixed upon his face, and he had to reply at once. “Certainly you shall see her, but you are not strong yet, Ethel. We had to keep poor Ally’s illness from you. You shall see her, if you wish it so much. Though there is not,” with a gulp, “any immediate necessity for it yet.”

“Oh! yes, papa, there is. I know—I know—and I must see my poor little darling for the last time. Oh! papa, you would not let my little sister die without letting me have my last kiss of her in life. I could not have borne it had she passed away without a last farewell. I could not have borne it to have been left in ignorance. None would tell me, but I knew. Oh! my poor little Ally! My poor little darling!” and Ethel, bending forward, with her face bowed into her hands, shed the bitterest tears that had yet come to her now darkened life.

“Yes! Ethel, our poor little darling is leaving us. Her bright little spirit will soon be with its Maker. Oh! Ally, Ally,” and the father gave way to his grief as had done his daughter. “But, Ethel, my darling, you must not give way—for our sakes you must not. It was to save you from this that we did not speak,” he continued, controlling himself as he witnessed his still sick child’s agitation. “You shall see her, Ethel. You shall see her at once. But how did you learn the sad truth that our darling was—was to go from us?”

“The knowledge came to me, papa, I know not how. I am ill and weak, and, I suppose, a morbid sensitiveness gave me this intuitive knowledge of the evil hanging over. Oh! papa, just think what it would have been to me in after days if God had not in His mercy given me this perception, and my sweet

little sister had drawn her last breath within the few feet that separate us, and I in ignorance. What undying horror. Could I have had another contented hour?

“For happiness I no longer look!”

“Oh! say not that, my darling. It is all very dreadful. Our out-look is indeed darkened, but it is God’s will that this agony should come to us,” answered her father, and her words recalled to his mind the miserable fact that his beloved son, his other child had by his fatal act of folly, brought upon his head the undying horror—the horror of remembrance to him for all time that, whilst he was marrying, his sister was dying.

As the father’s thought called up this, and the—but too probably blasted happiness of his son’s life, it was by stong effort of his will that he so far conquered his emotion as to be enabled to carry on the conversation. As he looked at his daughter on her sick bed, changed and weak, pale as the sheets that enwrapped her; he remembered too that her life had become darkened over; that her prospects of happiness were blighted also; that in addition to the death stroke upon them—the passing away of the little darling of the house—and the blow that Reggie’s miserable union was to bring upon them all; had not Ethel another grief? Was not she the hardest tried? Her’s the heaviest lot? Was not her grief heavier even than his own? As he remembered this and looked at the wasted form of his beautiful daughter, a gush of tenderness sprang up towards her in his unselfish breast.

Had she not more to bear than he had, and she not so well able to bear it?

“Ethel!” he continued, “I will send your mother to you, and you shall see your poor little Ally now, at once. But, Ethel, Edwin Vance was here to-day. He had come to see you.”

“Yes, papa! I know,” she hastily replied. “But I do not wish to hear of that to-day, at any rate. I want Ally—to see Ally.”

"And, Ethel, I believe he is innocent—that a vile plot has been brought against you to separate you from him by—by—by—that girl. He indignantly denies the charge of faithlessness, and demands an explicit statement of the charges against him, when he can at once prove his innocence."

"No! No! Papa," exclaimed Ethel, excitedly, and waving her hands as if to keep off the subject from her.

"I will not hear anything about him. This is not the time. It is almost sacrilege, and Ally's lovely little life drawing so fast to its close.

"Oh! talk not of that. Just think, papa. I have not seen my sister since I have been ill—so long, so long—and now she is dying. And I should never have seen her again, had it not been for myself; she would have died from me and I unknowing; left me for ever hungry and tortured for her. As it is, though I shall see her again, the darling! how dreadful; how horrible it all is."

And so Ethel had the sorrowful consolation of the last parting with little Ally.

Supported by her father and mother, she wept out the last Farewell, and kissed in floods of tears, the little face, beautiful still, though so sadly, wastefully changed, that she would see no more on earth. A sorrowful consolation, for only by the longing glance of the yet bright dark eyes, and the feeble motion of the strengthless lips could the dying child return her sister's caresses, into whose clinging kisses all time was crowded; long years of love were thronged, the close yearning embrace of poor helpless humanity that would fain hold back from the awful gulf of Death its loved and dear ones—who pass away, nevertheless, over the dark brink, though every heart-string cracks.

For poor Ethel her little sister's life was over. She was carried back to her room half-fainting, and the merciful sleep induced by the opiates administered by the vexed doctor shielded her from further present agony.

* * * * *

"But where is Reggie? What can have kept him? Why is he away to-day of all days?" sobbed Mrs. Mordaunt, as sitting by the side of her dying child, Dr. Streatham gently told her that ere the morning had dawned her darling would be no more.

"He should be here. He will never see her again, and how dreadful it will all be to him. He should not have gone, though Heaven knows, I never anticipated this. It is cruel! It is cruel!"

Cruel enough was the thought to the poor mother, and cruel enough to the father, who carried silently in his breast the knowledge that their son would not come—that he was almost lost to them, and that his coming would be, even at this time, a greater grief than his absence.

He would not add to his wife's bitter sorrow by telling her the truth. He would keep it away from her as long as it could be kept.

But as the evening wore on into night and no Reggie came, Mrs. Mordaunt grew anxious for him, as well as distressed at his non-appearance, and she could not be appeased.

Her husband's endeavours to calm her fears at length were fruitless.

She became alarmed that some accident had befallen her Reggie, and all assurances of his being very well able to take care of himself fell uncomfoting and unheeded upon the mother's heart.

The pained and unnatural manner of her husband in speaking of him was not unnoticed by her. Something was wrong, she was convinced, and her pertinacious questionings and very apparent alarm at length had their effect.

To keep her longer in ignorance of the fact that her son would not come had become a greater evil than telling her

the whole truth. The certainty could be no worse than the suspense.

"My dear Florence," he said, "I had intended for your sake—bitterly stricken as you are—to have kept a further grief from you, but your needless anxiety for your son forces the avowal upon me. Reggie is safe enough, so far as his bodily health goes, but he will not be here to-night or for many nights to come. I have but too great reason to believe that he and Emily Dearborn went away together this morning, and by this time are married."

"Married! Married to Emily Dearborn! What is that you say, Henry? Impossible! You cannot trifle with me—you would not—thus," ejaculated the poor mother, rising from her seat beside her sick child, and confronting her husband with horror-stricken face.

"It is not impossible, Florence! I am not trifling with you. That it were not true what would I not give. He went away with Emily Dearborn this morning. Went away prepared—she with her travelling baggage with her. Went away together. Of this there can be no doubt. It is a sad certainty.

"And, worst of all, he went away with a lie on his lips. To effect his purpose the more securely, he deliberately lied to me—to his father.

"Oh! my son, my son, that was the heaviest blow of all. I could have condoned all else. I could even have forgiven that girl—who has brought such ruin upon us—forgiven her as his wife," he continued.

"Oh! Henry. It may not be that—I cannot believe it. He may have merely gone for a drive with her.

"What is your information? May it not be mere idle talk? Who saw them?" queried Mrs. Mordaunt, with departing hope, however, fading from her face, and belying her words.

"I wish I could believe it were not that, but I cannot," he replied, mournfully.

"I will tell you all I know, and you can then judge for yourself, that you will not see him to-night. "Last night, late, he came to me, came to tell me that my advice of the afternoon had been taken by him; that he, in deference to my expressed wish, would give up all thought of that girl, but that it was necessary for him, the better to do it, to leave home for a time. He would return, he said, to college friends in the West, and remain with them until term commenced; and he asked for money for this purpose—to travel—to pay his college fees and other purposes. He asked me for six hundred dollars, and I, delighted at his dutiful acquiescence to my wishes, and desiring to help him in every way, gave him a thousand.

"He told me, then, that he would go to Cascades to-day, to make some arrangements, I believe, he said, but that he would be back home early.

"I believed in the truth and loyalty of my son, as a father should do, had nothing to object, and he went away this morning.

"This afternoon, whilst I was with Vance, the man—a farmer living on the Cascades road, who saw their meeting, at whose house the girl, who is now his wife, had left the night before her travelling valise—came to me and told me the news, the unexpected and direful news, broadly and openly stating their object; and, Vance told me he had, to his surprise, met them at Cascades, going to the station for the southern train.

"I fear it is all too true, my darling," he continued, looking sadly into his wife's face.

Mrs. Mordaunt, for a few moments, answered not a word, but remained standing immovable, in the attitude in which she had at the first risen to her feet. At length, as if speaking to her own thoughts, she brokenly said—

"Oh! Reggie, Reggie! you have not done this thing? You would not do it, my son, my darling. Henry, tell me, in mercy tell me, that our Reggie will be home with us, to-night?"

"My poor wife ! We must bear the troubles that God sends, as we are taught by Him to bear them. Your son will not come to-night. His horses came an hour ago, driven by a man from the Cascades' Hotel, but our unfortunate son has not come. I need say no more."

Mrs. Mordaunt answered not a word, with pale, drawn face, she sat down again at the side of her dying child, and bent down over the little sufferer, whose span was short for her ; by that movement, shewing that she gave up her son, and drew to herself every precious moment of the little life she was losing,

Through the long, sad hours of the night : long in their agony, yet how short with the dreadful end they brought nearer—nearer—nearer—the father and mother kept their vigil. The mother's hand convulsively clasping the little nerveless fingers of her child—so soon to be God's child.

Both watching with agonized eyes the fainting breath, weakening—weakening—dying—gasping away. The glazing—the dread dimness stealing over the the beautiful dark eyes, that to them, had been so bright, so full of joyful life and expression.

Watching for the dread approach of the dark, silent angel of Death ; the awful moment ; how awful to the strained hearts of the loving parents, helpless in their misery, who would freely have given up all—all the world, all the world could give—to avert the dread inevitable, when the last breath is yielded, and their child, theirs no more on earth.

With the first silvery streaks that lightened the dawn, the little face stilling from pain, lightened up with a soft smile, the last tracing of the pure soul, opening from clay, as it rose to meet its God. Their little child was dead—but was she not now God's little child ?

As, with bowed heads and tearful eyes, they stood and prayed over the quiet form, so lovely in its peaceful death, their hearts were dead within them, but for the grand consolation, she is

God's child ! ever His child ! more than ever His child now !
with Him for ever ! at rest !

Of that there could be no doubt ; no doubt of that sweet salvation, In this they knew, above their smarting wounds, they knew that their little Ally was well again. Better than the world could make her. An angel—their angel—they had an angel in Heaven.

To them alone was left pain ; to her, ineffable bliss.

But, though the firm truths, the grand beliefs of religion can comfort and strengthen, they cannot altogether remove such bitter griefs as these. The poor, loving human hearts, though unselfish and softened in so many attributes, cannot be so wholly sublimed above the pangs which death, striking the loved ones, so rackingly inflicts, as to see the prompting mercy that directs the dark angel's hand, and rise above the agony, to say "It is not loss."

The ennobling and purifying doctrines of Christianity that teach the love of all things, teach, also, the highest and purest love. The softening influence makes our earthly affections the deeper and stronger.

But when those affections are put to the dire test, when death strikes, that kind influence may comfort and strengthen to bear the blow, and is the healing balm to the gaping wound, yet who amongst us could force back the bitter tear, and unlamenting say, "It is not a loss."

So it was with the Mordaunts. Their sorrow for the death of their child was very profound. It was the first time that death had come home to them, and their first agony was great enough that their other troubles were dulled to them. The absence of their son, and its cause, would have been felt as a great grief, had it not been swallowed up by more terrible and greater. Had it not been that the death of their little child was so overwhelming a blow in its dire suddenness, their son's misfortune—as they could not but consider it—would have been a very dread-

ful one to them. But their feelings were mercifully numbed towards the lesser by the greater grief. But that grief was bitter enough, and dreadful enough.

The little Ally—lying on her white bier, in the soft loveliness which Death enwraps his child-victims was a peace-maker. The terrible sorrow of her loss benumbed, the smarting wounds of the parent's hearts, which their son had given.

Her little form, still and quiet—voiceless, but for the wreathing smile that had marked the heavenly transit—a softening peace-maker, that came between the son's deception, his fatal folly, and the parent's natural resentment.

When, during the evening of the day on which Ally died, a letter from Reggie came, the hearts of the father and mother, as they stood beside their lost darling, and recognized that she was, to them, an angel, were softened, and the resentment and anger died away. Through their little peace-maker, Reggie was forgiven, though he could not be restored.

He was still their son, and though he had cut himself away very effectually from them, yet their love burned warmly for him, and all that concerned him was of vivid interest to them. Therefore, sorrowfully and reluctantly—for it seemed like profanation to their little one's memory, to enter on the things of the world—they withdrew to read the letter that confirmed the loss to them of their son. Its words were few enough, and could not, of necessity, be agreeable to those to whom they were addressed.

“ROCHESTER, N. Y., Oct. 7th, 1873.

“MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER :

“ You will, doubtless, be much surprised to learn by this time, that I am married. I have to fear—although I hope my fear may be groundless—that you will not be pleased to learn for I know that you are prejudiced against Emily. But what was I to do? I could not live without her; and, we are married. My happiness depended upon Emily, and, knowing that your consent was hopeless, I, for my own sake, had to take the step

which has secured it. When you come to really know the worth of my sweet wife, as I know it, you cannot but acknowledge that I was right. Meanwhile, I have to entreat your forgiveness, which we will, in person, solicit before many days.

"We were married this evening, and, I snatch a few moments to write to you, to beg your consideration, and tell you of our happiness. My sweet wife—your new daughter—joins with me in what I say, and in love to you, and to Elsie, and Ally, who, we hope, is better.

"I hope my dear father will pardon me for what occurred between us in the drawing-room, yesterday morning. I was in a strait, and hardly knew what I was saying. When he sees my happiness, and knows the goodness and worth of my beautiful wife, he will, I am sure, forgive me.

"You may expect us in a few days. Under the circumstances, and uneasy to see you as I am, we will hurry home very shortly, instead of making a long trip, just now, though we may, after our meeting, spend our honeymoon in travel.

"With best love to all, from your new daughter, as well as from myself,

"I am, my dear parents,

"Your affectionate son,

"REGINALD MORDAUNT."

This was Reggie's extraordinary letter. Extraordinary in the confident tone which pervaded it, in spite of all.

"Poor fellow! how deceived he is, but it is all very dreadful," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Deceived! He will never have a day's happiness with that woman. But they cannot come here; I shall never allow her to be received into my house," answered her husband.

"Oh! Henry, but we must see Reggie sometimes. He is our son after all. But I agree with you that his wife can never come to this house," hastily replied Mrs. Mordaunt.

"But you must write at once, if they are not to come here. Write kindly, my dear husband, though he has done wrong and ruined his own happiness, as well as struck at ours, yet he is our son, and he will have trouble enough soon. We must forgive

our wrong, for our little angel's sake, whom he will never see more. Oh! Ally, my little daughter."

"Florence, my darling, our little one shall make peace between us and our son. Poor fellow, he will need it sorely enough. I will write a few words to-night to prevent their coming, for Emily Mordaunt, as she is now, shall not enter this house," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

After a little further conversation and consultation the following letter was written and sent to the post office to save the night's mail.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, — 1873.

"MY DEAR SON,—

"For such you still are, although you have separated yourself so completely from us, and have, I fear, as completely ruined your own happiness by your most miserable marriage.

"I have but little to say in reply to your letter, save that it is impossible for us to receive you, with your wife, as you seem to expect.

"Emily Mordaunt can never, with my consent, enter the door of my house, and I write this on the instant of learning your whereabouts, to let you know this, my unalterable determination.

"As to your marriage I will say nothing, will leave you to discover for yourself its results.

"Your little sister is dead. Died this morning. In mercy to you I shall say no more than to give you the sad tidings.

"I shall not leave you to starve, neither shall your wife find that she has made a rich marriage. I shall pay over to you henceforth one thousand dollars per annum, which is more than many worthy clergymen have to subsist upon.

"If you have any energy or ambition about you, you will have an opportunity thus, to advance yourself, but you need expect nothing further from me.

"I need not tell you that both your mother and myself are most bitterly grieved and disappointed—most bitterly grieved.

"I repeat again that not under any circumstances shall your wife be received at Lake Mordaunt.

"You have our forgiveness, my son, for the wrong you have done us, and our sympathy for the wrong you have done your-

self. Your little sister, lying upon her bier, is the peacemaker who has brought you this forgiveness, disarmed our resentment and caused us to extend the helping hand, that might not otherwise have been extended. Your wife we simply ignore—to do aught else would be treason to yourself and to others as dear to us as you are.

“I cannot advise you in your new life, though I much fear advice is necessary to you. I shall abstain from interference in your affairs.

“Your mother sends her love to you, her sorrowing and prayerful love, and your father joins with her. Ethel knows nothing as yet, and she has sufficient grief already without increasing it until she is better able to bear it.

“I am, my dear Reggie,

“Your affectionate father,

“HENRY MORDAUNT.”

“Are you not too severe towards him, my dear husband? I mean as to some of the expressions of the letter. You are liberal enough pecuniarily. Could you not have written more kindly?” said Mrs. Mordaunt, looking up with tears in her eyes to her husband’s face.

“No, Florence. It is better as it is. The sooner he learns his real position the better. Poor fellow! he will soon enough, I fear, find out what a fool’s paradise he has entered.

“With the wife he has taken he will not find the thousand dollars a year too liberal, nor will she either, that is one comfort; she will not find her adventure a rich one.

“Let the letter go as it is,” he continued, and the letter was sent.

“It is doubtful though,” said Mrs. Mordaunt, after a pause, during which her mind had been engaged with the painful subject they had discussed, “it is doubtful though if he receive the letter. They will not in all probability remain any time in that place.

“They may not start at once for home, yet they will hardly remain there, for you may be sure that she will not consent to forego her pleasure trip,” said Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Well! I hope he will get it," replied her husband. "I sincerely hope so, as it will save unpleasantness to all of us."

CHAPTER VI.

ADA SPEAKS.

When Mr. Edwin Vance had driven away from Lake Mordaunt after his very unsatisfactory interview with its owner, he did so mechanically and with much the same consciousness of volition about the act as he had about putting on his hat on going out of the door. He drove away simply because it was as obviously necessary a thing for him to do as the putting on his hat had been. It was the first thing for him to do and he did it, though without any purpose or defined idea.

Whither he was going, or what should be his next step, he knew not, had not thought, and his excited and disquieted brain was probably hardly in a state to form at once a rational or connected idea about the matter. So he simply drove away.

He found himself, as it were, placed in the position of one suddenly started upon a totally unexpected journey, for which he was wholly unprepared, and of which he had never thought, not even knowing whither he was bound or what direction his steps should tend. Conscious only that he was moving and that there was an end to attain, though without a guiding circumstance or ray of light to show how it was to be attained, moving on simply because there was naught else left for him to do.

He would have much preferred *not* to have driven away as he did, from Lake Mordaunt, for many reasons, as may be imagined; but the force of circumstances was too urgent, and he could not remain.

He had to go forth, unprepared and unaided by anything, save a name, towards the elucidation of the mystery that had shrouded his own and his Ethel's happiness.

He drove on then mechanically for some time, his mind bent upon the strange interview through which he had passed, and its equally strange incidents, recalling and pondering uselessly every word that had fallen and every event that had been related to him, but at the same time gradually quieting and composing his excited nerves and bewildered brain into method and order that would develope and centre again upon a purpose.

At length he awakened from his reveries to find himself close upon the village of Ten Lakes, having unknowingly passed the road to Cascades, from whence he had come, and as he hesitated as to whether he should turn back towards it or continue on, it flashed upon his mind that Mr. Mordaunt had named Emily Dearborn to him as the preferrer, or possible authoress, of the charges that had come between him and his love and that it was possible he might obtain by some chance or other a clue, some trace or stray scrap of information that might be of service to him, and as he had no more particular purpose in directing his uncertain steps to Cascades than to any other place in his present state of doubt, he resolved to endeavour a meeting with some of the Dearborn family and try for results.

He therefore drove up to the hotel, consigned his team to the ostler who had served him on a previous occasion, and went into the house to consider his next move.

After ordering dinner, he started out on a voyage of discovery, intending to call at the Dearborns' residence in case he met none of the family, making for himself the pretext that he might hear something of interest, though that was hardly probable in Emily's absence. The real motive perhaps for delaying in Ten Lakes was its neighborhood to his Ethel, and his unwillingness to tear himself away under circumstances so distressingly unsatisfactory.

As he strolled up the street his thoughts on the subject were arrested by the sudden drawing up beside him of a carriage,

and the fresh young voice of Ada Dearborn, who with a younger brother occupied it, fell on his ear.

"Oh! Mr. Vance," she said, "I am so glad to see you. Have you come from Lake Mordaunt to-day?"

"Yes, Miss Ada," he replied, going up to the carriage and shaking hands with its fair occupant. "I have but just returned. I only remained an hour, however. I am sorry to say they are in great distress there. Poor little Alida, I was horrified to learn, is on her death bed. Had you heard it?"

"Yes, Mr. Vance, I had heard it from the doctor, and could hardly believe it. How very dreadful for them all, and I fear there is an added grief for them in prospect.

"Was Reginald at home, may I ask? I really have a strong motive for the question, Mr. Vance," said Ada, who Vance now noticed, wore a disturbed and disquieted look upon her usually bright and laughing face.

"No, he was not, Miss Dearborn. I met him in Cascades to-day to my surprise, as he was in-----" and Edwin hesitated, suddenly remembering he was addressing the sister of the companion of Reggie's flight.

"In Cascades," repeated she. "Was he alone? Did you see that he was alone? Oh! believe me, that I ask from no improper motive, but it would be a great relief to me to know that he was alone," continued Ada, excitedly, and with a hot colour in her face.

Edwin Vance paused a moment ere he replied. "My dear Ada, I think I know to what you allude by your question, and I fear my answer will not be as you would wish it; that will be no relief to you. I met-----"

"Then my sister was with him?" interrupted Ada. "Pray have no hesitation in telling me, Mr. Vance, of the disgraceful fact. If it is so we have disgrace enough before us that you need not hesitate to tell me," continued Ada looking half de-

fiantly, half tearfully, at the rather painfully situated young gentleman before her.

“ Yes ! Miss Emily Dearborn was with him. I met them at the railway station, and was somewhat surprised at meeting them though I was so occupied with anxieties of my own that I paid but little attention to aught else. I do not see though, my dear Ada, that you should couple disgrace with the fact, to yourselves at any rate, for I may add that, whilst with Mr. Mordaunt this afternoon, some information was brought him, not very reliable however, that they were on their way to be married, and that in all probability ere this, your sister is Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt.”

“ Is not that disgrace sufficient for me—for all connected with her? Think a moment ! Will it not be said, and said with truth, that my sister, a portionless girl, has taken advantage of the youthful inexperience of an unformed boy, the only son of very wealthy people, to entrap him into a most unsuitable marriage ; an elopement planned by herself to secure a rich marriage. Is not that disgrace sufficient, Mr. Vance? And then that this hateful affair should take place at the very time when his little sister is dying.

“ How dreadful for him—for all of them ! My sister, I am ashamed to say, will be the only one who will not feel the disgrace, who will feel nothing but exultation at the success of her plans. But, Mr. Vance, now that we are upon this painful subject, may I ask you a question ? A question relative to yourself and your own affairs, but which now interference on my part—the sister of Emily Dearborn—might not be unjustifiable, as it might possibly render you a service. Are your relations with your affianced bride, Ethel Mordaunt, as happy as they were when I was at Lake Mordaunt—as happy as they should be? Whether you answer me or not, Mr. Vance, I shall tell you what I have to tell and which the dreadful event of to-day,

empowers me to tell," and Ada looked up into his face as if awaiting his reply.

"No, Ada, they are not so happy as they were. Very different indeed. Through false representations, the exact nature of which, by reason of Miss Mordaunt's illness, I suppose, I am not able as yet to ascertain, our engagement is broken off, and I am almost at my wits end. All that I could learn to-day was that these representations emanated from your sister, I am very sorry to say, and as I know them to be false, I am compelled to consider that she cannot be guiltless in the matter."

"Your engagement broken off! Oh! Mr. Vance can it be so bad as that?" exclaimed Ada, in an accent of horror, and shrinking back into herself as if struck by a blow.

"Did you say positively that Emily was concerned in it, that it emanated from her? Oh! it is too horrible.

"Mr. Vance," she continued, hurriedly, "if you know yourself to be innocent towards your affianced, you can look upon it as a truth that Emily Dearborn is at the bottom of your trouble. I have heard her threaten Ethel's happiness; from vague hints I have for some time feared that she meant, if she could, to work mischief against your engagement, but when she became engaged to Reginald, as she has been for some weeks to my knowledge, I supposed, as I might very naturally be expected to suppose, that all such ideas would be relinquished by her. You can blame her for all. You need look no further, save that in all probability Sidney Wolverton was in league with her, or was _____"

"But what possible motive could she have, Ada? That is what I cannot understand. I certainly have never injured her that she should do so frightful a harm," interrupted Edwin, excitedly. "It seems so inexplicable."

"Not inexplicable at all. She probably wished that you should have married her instead, and was jealous; she hated Ethel.

He ambition has always been to marry a rich man, dreadful as it appears that I, her sister, should have to say it.

"Mr. Vance, I will do what I can to help you to right yourself, for Ethel's sake, but to-day I am too much disturbed. I must go home and tell my parents what has befallen them. We have been very anxious all day since we missed Emily, as there were suspicious circumstance connected with her absence.

"Call at our house to-morrow, and I will see you further upon this dreadful matter. For the present I must say 'farewell,'" and without waiting for another word Ada drove off with her round-eyed little brother, who had occupied himself during the interview in staring fixedly upon Edwin, and now turned his chubby face over his shoulder to continue his pleasing pursuit so long as the object of his gaze remained in sight.

Edwin Vance, thoroughly astonished at the things he had heard, gazed after them with a round-eyed stare almost equalling that by which he was stared at, until, recovering himself, he turned back to the hotel to eat his dinner with what appetite he could muster, and revolve the new lights of his position in his mind, endeavoring to extract a small modicum of hope out of them. He was determined, however, to remain where he was for the present, and await further developments, and he had not found his visit to Ten Lakes altogether in vain.

There we will leave him, and turn to another scene of our story.

CHAPTER VII.

EMILY'S HONEYMOON.

Emily Mordaunt, the bride of a day old, was a very different woman from the Emily Dearborn of but two days ago, secure in her marriage. Her fears had gone, and with her fears had gone also the recollection of them. For her the consequences

that had seemed so frightful but two short days since no longer existed. Done with the past it was at once swept away from her mind and forgotten.

Of what further avail the slain dragons that could no longer appal her present. Away with them. Away with the dead possibilities of spent minutes, and place, for the aptitudes of the living and striking hour.

Her confidence in herself and her own powers had returned, and with it had set in again the full tide of her ambition.

Now that the dread of personal danger to herself, under which she had been the veriest coward, had passed away, her active brain—disdainful and unappalled by moral terrors—commenced again, the first day of her married life, when other girls would have been wrapt up in the soft dreamings of romance, its schemings and plottings for advancement and self-aggrandizement.

The security which her marriage gave her, had brought her back her strength, but with that strength had come, even thus early—this first day of her honey-moon—a slight feeling, a tinge, but perceptibly distinct and recognized, a feeling of regret for the step she had taken, for her marriage, not yet a day old.

For was not the full and swelling tide of her ambition now hemmed in, pent and confined within the narrow bounds which her marriage to Reggie Mordaunt had set in impassable limits before her. Into the narrow reach left her, must that swelling tide of striving hope be cribbed, where before was the limitless ocean for its expansion.

But if a feeling of regret for the step, that but so lately had seemed a necessity, was present to her, there was equally present the fact that the step had been taken, and its consequences inevitable.

She was married, and she recognized that her marriage placed bounds ; gave inevitable and changeless direction to her ambitious desires.

She was a Mordaunt ; the course of her life was fixed, and she was sufficiently aware that if she was to rise at all, that rise must be through her young husband and his family.

Her energies were bounded, though her ambition was boundless. But when within this narrow reach, its swelling tide was confined, its waters heaped up and pressed within their limits, would not their concentrated and forceful power be the stronger, reach the farther, and rush the faster to the objects desired?

Emily Mordaunt was herself again.

The beautiful young bride—sitting in the handsome parlor of a Rochester hotel, the afternoon of the day succeeding her marriage, pondered on these things. The bride of a day old found her delights in the unromantic schemes of personal advancement, as though her marriage had been ten years back, instead of a few hours.

Her aims were distinctly before her in her mind's eye, and the achievement of those aims occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of all softer emotions.

The loving attentions and delighted talkings of her young husband at her side were to her evils—necessary evils it might be—which had to be endured, but evils, nevertheless, distracting her from the things of greater importance.

He was demonstrative, enthusiastic in his happiness, careless of consequences and of the future, wrapt up in his fair bride, and his dream of romance, eager to make manifest his love, and hungering for its return.

He had obtained his beautiful Emily, and he was happy, but his happiness sprang from himself alone. Could he have analyzed his sensations, he would have found that he was happy, because he felt that he ought to be happy, having obtained that, which the prospect of obtaining, had seemed so happy.

"Emily, my darling," he said, "have you written to them at Ten Lakes, yet, to tell them of our happiness?"

"No, Reggie! not yet, Where is the hurry?" she replied, carelessly, in the midst of her dreams.

"But they will feel so anxious about you, you know. You were very particular that I should write home, yesterday; directly that we were married—and, why——"

"That was different, altogether," she interrupted.

"It is very important, for us that every means should be taken to conciliate your parents and reconcile them to our marriage. They do not like me, as it is, but they fondly love you, their only son, and it would be very poor policy on our part, not to wipe away any bitterness they may feel through our marriage, by every attention to them and their feelings.

"And, we have begun well. Your letter to them was just the thing, dutiful and affectionate, yet taking your own grounds," continued Emily, praising herself, however, for she had inspired the letter, while seeming to praise her husband. "My father and mother, on the contrary, will be pleased enough, and we need not be so particular with them."

"Oh, Emily, you should not speak in that way of them; I know I shall be just as glad to hear from them that they forgive us for marrying as we have done, as to hear the same from my own parents. But they will be so anxious about you, and alarmed at your unexplained absence. There will be so much talk made; if the matter is not known. I never could face it all," he said.

"There will be talk enough, as it is," she thought to herself, "writing will not help that, I expect. Much I'll care for the facing of it."

"Well, Reggie, unlike most brides, I am ready to give up the greater part of my wedding tour, in order to go back at once," she continued, aloud. "Partly to agreeably surprise my own friends, but mostly to do the agreeable, be the agreeable, and seek reconciliation from your's. The sooner we visit Lake Mordaunt, the better," she added, decisively. "The less time

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we give them to think over the matter, before obtaining their forgiveness to that which they cannot now help, the better, also. Instead of going on to New York, to-night, as we arranged, let us change the programme by shortening it. Let us go to Montreal, instead, remain over the morrow, and hence on to Ten Lakes, and Lake Mordaunt. Had you not better make arrangements, Reggie, see about a train and other details, that fall to a gentleman's share ?"

"I am sure that I cannot see what makes you so very anxious to get back, Emily, for I do not think you will find it so very pleasant, with my people, at all events. We had far better wait for a few days, and enjoy ourselves, until we hear what is likely to be our reception. Let us go on to New York, as we had agreed, and return this way for our letters," replied Reggie, who did not fancy an immediate interview with his father, much preferring the enjoyment of his new-found happiness, away from the possibility of angry reproach.

"I can very well predict the nature of our reception, my dear Reggie, and I am prepared for it. Of course, equally with yourself, I should have preferred the pleasure of a honeymoon season, did not the circumstances render it best for us to forego the enjoyment. It is very important, absolutely necessary in fact, that we should have things placed upon a proper footing with your parents, and I can see no better means of success, than by at once presenting ourselves before them."

Emily said this a little imperiously, as if her mind were made up that it should be as she wished. She continued—

"We must be very particular to avoid the least appearance of carelessness or neglect towards them. The sooner we meet, the better chance of regaining their good-will, towards yourself, at least."

"Very well then, my own Emily. If it pleases you, it shall please me, though we are, in my opinion, giving up our pleasure uselessly. It is but a question of time with them at Lake Mor-

daunt, and when they come to know you, my darling, how will they wonder at their cruel prejudice."

With these words, Reggie surrendered to his beautiful wife, with the reward of a kiss—the infliction of which she suffered, as a matter of course—a penalty of the easy gaining of her point.

"We shall not be at home for two days yet, that is one blessing!" he continued, as he left the room.

"Well, my cards are pretty hard to play," soliloquized Mrs. Reggie Mordaunt, as she seated herself again comfortably, upon her husband's exit, "and I need not count upon much effective assistance in the playing from my young worse-half, either, that seems certain. To manage these Mordaunts, will prove an enterprise of difficulty, and I have to do this work alone," she continued. "The sole aid that ingenious Reggie can bring me, is the love of his parents for him. That must overcome their dislike to myself, in some measure, at least.

"If I but carry on my affairs properly, I shall soon have the mother round upon our side. She may be the bitterest against me for a few days, but she will not hold out long against her own, especially as there is no remedy.

"I shall find my generalship more called into play with the father and Ethel. Cool, quiet, and determined, as is the former, a decision once arrived at will be long maintained, while in Ethel, I shall have a bitter enemy. But she is, fortunately, yet too ill and weak to be very formidable, and the sooner the first meeting with them is accomplished, the sooner will they become accustomed to the new order of affairs with Reggie, and the less opportunity will Miss Ethel have to undermine us.

"Of course, our reception will not be a pleasant one, that is to be expected, even Reggie knows that, but what do I care? I know how to bear the disagreeables, to put the disagreeables to use, also.

"The sense of my triumph over them, shall keep me cool, if

nothing else would ; the first impressions that I, as Emily Mordaunt, will leave behind me, shall not be unfavourable, at all events, in the light of their son's wife. Reggie shall be happy in his wife, for that occasion, and it shall be apparent that he is happy.

"If I can manage that the first few weeks shall pass well with us, I can count Ethel out of the game. I shall have nothing more to fear from her, she is effectually disarmed in the Vance affair, by my marriage, and, as time runs on, she will be left to herself, to nurse her griefs alone. They will become stale, as fresher events rise to the surface, to more immediately interest those who are not the active sufferers.

"Mrs. Mordaunt, too, day by day, will blind herself to all save that I am Reggie's wife, and Reggie happy with me. All unfavourable impressions will disappear in the end, before these facts in the mother's eye. From being an enemy, she will become an ally, and Ethel's woes shall take a secondary place—in her estimation—to Reggie's grievances, which shall be kept ever present before her.

"If I can but keep things so that Mr. Mordaunt shall not displace Reggie in his will and be tolerably liberal in the meantime it is about as much as I can well hope for from him.

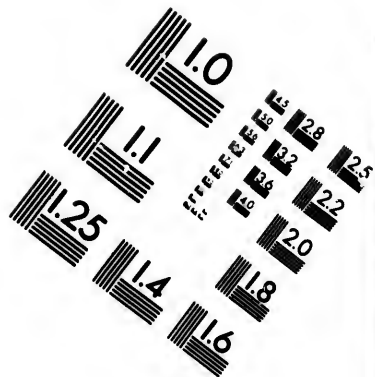
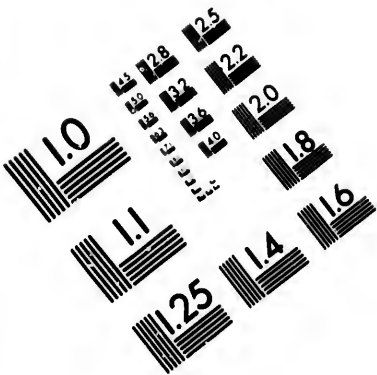
"I can try, however, for greater things, and as I have but little else to do but try, there is no saying how far successful I may be. The Lake Mordaunt property shall be mine in the end. By hook or by crook I will have it, nor shall it be my fault if, in the end, the greater part of the Mordaunt wealth does not fall to Reggie also.

"Ethel, in all probability, will die an old maid. If I can keep the quarrel with Vance alive, to a certainty she will pass into that unenviable condition.

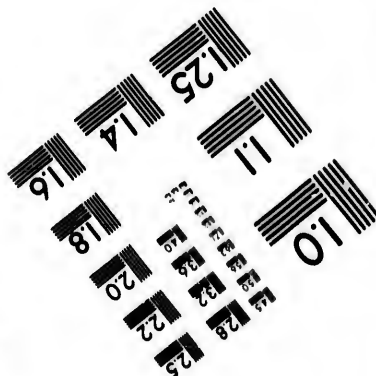
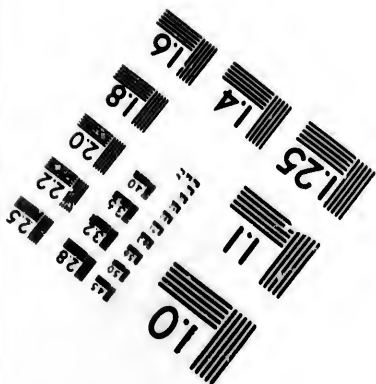
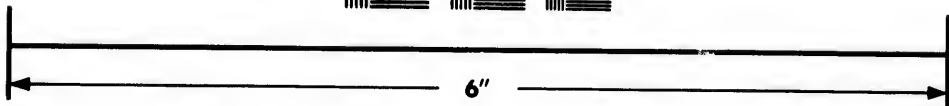
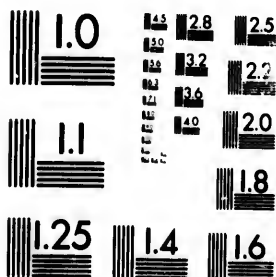
"If I can prevent it, she shall not marry Vance. She will never marry another, and her fate is tolerably sure.

"I am a Mordaunt now—one of them—an important mem-





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ber of the family, one whom they will have to consider, and if I do not mistake myself very considerably, I am the best of them also, in so far as capability is concerned.

"I rather imagine though that that is not altogether their impression," she continued with a laugh.

"I am a pariah in their eyes, an outcast, I suppose.

"Well! perhaps I deserve to be so considered by them, but it shall be all the worse for them that I remain so.

"The triumph is with me at present. The defeat and loss with them. It shall not be my fault if still the tide of my success flows not on to the full.

"Notwithstanding all the serious errors which I committed in the Vance affair, all my plans have prospered.

"Even though events have not turned out as I intended, I have prospered.

"To have married Reggie Mordaunt so soon, if at all, was hardly upon the programme, but it became necessary, and, so far, I see no reason for much dissatisfaction.

"The prizes are not in my grasp; the long fight for them is still to be fought, yet in the end I shall stand the victor.

"If Edwin Vance had not met with Ethel Mordaunt I should have married him I think. Not very difficult for me would it have been to have fanned into a flame the sparks of interest, very obvious interest, which she diverted from me and lost to me.

"She takes nothing by her motion, however, as a lawyer would say. I have non-suited her with a vengeance.

"If I did not obtain that which I desired, neither is she to be congratulated. It is, too, of greater importance to her than to me, for my heart—I suppose I possess one—is not touched in the matter. The blow falls very easily upon me, but for her there is no recovery unless she regains her lover, and that I do not intend she shall do.

"Yet it would have been better for me in every way if I

could have married Vance. He would have made a good woman of me. I should have been a good wife to him, while now —

“ Well ! I suppose I shall have to be a good wife to Reggie, in order the better to fight my worthy father and mother-in-law, yet the process, I suppose, will not be conducive to making me any better than I am at present.

“ That cannot be helped, and I dare say I shall remain very contented in my normal state of badness.

“ The *rolé* of a good woman, after all, would hadly be congenial to me.

“ I wonder, too, what Sidney Wolverton wil say to my metamorphosis ?

“ He will not like it, that is very certain, but he will have to put up with it. I should have been a fool to have married him, though I could easily enough have loved the man, villain as he is.

“ Yet my marriage with Reggie Mordaunt, not a rich one, and with but little love on my part, is preferable to the fate of becoming Sidney Wolverton's wife.

“ And he is a villain, an unmitigated villain. Though I am not a pattern of saintliness myself, yet I should find it very difficult to continue love for one whose villainies have descended to mean villainies.

“ And his villainies are certainly not of the heroic order.

“ No ! I am better as the wife of good-natured, simple Reggie, even though I do not greatly love or highly respect him. Still, he is not a villain.

“ In the end, I shall have wealth, and power, and influence. The wealth of the Mordaunt's, and the power and influence which I am very well able to derive from such, shall well content me.

“ Meanwhile, I shall find my happiness and my occupation in striving for their early attainment. Yes, it is better to press on

homeward, at once, and get beyond uncertainty into assurance of the ground upon which we at present stand.

"I'll beard the Mordaunt lion in his den, despite portentous growls anticipatory. I will be a dutiful child, begging forgiveness; throwing up my hands, and saying, 'It was all for love; how then can you blame us?' for the mollification of the outraged parental heart.

"And it will be very strange if I do not mollify in the end the prejudices of these people. I shall endeavour to conduct myself, and to so lead Reggie, that their dislike of me be not increased, at any rate. It will be very odd, indeed, Emily Mordaunt, if you do not, before very long, wipe all that out.

"At any rate, I shall see what line I shall have to take in my warfare, my coming fight. For open battle, or smiling truce, I am equally ready. I am on the vantage ground as the wife of their son, success is but a question of time, and I can endure the meagre present in the prospect of the rich future.

"To drill Reggie into his part is the next thing that I shall have to do, for he will be an important player on the board. There must be no blustering or heroics to mar the day in his demeanour.

"He shall be happy in his wife, and they shall see it. They shall see too, that although earnestly desirous that his family ties remain unbroken, his wife comes first with him, his family next.

"The task with him is easy enough for me. I can mould him to my hand as I please. I would that all the rest were as facile.

"Now I shall go and prepare for the journey. I shall not write to them at home, it will be preferable to meet them, personally, and I am afraid to let that sneak, Ada, know anything more than I can help, until I get her disarmed by her mother's authority. They will suspect what has happened, but they cannot know certainly, and I prefer to tell my own story."

Such was the course of Emily's reflections, and in similar strain they were continued, as she made her preparations, until interrupted by her young husband's return.

"Well, Reggie," she said, as he entered her room in search of her, "what is to be the order of our proceeding? When do we start? I am all ready."

"There is a train at seven," he replied, "and if we go by it, we shall reach Montreal in the morning; but I really cannot see the necessity for our return at once. We are going to meet those disagreeables which we can just as well encounter later. Our marriage ought to bring us a few days' freedom from such; at any rate, Emily, I always imagined that young ladies set great store upon a long marriage tour, and why we—"

"But I do not, Reggie," interrupted his wife. "It has no romance or pleasure for me under the circumstances, nor do I see that it need for you, either. I am very happy as it is, and have you not me to comfort you under the deprivation. No, it is better for us that we return and meet them all, as soon as possible. Why should we fear disagreeables? For to do so, is to admit that our marriage was wrong, and that I do not imagine either would wish to admit. The only solid ground of complaint that your friends can have is that you are yet very young to enter upon the responsibilities of married life. No very serious objection, and one that each day will make less. There can be nothing else tenable against us. I am a lady, certainly good-looking and accomplished enough to be your wife and their daughter-in-law. You think the same, I'm inclined to believe, Master Reggie. Quite good enough to enter into the Mordaunt family, grand as they think themselves," said Emily, with a bewitching little laugh, turning her pretty face towards her young husband.

In his physiognomy was plainly written the belief that she was an angel, though it is, on the whole, very doubtful that, had

any of his family been present, they would have endorsed his belief.

“Good enough ! Good enough for the Mordaunts ! I should think you are, Emily,” exclaimed the enraptured young swain, who, to do him justice, loved dearly his beautiful, though unamiable wife.

“They should be proud that you are one of them,” he continued. “It is but a miserable prejudice, for which I cannot account and will not forgive, that puts them into opposition to our happiness. But, no thanks to them though, they could not prevent that happiness. I cannot easily forgive their dislike to you, my darling, so unreasonable, so ridiculous towards one so beautiful and so good.”

“But you must forgive it, Reggie, and you must make up your mind to go back cheerfully to meet them, as I wish you to do. It does not belong to you, it will not do for you, to resent that which your parents have the right to view from their own stand-point. It will not do for you, for either of us, to offend your father, or to widen the breach that may already exist. You must remember, too, that you have taken a wife, incurring new responsibilities, and you cannot afford to quarrel with those on whom your future so much depends. You must strive to regain, if it be lost, your status with them as their son, the happy relations which have previously existed. It is very necessary for us, and will not that condition of things, also, be very pleasant, Reggie ?”

“Yes, I admit the pleasantness, if it can be brought about,” replied Reggie, to his wife’s address ; an address so very virtuous in its resentments, as to appear rather foreign to her real character.

“Why can it not be done ?” resumed Emily, waxing earnest in her purpose. “Can we not disarm their resentment by subduing our own, as we are in duty bound to do towards our parents, and by approaching them as children should approach an offend-

ed father and mother, seeking reconciliation that shall make all happy. We shall be doing that which is right, and we should not find the doing of it disagreeable. Again, Reggie, if you shew them that you are happy with your wife, will it not make them the happier, and reconcile them to you and her, to see it? If you show them that we are anxious to please and to consider them, will not they be pleased thereby? And are we not bound, both of us, to consider their feelings? You, the more especially, as their son, and, the fact of their great love for you binds you to consider them. Between their love for you, and their prejudice against me, they probably are not, at present, very happy; so we are bound, by striving to remove that prejudice, which alone our dutiful conduct can do, to ease the aching of their hearts.

"Such is my opinion of that which we have to do," she continued. "Besides, Reggie, you should, at least, let me have my own way upon my honeymoon days, and I wish to start homewards, this evening."

Emily asked this, but, at the same time, she was fully of the opinion that she would have her own way, not only on her honeymoon days, but after them, also.

"You are right, Emily, as you always are," he replied, gazing fondly upon his wife, whose face so brightly animated, seemed to express that her sentiments sprang from the deep convictions of her heart, in place of being, as they were, the mere words which her intellect prompted as the best to bring her husband over to her views.

"You have convinced me," he continued, "my own darling, if my father had heard your noble ideas, as I have now heard them, would he not be compelled to own his mis-conception of one so amiable and true?"

"But he did not hear them, Reggie, and if we wish the mis-conception removed, the sooner we commence, the better for all of us," quickly replied Emily. "We had better go down to

tea, however, as we have to start soon, and people on their honeymoon appear to become hungry as often as in ordinary every-day life."

"Very well, let us go down, then, and appease our hunger. One thing, though, is very certain, that hunger will not be a prominent sensation with me when, the day after to-morrow, I approach Lake Mordaunt, and my father's presence," answered Reggie, who laughed as he said the words.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SKY SHALL BRIGHTEN O'E'R THE LITTLE GRAVE.

"Earth to earth; ashes to ashes; dust to dust."

Standing upon the edge of the little grave, that in a minute's space would shroud for ever a beloved form—that of his dead child—from earthly ken, the grand words of the burial service of the Church of England, so solemnly beautiful, sounded on the father's ears.

Sounded on his ears with a vast significance, a new and awful impress, that, to him, had never before been attained.

Great words that, until then, had never revealed to him the grandeur of their meaning.

Sounded in his ears, and heard with the tremendous interest of one to whom Death, for the first time, has come home; snatching, for the first time, from the clinging grasp, the loved and dear; ending, perforce, for this earth, the fatherly care—the loving care that was so bitter to end, that to have continued would have been so sweet.

Heard with the tremendous interest of one whose love, stretching beyond the impassable limits of the grave, listens with intent yearning to the glorious words of the Father, the Heavenly Father, who—taking his treasure, replacing his loving care—gives the grand promise of His better care.

“I am the Resurrection, and the Life !”

Though the splendid words, whose vastness reached his soul, as he stood at the last parting, to give up his child to his God, would not, on the instant, perhaps, wipe away the blinding tears, or heal up, at once, the wounded heart, yet did not the consoling Mercy, the vast Promise fall in its strength of sweetness, upon that heart whose earthly love so longed and yearned?

Did not the father know then—know what before he had but believed—that his child was now God’s child, and that it was well with her ?

Mr. Mordaunt, at the funeral of his little Ally, stood alone—alone in a crowd—for though the respect and liking in which he and his were held had sent a representative from every family, rich or poor, of the surrounding country, yet none of his own blood supported him, as with grieving heart, and moistened eyes he ended, with the grave, the earthly guardianship of his lost child. And amidst his grief—even amidst the hallowed interest, the awed softening that God’s vast words, as the grand transfer to His guardianship was made, brought to him—he felt the loneliness ; not in anger, or repining, but that it was so. Kind friends, neighbours, and acquaintances from many a mile around, had followed, in long line, the bearing of his dead to the grave, and stood with him, as he paid the last earthly care, yet still he was alone. Where was his son that he was not at his side?

He felt the absence.

When the last words were said—all left to him of his little child, a bright memory—he turned away to face again the business of life. He had to note, with a sharp sense of pain at the contrast—that, though his son had not been with him, the man whom his elder daughter loved, but had discarded and put from her, had stood by his side. He noted it, with the more pain, that he who was not called upon to do it, had done the thing, which he who was called upon to do it, had not done.

When he had passed out from the sacred grounds—how sacred now for him—he approached Edwin Vance, and in silence, for he could not yet trust his voice, yet with warm pressure shook the hand of the man who, though far enough away, at present, from being akin, and hardly-treated, perhaps, had yet remembered to do him and his this sad respect.

“I deeply sympathize with you, Mr. Mordaunt, with all of you, in your great sorrow,” said Edwin, as he returned the friendly pressure. “For it is a great sorrow, even though we must know the bright certainty of your little child’s Heavenly home. Her innocent little life has ended in assured salvation, of that we cannot doubt. Would that the closing of our lives of longer span might carry the same glorious certainty.”

“Yes, that certainty shall be the consolation, and shall rob the blow of its bitterness. Our agonized love for her, lost to us, shall not carry the selfishness to wish our darling back again to this life of sin and misery, that thereby we be saved from grief,” replied Mr. Mordaunt, as he slowly moved on by the side of Edwin.

“Would that all our griefs could bring the like consolations that are carried by little Aily’s death,” he continued. “I am ashamed to confess that my heart was not altogether free, to-day, from the bitter remembrances of my son’s folly, and the scandal of his elopement. I hated and despised myself that, on this sad day, I could have borne such sentiments. I hated myself, that his absence, to-day, was resented, for when he left us, we, any of us, knew not of the danger hanging over our little one, and I should not have resented. They are married—we have heard from them. But all that, I suppose, is the town’s-talk, at present.”

“They were in Montreal, yesterday, so Ada Dearborn tells me,” answered Mr. Vance. “But I have heard nothing further than that they are married.”

“Poor Reggie, to whose future I had so looked forward and

planned. But my vanity is struck down," exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, speaking, however, more to himself, than to his companion.

And then followed a pause.

"I hope Mrs. Mordaunt and Eth— Mrs. and Miss Mordaunt are well, and able to bear the grief that has so hardly fallen to them," said Edwin, to change the sad conversation, and, perhaps, a little to hear of her he loved.

"Thank you, Edwin, Mrs. Mordaunt is well, and Ethel improving; but, as you can imagine, they are in sorrow. Ethel does not yet know of Reggie's marriage; we have not dared to tell her. She loves her brother dearly, while Emily she much dislikes and fears. The news would yet be too terrible a blow for her strength."

"And she has reason to fear her, Mr. Mordaunt. Very great reason, as have I, also," replied Edwin, with indignant warmth.

Then as he noticed the sudden-looking into his face, which his words had evoked, he continued—

"I should not say it, to-day, perhaps, at all events, but I have had a history from Ada, a plain history, which will, I think, carry conviction to you, as it is, knowing my own innocence, absolute certainty to me, that her sister, your son's wife, is the sole contriver of the mischief that has come in such dreadful manner to Ethel and to myself. Ada, who is as true and——"

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Mordaunt, "had it been Ada whom he had married, what a difference had it been? Then there would have been but the folly of their too youthful years to lament; a fault that time could correct. But with the scheming, wicked, and unprincipled woman to whom he has allied his promising youth, what a dreadful future has he not placed before himself?"

"But what of Ada?" he continued.

"She regrets, she feels as bitterly, the event of this marriage, as you can do, Mr. Mordaunt. She holds down her head in shame at the recollection," answered Edwin.

"I admire and respect the young lady," he resumed, "who, while in her conscientious working-out of the duty laid upon her in the commands of her worldly-minded parents, concealed the things, which, if known, might have prevented the mischiefs which have taken place, yet, when the climax in your son's marriage with her sister had arrived, was not deterred from coming forward to do the right that was left possible for her to do. The marriage can not now be averted, but Ada, by telling me all she knows about the affair, has done all she could do to prevent further mischief, and to repair that already committed. That which she has told me, gives the direction, at least, in which to prosecute my efforts towards regaining what I have lost, and to right myself with Ethel, and all of you."

"What is it she has told you?" queried Mr. Mordaunt, in evident interest.

"That, from the first hearing of our engagement, Emily resented it, and determined to make mischief between us. That her visit to Lake Mordaunt, during its first days, took place that she might be on the spot to forestall it, if she could. That she did not intend, if she was able to prevent, that I should marry Miss Mordaunt, even had foul means to be employed," answered Vance, with fixed earnestness. "Ada has told me every unguarded expression of her sister with reference to us, with some very suspicious circumstances, of which she had become cognizant. Among them, that she had found her sister in the act of completing a letter, to which she had not attached her own name, but another. This name she had not been enabled to recognise, as Emily had snatched away the letter upon becoming aware that Ada was in the room. The latter is, however, positive that she

saw my name in the body of the letter. This circumstance looks the more suspicious, as it preceded, by a very few days, Miss Mordaunt's illness and my repudiation, the more so, when taken into account with Emily's unguarded threats against us.

"She also told me," continued Edwin, "that the engagement between her sister and your son was entered into before the family's departure for Cacouna, and though known to all her's, was kept secret from your family; on Ada's part, only by strict parental command, which she considered herself bound to obey. That Emily had no intention then of marrying Reggie at once, but only wished to have a hold upon him, in case events occurred which would make it a wealthy marriage for her, and she did not make a good match in the meantime. The hasty elopement and marriage, Ada explains by the probable supposition that Emily, having placed herself in a dangerous position by the acts which led to the breaking off of our engagement, became alarmed, and sought safety by an intimate alliance with the family she had injured, who possessed the evidence against her, and, who, of course, would suppress that which compromising one, would compromise all."

"Very likely, indeed, is Ada's explanation of the marriage. She has thrown light upon the whole story," said Mr. Mordaunt.

"Yes, a strong light, sir!" answered Edwin. "Could I but get a momentary sight of these papers which turned Miss Mordaunt from me, I could, at once, disprove them, and that—with Ada's evidence—should surely be sufficient to satisfy all of my innocence in this matter."

"I shall be satisfied, at all events, Mr. Vance, and you shall have these papers, if I can procure them for you," replied Mr. Mordaunt.

"But here is my carriage," he continued, "do you remain longer in Ten Lakes?"

"No, I think not, Mr. Mordaunt," answered Edwin. "I intend to run down to Montreal, to-night. If you can obtain the letters, or copies, would you kindly forward them to Toronto? Good-bye, sir, I trust we may meet again under more happy circumstances!"

Then they shook hands with each other, and were about to separate, when Edwin, turning back again, looked up at his Ethel's father for a moment, and, somewhat hesitatingly, continued—

"If I could get, to-day, a glance at these letters, it would materially aid me in my efforts at justification. Is Miss Mordaunt yet sufficiently well to be asked for them?"

"H'm—yes!" replied his companion, musingly. "She is quite well enough for that, now, and it would be better for her, for her mother, also, if, at this time, their thoughts were aroused to a subject connected with the interests of life. She shall be asked for them, to-day."

"But, could you not let me drive back with you to Lake Mordaunt, in order that I may see them, sir?" asked Edwin, hesitatingly, yet boldly enough, under the circumstances in which he stood. "If Miss Mordaunt is sufficiently well to be asked for the papers, would it not make her feel happier to know that I am guiltless?"

"Well, perhaps so! Jump in, Edwin, I cannot guarantee success, but I shall try."

Mr. Mordaunt, with Edwin Vance beside him, drove back again to his desolate home.

But, although he went there, he could not get the letters for which he wished.

There was demur at first upon the part of Mrs. Mordaunt, and when that obstacle and Ethel's reluctance to enter upon the subject had been overcome, the letters could not be found.

Ethel could not remember where they were, or where she had put them, and a search ensued.

Her writing-case, work-boxes, jewel-casket, every possible receptacle likely or unlikely to contain such articles, were overhauled, but the letters could not be discovered.

Mrs. Mordaunt had felt incensed with Vance for coming, as he had, at such an unpropitious time, to their house, and she was the more anxious, now that she had commenced the search, to obtain the letters, that she might overwhelm him with the absolute proof of his villainy. Her inquisition for the missing papers was vigorous that she might the sooner get rid of the unwelcome visitor.

Ethel had not been informed of her dismissed lover's presence, and she evinced but little care in the search, thinking more of her lost little sister, than of her own concerns.

The father alone was deeply interested in the matter, that a gleam of brightness might be brought once more, by discovery of Vance's innocence to his darkened home.

While the search progressed up-stairs, he sat alone with his visitor in the library, each too anxious and uneasy for other than very disjointed conversation, and counting the minutes until Mrs. Mordaunt should appear with the desired objects of their search.

The latter had not yet been informed by her husband of Ada's revelations to Vance, so to him she had hardly been civil, or had spoken, with the result of making him still more disquieted and miserable. He, therefore, passed a sufficiently weary hour of waiting expectancy.

When at length the door opened, and Mrs. Mordaunt entered to give them the intelligence that the letters could not be found, he felt almost in despair. He had hoped so much from his visit, and now all had been in vain.

They had searched thoroughly, and re-searched minutely, but without success. Ethel could not remember aught further of their whereabouts than that she had them safely laid away somewhere, and that they were certainly in the house.

"Where can they be?" said Mr. Mordaunt, impatiently. "Has Ethel had them in her possession, since her illness, Florence?"

"No, of that I am sure! She could not have had them in her hands since the first day of her illness," answered his wife.

"Then she has hidden them, and forgotten about it, or they are in the room in which she held the interview with that girl, Emily. Let us go to search there for them," exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, hastily, and as hastily he left the room, motioning the others to follow.

Another search ensued, with no better success. Every paper, book, corner, article of furniture, receptacle, or object possible or impossible, was ransacked over and over, but still the same result.

No letters to be found.

Edwin Vance, in bitter disappointment, prepared to take his departure, no better off than when he had come to the house. He adjured Mr. Mordaunt in the most earnest and moving tones to have the search continued, and to find them, even if the whole house had to be turned topsy turvey in the effort.

He had bade his farewell, and had turned to leave the room, when a hasty ring upon the front-door bell sounded, voices were heard in the hall, and the next moment, Reggie Mordaunt and his wife stood before them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIDE'S VISIT.

There was a pause—a pause of astonished surprise.

A pause of astonished surprise on the prior occupants of the room, and a not less surprise on the part, also, of one of the new comers, at least. This surprise was experienced by Emily

Mordaunt, for did not Edwin Vance, holding apparently the most friendly relations again, stand before her, in the house from which she thought she had for ever driven him ?

She certainly was surprised, as were those she faced.

The pause, however, was but momentarily, for Reggie rushed forward, exclaiming—

“ My dear father and mother. I have brought my wife to you, that we may ask and obtain your kind forgiveness for our——”

But his father advanced forward a step, and with a gesture, stopped his impetuous address.

“ No more of that ! Not another word ! It is not for you to ask forgiveness, although, perhaps, for us to grant. What has brought you, Reginald, with your new-made wife, against my express command, to this house of mourning, which you have still further helped to desolate ? Have you not received my letter ?” he said, sternly, while he gazed full into his son's face, as he stood where his footsteps had been arrested, a few feet in front.

“ Letter ! What letter ? I have had no letter, father,” answered Reggie, confusedly and bitterly astonished.

“ House of mourning ! What do you mean ? I do not comprehend,” he continued, and then his eye fell upon the deep, black attire of his mother.

“ Do you not know that your little sister is dead ? That while you stole away to your marrying, your sister lay dying ? Your sister, Alida, is dead and buried.”

Sadly, solemnly, yet sternly, the father addressed these words to his son, upon whose ears they must have fallen with awful dread. His face blanched, his eyes lost their bright excitement, his head drooped as he heard them.

“ Ally dead ! Ally dead ! It cannot be so. Oh ! surely, surely, it cannot be that my little darling has gone. Mother ! tell me, only tell me, that Ally is not dead, and I——”

Reggie broke down ; he could say no more. The sad faces

before him told him all the tale which he would not believe—which could but be so dreadful for him to believe. Then, boy as he was, rushed into his mother's arms, his head down upon her shoulder, his voice, broken in agony, pouring out his laments, while his loving mother, straining the form of her son—erring, yet loved—to her heart, sobbed back to him her tale of agony.

“Poor boy, it is but a sad commencement of your new life,” said his father, looking towards him with a softened eye, for a moment. Then, turning to Emily, who had remained standing quietly, as she had entered the room, “and now, madam, what has brought you to the house, when you must well know you are not welcome? Have you not done sufficient injury here already?” he said.

“Reginald and I have come to ask you for your forgiveness to us, and we did not know about poor little Ally, Mr. Mordaunt,” answered Emily, sadly and slowly, as she raised her eyes, beautifully moist in their feigned sorrow, to his face.

“I suppose so,” he replied, cuttingly. “You imagine then that it is not so utterly useless to ask my forgiveness, to your marriage with my son under such disgraceful circumstances, as it would have been to ask my consent to it.

“Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, as you have so unhappily become, I have decided—irrevocably decided—that I will not receive you into my house, and I shall keep my word,” he continued, with raised voice. “You! You! who have not only lied and forged to destroy my daughter's happiness and almost taken her life, but have stolen from me my son. You are my son's wife, but never shall you be my daughter. I might have forgiven the marriage had you been as other girls are, but for you, as you are, Emily Mordaunt, there is no forgiveness. You are known—your sister has told all.”

“My sister can have told nothing to my discredit, if she spoke the truth, Mr. Mordaunt,” replied Emily, firmly, yet with a

quiet sadness in her voice. Nor have I lied and forged, as you assert. Neither have I stolen your son away from you. I married him because I loved him, and he loved me, and he is not the less worthy to be your son that I have married him. Nor am I unworthy to be his wife !”

As she said these words, Reggie turned from his mother to his wife, and, addressing his father, said, in violent excitement—

“ Father ! You shall not speak in such terms to Emily ; you may hate her, but——”

“ Reggie, do not speak so ; remember it is your father,” quickly interrupted his wife, and her shot was double-barrelled, arresting Reggie in his violence, as he sprang from his mother, and telling upon her assailant, who little expected such a speech from her.

Then, she continued, turning towards her husband's father, and speaking in a firm, but quiet and lady-like voice, “ Mr. Mordaunt, I perceive that my presence is disagreeable in this house, and I claim no rights here—I came with my husband to ask forgiveness for the step we have taken, independent and rash as it may have been ; it is not extended to us—so I will go and wait for him outside.”

“ There is no occasion for that, that you should go out to wait for him, Emily—Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt—I mean. Pray be seated, you can await Reggie here,” exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, hastily, as Emily had moved towards the door. Much as he disliked her, his spirit of hospitality could not brook what seemed so like turning her out of doors, and her demeanour during the interview had insensibly softened him.

As he placed a chair for her and motioned her into it, he continued, in a lowered voice, “ Madam, I do not wish to be unjust or cruel to you, but you have injured us most sorely. Still, all shall be forgotten and forgiven between us”—here he spoke with difficulty, and hesitatingly—“ and you shall restore your husband to his family and his friends again, if you but repair the great

wrong you have done, and heal—even if it be at the expense of a confession—the great unhappiness you have caused to my daughter and her affianced husband. Speak, I beg of you, before it is too late. We are already advanced upon the road to the discovery of the *plot*, hasten our steps, and what you say shall go no further than to those who are righted there.

This address to Emily was not judicious on Mr. Mordaunt's part ; and he shewed himself but a bad tactician. It was not likely to have succeeded under any circumstances, and it was worse than useless, for he had let Emily see that the reconciliation that she had feared, had not yet taken place.

“Mr. Mordaunt, if the restoration of my husband to his family, and your forgiveness is to be only obtained at such a price, we must learn to live without these blessings. You would have me accuse myself of foul play in the unfortunate difference between Mr. Vance and your daughter. I love my husband too well to procure his restoration to your favor at the expense of his wife's self-respect, and, necessarily, of his love, and he loves me too well to wish it. If Mr. Vance is innocent, it is easy for him to prove his innocence. It is not meet that I should be his scape-goat. Reginald, let us go, if you are ready. It is better that we should go at once.”

Reggie, who, in the earlier part of the interview, had been conversing with his mother, and during the latter episode had been detained by her to prevent the interference which his gathering anger menaced, now moved towards his wife, and in a loud voice, exclaimed—

“Yes, Emily, my darling ! We will go ; you shall be insulted here no longer. They will all know you better some day, and then it shall come your turn to pardon. Perhaps, then, they——”

“Stay, Reginald ! I wish to speak to you a moment ; I shall not detain you long,” and, taking him by the hand, Mr. Mordaunt led his son into the bay window, in whose recess they

were at once engaged in earnest conversation, and, as a cheque passed from the older to the younger man, it was probable that the ways and means of the new-married couple formed the subject.

Meanwhile, Edwin Vance, who during this interview had remained a silent, but very uneasy spectator, had been fidgetting about the room, as if knowing he should not remain in it, yet unwilling to leave it, now stepped forward to Emily, and calmly, yet courteously, addressed her—

“Would you be so kind as to inform me, Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, of the nature of the contents of the two letters concerning myself, which, upon the day of her illness, you laid before Miss Mordaunt? from whom they came? to whom they were addressed? and how they came into your hands? You would confer a great favor on me in so doing.”

“Mr. Vance, I must decline, at once, to enter upon the subject with you in any manner,” she replied, decisively. “I must refer you to Miss Mordaunt, who holds the letters, for all information.”

“And, yet, madam, you would aid me most materially in the elucidation of this affair, by doing as I ask, that is, if you wish that light should be shed upon the matter. You are aware, I suppose, that Miss Mordaunt is still very ill; too ill to be able to assist in it,” replied Edwin, still quietly, but pointedly.

“I repeat, sir, that I decline to enter upon the subject at all. I have nothing whatever to do with it, especially with you, sir,” answered Emily, with an angry light shining in her eyes.

“Pray permit me to differ from you there, madam,” said Edwin, in response, warmly, as he became incensed at her coolness. “You will find that you have a good deal further to do in the matter, and with myself, also. From information in my possession, I am no longer left in doubt as to the author of one of the documents in question, You—yourself—wrote it, madam; you—yourself—have contrived the wicked schemes

which has brought upon us this unhappiness. You, Mrs. Mordaunt, wrote one of those letters, at the least."

"And did I write the other, also, sir?" replied Emily, with a laugh. "Pray from whom did you derive your precious information?"

"From your sister, Ada, who saw you write the letter, saw that it concerned me, and saw you append a signature certainly not your own."

"What is that about Ada Dearborn?" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, coming forward to them, "What did she tell you, Mr. Vance?" she continued, with interest in her voice.

"I had hoped that you had not overheard what has passed between us, Mrs. Mordaunt," said Edwin, in response, "for your daughter-in-law's sake. I had intended this matter to be limited to herself. She, however, declines to give me the information I sought, although, from her connection with the matter, it is but her duty to give it. However——"

"Yes, yes! I understand. But what was it Ada Dearborn said? I heard her name used concerning events which are of interest to me, as well as to you, and as what Ada says can be depended upon, I am anxious to hear," interposed Mrs. Mordaunt, placing herself beside them.

"Well, Mrs. Mordaunt," interrupted Emily, who wished to create a diversion from a topic which she could not but feel to be dangerous, "allowing that my sister, Ada's statements are to be depended upon, in general, can we feel sure that Mr. Vance's rendering of them will be equally trustworthy. I should imagine that you have already had some experience of him that should carry its lessons," and as Emily said these words, she rose from her chair to move towards her husband.

"Pray be seated a moment, Emily," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, "it cannot harm either of us to hear what Mr. Vance can have to say, so long as we are clean-handed, while it will be very easy

to verify the account, by reference to Ada, herself. I beg of you, therefore, Mr. Vance, to repeat what she said to you."

"Then I must decline to have a repetition of the insults to which I have been subjected by Mr. Vance," said Emily, moving away from them towards her husband; but, stopping, she turned to Mrs. Mordaunt again, and quietly said, "I am ready, at any time, my dear madam, for my husband's sake, if not for my own, to enter into any explanations that you may require of me; but, after the wholly unmerited expressions which Mr. Vance has thrown upon me, with the very palpable object of cleansing himself by blackening another, I cannot undertake to do so in his presence."

"Heaven knows! Madam, that I do not wish to injure you, although you have so deeply, so unnecessarily injured me," exclaimed Edwin, earnestly. "I sought but to give you an opportunity, in the easiest manner possible to yourself, to right one of the wrongs you have done me. A few words from you would have righted me, and then the matter would have ended—forgiven and wiped away—so far as I am concerned. This you will not do; but I can assure you, madam, that, in justice to myself, in justice to others, I shall clear up this matter, regardless of all consequences, even if those consequences be very serious to yourself."

He looked at Emily, standing in her easy grace, her splendid face towards him, her fine eyes, in their beautiful softness, fixed upon his own, and, as he spoke, he could hardly believe himself that he addressed words of such import to a creature so very fair, so softly, so beautifully feminine, and sweet.

It staggered him almost to ascribe evil to her in her bright loveliness. But he looked at her, and said the words, nevertheless, though the power of her triumphant beauty seemed to bear down their force, and he felt that they fell flat, mis-applied and nerveless before her.

"That is sufficient, sir!" she replied, with a bow to him,

gracefully sarcastic. "I am here for a better purpose than to bandy words with you, despite the *very serious consequences* you threaten. I must decline to become your scape-goat."

"What is all this? Do you dare to address my wife, sir?" exclaimed Reggie, coming forward, as he heard her raised voice. "You villain! what brings you to this house, when——"

But his father's restraining hand was laid upon his shoulder, as he rushed furiously towards Edwin.

"Yes, father!" he continued, turning to him, "I say it is a shame that you receive this perjured wretch here, in this house, while my wife—my pure, beautiful wife—your daughter, too—is turned from the door!"

"Reginald—for my sake—if you love me—not another word!" exclaimed Emily, placing her hand on his arm, as she ran up to him, and looking into his excited face with pleading, beseeching eyes. "It is not for us to complain, Reggie. Come, let us go away, together! We did not come to quarrel. Let it not be said that we brought strife into this house of mourning, my dear Reggie."

At the touch of her hand the sound of her voice, Reggie's whole manner changed. The workings and wrinklings of rage disappeared from his face, and, as he gazed on his wife in her beautiful pleading and loving beseechingness—so admirably acted, yet so natural—a light of tender admiration and love sparkled in his eyes, and brightened his visage.

"Yes, Emily, my darling, you are right. Father, I am sorry! Forgive me!" he said.

"Well, I will say this, Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, that you have got your young bear licked into very tolerable shape. Keep on as you have commenced, and there will be hopes for you," said Mr. Mordaunt, looking at Emily, surprised enough, but with not a little admiration.

"He is my husband, sir, and we love each other!" returned

Emily, quietly, but with a spirited flash over her face, that told well, also.

"For shame, Henry!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, reproachfully.

"Don't speak to her so cruelly, and of Reggie, too!" she continued, and as they said their good-byes, the clasp of the hand that Emily received from the generous-hearted Mrs. Mordaunt was a warm one.

Emily felt, with a little thrill of pride, that she had done well, the parting was very different to the reception, and she had gained, in spite of untoward circumstances, as much as she had hoped.

"If only I could have seen my poor little darling, Ally," said Reggie, with the tears in his eyes, as after coming down from his two minutes' visit to Ethel, who knew nothing, as yet, of his marriage, he shook hands with his father, and was clasped in the fond arms of his mother, at the door.

"Yes Reginald, it is very sad for you. Take it's lesson to yourself. You have commenced the world at a very early age, under circumstances——

"Well! I will say no more of that. Remember, what I have said to you to-day, and let us hear from you. How far do you go to-night?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, to him, as he stepped into the wagon beside his wife.

"To Ten Lakes, from there, as we may decide," he replied, and they were gone.

Emily departed from Lake Mordaunt triumphant as to the result of their interview, knowing she had left a good impression behind her, but vowing vengeance against her sister for her treachery. "But, for which," she said to herself, as they drove on, "I would have brought them wholly to my feet. They shall suffer for it though," with which amiable intention, she dismissed the subject for the present from her mind, for the laudable purpose of catechizing her loving spouse as to his

conversation with his father, and the tangible results that had flowed therefrom.

"I should not wonder if that woman does not make Reggie a good wife, after all, and reform herself in reforming him. She is very graceful and very undeniably handsome, too," remarked Mr. Mordaunt to his wife, as they walked back to the room where they had left Edwin Vance standing.

"Well, I hope so," she replied, "I was agreeably surprised at her conduct in some respects—— But I must hear what it was that Ada said."

The interview seemed to have been an unsatisfactory one to Edwin Vance, alone. He was not one whit farther advanced for his visit to Lake Mordaunt. He had not got the letters, and the prospect of obtaining them seemed more dubious than ever. While he had been very effectually snubbed and defied by the handsome Emily Mordaunt, he had made no progress either, and everything seemed to have worked against him. It was all very bitter to him, as he stood alone in the room, awaiting the return of the master and mistress of the house. He was there under the same roof with his Ethel, and he could not see her.

If he could but see her—even for a brief minute or two ?

How he longed, with ardent, yearning longing, for a glimpse of the face he loved so well, even though the dark barrier that divided them, were not yet swept away by the strong hand of the truth. If he could but see her, if he could but be with her, how would he not sweep away, the falsehood which had brought them their misery. How he would make his loyalty and truth as clear as the blue skies above him.

And could he not see her? Why should he not see her? Why should more long days of misery and doubt, long reaches of blank unhappiness and drear uncertainty stretch out before them, when a few words might make all bright again for them both? He would try to see her, and as Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt

re-entered the room, he commenced his earnest appeal to them.

"It will do her good. She is weak and ailing yet, and it will be good to rouse her from the morbid and extreme grief under which she is prostrated for her little sister, who is now in Heaven, and in happiness," said Mr. Mordaunt, in answer to the strong objection of his wife, who, though deeply impressed by the force of Ada's statements as to her sister's animus and very suspicious doings with regard to Ethel's engagement and its breaking off, would not consent on the score of her daughter's still feeble state to allow her to be disturbed.

"And it may make her feel happier," added Edwin. "I know—as well as I know I love her—that she loves me, and will be glad to give me the opportunity to prove myself still worthy of her regard. I will control myself, Mrs. Mordaunt. I will engage not to excite her by violence in word or act. There shall be no noisy protestations on my part. If you desire it, I will but ask her to give me what information she can remember as to the contents of these letters, and shew——"

"Get her up out of bed, Florence," interrupted her father, "take her lover up to see her, and you will do her more good than a dozen doctors. Rouse her up to life again, and she'll mend the faster."

"Oh! Henry, don't speak so of our poor girl," returned Mrs. Mordaunt, with almost a smile upon her sorrowful face. "Well, I shall go up to her, and prepare her, though much against my own inclination. Neither is this the proper time for the interview, which is, in my view, utterly useless, unless Mr. Vance is prepared to make all things clear once more," and with this parting shot, the price of her given-up opinion, Mrs. Mordaunt left the room to prepare her daughter for the coming interview.

In a few minutes she returned, and Edwin Vance, hardly able to believe himself for the delight that thrilled his heart, yet very conscious of himself, from the nervous anxiety that

accompanied it, was escorted by her into the presence of the beautiful young lady whom he loved.

Ethel sat reclining in an easy chair—weak, changed, thin, and pale ; her paleness the more apparent in contrast against the deep black dress which she wore. Thin, pale, and changed as she was, she was still very beautiful—sorrowfully, sadly beautiful, but with an added charm from the sorrow and the sadness. Yet her eyes were bright, and a faint tinge of lovely pale rose lay on each cheek ; beauties which the expectancy of meeting her lover—even though he were lost and against whom she thought bitterly—had brought to her. But she was calm and quiet, and a little air of resolution was visible upon her face, as if her mind was made up, as if she entered her protest against the events that so peculiarly occurred to her.

He entered the room with eager step, yet hesitated, almost halted, as he stepped forwards to where she sat. He was imaginative, romantically inclined, of acutely nervous sensibilities, and his impressions on entering the room where Ethel Mordaunt sat awaiting him, were somewhat overwhelming. For, from the events of the next few minutes, how might not his whole future life be moulded. He met again her who was to have been his wife—met her after a separation during which a barrier of misery had been raised between them. He met her he loved—not with the old, happy confidence and joy—all in all to each other ; but in coldness, reserve and distrust on one side, with deep anxiety on the other.

Yet he was very happy to see her again, even though the meeting was painfully anxious to him, for he really loved her, with a real affection that no rebuff, however unmerited, could weaken or drive away in resentment ; nor can it be said that Ethel, on her part, was not glad to meet again him whom she still loved, although he had, as she was led to believe, wrought her such deep injury.

Edwin Vance was a lawyer, accustomed to cool command of himself and his thoughts; accustomed, and equal to expressing them, with care and fluency, in public—before any amount of public; endowed, or should have been endowed—as all lawyers are—with illimitable cheek, with expansive mental perspectives of boundless, resistless, conspicuous, assertive, sanguineate-hued brass; yet he entered the room to meet a quiet-looking and lady-like girl, with much timidity, with the nervous confusion of mind and body of his adolescent appearances before the fair, when his hands and feet were so difficult to get hidden away.

And yet on the face of it, it does not appear a very tremendous thing to appear in an interview with a young lady, no matter how pretty soever she may be.

Many people, indeed, like it, especially if the qualifying adjective, as applied to her looks, be in the superlative.

But when the happy interviewer, is much enraptured of the interviewed, is in sad disgrace with her, and highly anxious to restore himself to her good graces, it is but probable that he would find the opening moments of the interview rather bewildering.

“Miss Mordaunt—Ethel—I am very happy to see you so much recovered, very happy to see you again! I have been very anxious and miserable!” exclaimed Edwin, disconnectedly, as he advanced to her, and mechanically offered his hand.

Then his eyes took in the full change that had come to his own gay and brilliant affianced. Beautiful still, but how thin, pale, sorrowful and quiet. The same Ethel still—his Ethel—but the Ethel to whom brightness and sunshine had been so natural, now seeming natural in deep, dreary shades. He loved her truly, and, as the past and the present, with her, rose before his eyes in sudden picture, he had, by an effort, to repress the conflict of emotion that rushed over him.

“It is very delightful to me to see you again, and I cannot

thank you enough for allowing me the privilege, while, too, you are still so unwell. I had thought, though, that you were stronger than you are, Ethel. I never expected to see you so chan—I trust my pertinacity has not caused you exertion, for which you are not able?"

"It was so strongly represented to me, as an act of justice towards you, that I should see you, even at this unhappy time, in order that you might obtain information upon a certain subject, which my father and mother could not give you, that I consented for that purpose, and I must request you, Mr. Vance, to confine yourself solely to that object. I am ready to answer you any questions you may wish to ask me," replied Ethel, coldly, as she touched very slightly his extended hand.

"If I had but known you had to force yourself to a painful exertion, Ethel, merely to perform an act of justice to me, I would have waited, patiently awaited, rather than that you should suffer. And, I will try to be as brief as I can, for your sake."

"I wish to do that which is right, sir. I cannot claim the exertion to be painful," answered Ethel quietly, "but the interview itself is not pleasant."

"Oh! Ethel, can you believe these things against me, these base and wicked charges that malice has brought between us and our happiness, can you trust me so little that I must disprove them to render my unstained honor clear to you? It is for that purpose I am here now, and——"

"I have trusted you, Mr. Vance, trusted you in all completeness, but I must believe the evidence of my own senses, and I most certainly trust you no longer. I prefer, too, that you address me as 'Miss Mordaunt,'" interrupted Ethel, the latter words in the quiet accents of her pride, but the added lustre of her fine eyes, and the heightened color of her face, showed her interest in what he said, who so earnestly stood before her, claim-

ed that he should be believed by her, in the strong rights of his love.

“Miss Mordaunt!—since you will not allow me to use the dearer name which it has been, and still is, my right and privilege to use—Miss Mordaunt, you are my affianced wife—you still remain so—for I have not by any act of my own forfeited my right to name you as such. I have to demand of you an explanation of the letter which a few days since I received from you breaking off, without cause assigned, our solemn engagement.” He paused a moment, drawing himself instinctively up, as his injured manhood asserted itself. But then, as his eye rested down again upon the wasted figure of her who had so suffered for him, for his sake, his voice changed. “Oh! Ethel! Ethel, not for that, not for that, but in your kindness, in your justice tell me of these things of which I am as yet ignorant, that I may be enabled to show you that I am not unworthy of the precious love that was once mine.”

She loved him, she always had loved him, and she loved him the more that he imperiously claimed her, and demanded as his right that which he asked. She loved him the more again that, recognizing all that she had suffered for him, and coming down from his high stand, he had put on that softening, smoothing, moving tone of supplication, of his loving generosity, that she should do that which it was bound to her to do. But though she loved him, though she could not help loving him, was it not but too patent to her that he was not true, and did not deserve her love.

Was it not but too plain, too evident that he was unworthy. She forced her mind—by the violent efforts of her pride, which would make it seem due to herself, her injured self, respect and maidenhood—up to the declaration, that he was unworthy, even though she knew at the moment that she had to *force* her mind to keep herself up to the desired mark. She knew that she did

not believe him to be so unworthy as the circumstances of the case required him to be. He had gained a point.

"I am not your affianced wife, Mr. Vance," she replied. "Not now," she added with a voice in which there was a quiver. "I did not break off our engagement without cause—there was but too much cause, Edwin. I could not have believed it of you."

"What cause? Let me know the cause? Tell me the cause that I may wipe it away at a word. Do I stand here like a guilty man?" he continued, with the firm conviction of his innocence ringing in every tone. "What are these letters of which I have heard so much yet cannot see, which I have never seen, but which I would so much like to see."

"I cannot find them," she said. "I cannot remember where I put them, but I have them somewhere. She has not got them; I had them after she went away. They are somewhere about. But I have been ill," and Ethel half rose from her chair in her excitement.

"Oh! tell me what they were. All about them, Ethel, that will do just as well. Your word to me, my darling, is the same as the letters. I can trust you though you do not trust me," answered Edwin, with sad reproach in his tone.

"You have not had occasion to mistrust me, Mr. Vance. I have given you no occasion," she answered.

"Nor have I given you occasion for mistrust either, Ethel, as in the end will become clear to you," he replied quickly, yet gently. "But will you kindly tell me what you can remember of the two letters, the writers, to whom they were addressed and their contents in so far as I am personally concerned, and how they came into the hands of the person who produced them before you—Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt, I believe."

"Who, Mr. Vance? Mrs. Reginald Mordaunt! What do you mean? Mamma!" exclaimed Ethel, turning her surprised and alarmed eyes to her mother, who had been sitting near her during the conversation. "What does this mean about Mrs.

Reginald Mordaunt? It cannot be—it would be too dreadful—that Reggie has married that girl,” she continued.

“Mr. Vance, I was right when I objected to this interview taking place,” said Mrs. Mordaunt. “By an unfortunate mistake, against which you, however, should have guarded yourself, you have necessitated an explanation not yet desirable. Yes, Ethel, in a moment of folly Reggie has allowed himself to be persuaded into a marriage with Emily Dearborn. They were married privately in Rochester five days ago. Your father and I would not tell you, thinking you had sorrows sufficient already, my poor girl.”

“Married! Reggie married! and to her—to Emily Dearborn. Oh! I cannot believe it,” said poor Ethel, wringing her hands as she sank back into her chair, from which, in her excitement, she had half risen. “Oh! Reggie, Reggie, my poor brother. However were you induced by her?—that hateful girl of all others—my poor boy, my poor boy. But Reggie was here to-day, mamma.”

“Yes, and his wife also,” returned Mrs. Mordaunt. “The marriage may not be so utterly bad, my darling, as you think. Emily is improved, and behaved very well to-day under trying circumstances. They certainly seem very fond of each other. You must not excite yourself, Ethel, about this. Look at it calmly. At all events it is irremediable.

“Mr. Vance,” she continued, “this interview must come to a close for my daughter's sake. Sufficient mischief has already been caused. You had better defer until another and more suitable time anything——”

“No! No! mamma, I am not unduly excited. You shall have no cause to complain of me, but I was a good deal shocked and distressed for poor Reggie's sake. Let the—the—the business be completed which brought Mr. Vance here. It is not necessary that it should be tedious, and besides I begin to think that this hasty marriage throws a little light upon the subject. If it

be that Mr. Vance, as he asserts, is in reality guiltless, and Ada's statements, as related, are verified, it appears to me pretty evident what were Emily's reasons for marrying Reggie—so unlikely a proceeding for her.

"She has become alarmed at the possible consequences of her act, and has hastened to secure herself against harsh measures by this alliance. I remember now that she tried very hard to get the letters back from me that day, and was much discomposed when I declined to surrender them.

"But then, again, Mr. Vance, one of these letters was in your own handwriting, written, too, from this very house."

"That is possible, Miss Mordant," he replied. "I wrote many letters when here. To whom was it addressed?"

"To Miss Agnes Seaforth. Do you know a young lady of that name?"

"Agnes Seaforth; certainly I know her. She is the daughter of my father's greatest friend, and an unlimited favorite of my mother."

"And engaged to yourself, I believe, Mr. Vance, for some time past?" queried Ethel, looking him suddenly in the face, with eyes brightened with anger, a bright flush upon her face.

"Engaged to me! Agnes Seaforth! Most certainly not. Neither of us have ever thought of such a thing in our lives. And so poor Agnes Seaforth has been dragged into this matter. Well!" he added with a laugh—though a vexed laugh, "It might have been worse, for explanations fortunately are very easy."

"I do not think so, Mr. Vance. Your letter to her was very unmistakable in its terms," replied Ethel, still with the light in her eyes and the angry flush upon her face.

"Then it was not my letter. I wrote to her simply as a friend might upon a matter of business, relative to her unwillingness to accept an annuity of six hundred dollars a year left her by my father. By-the-by, Agnes Seaforth never received the

letter, and reproached me for unfriendliness at a time when she was in some mental distress. Miss Dearborn, by some means, has purloined the letter, and probably composed the other to suit its terms.

"From whom does the latter purport to come, Miss Mordaunt?"

"From Miss Seaforth's aunt, a Miss Springer, of Toronto," replied Ethel.

"Are you sure, quite sure, the name is Springer?" he queried.

"Yes! I remember the fact distinctly, Mr. Vance."

"The name of Miss Seaforth's aunt is Springle, and this fact is a strong proof of the unguineness of the precious document. Would you kindly tell me of its contents, in so far as they relate to me," said Edwin, with eager emphasis.

"The letter was addressed to Emily Dearborn, stating that you were engaged to her niece, and had behaved very falsely to her, that you ought to marry her, but had refused to do so. That she had heard of your engagement to me, and besought Miss Dearborn, as the only person she knew here, to take upon herself the task of warning me on this subject, and, in corroboration of the statements, enclosing a letter found accidentally by her, from you to her niece, written from Lake Mordaunt."

"Miss Seaforth never received the letter I wrote her. The whole plot is perfectly apparent to me now, though I cannot understand the motive of the young lady in making such misery between us. It is as I have stated however. Miss Dearborn had purloined my letter, and built up the forgery to suit its terms.

"Is it not equally apparent to you also, Ethel? and am not I exonerated?" queried Edwin, gazing with fond beseechingness upon her face.

"Hardly, Mr. Vance. You make out a plausible case against my new sister-in-law, but you have not proved it or your own innocence. And now as I have given you all the information

in my power I must say 'good evening' to you. I feel fatigued. If you succeed in making your innocence wholly manifest, I shall have to admit that a great injury and injustice has been done you. But your own letter is too strongly against you, and there is no doubt of its genuineness."

"My innocence shall be made manifest to you, if I spend my life in the attempt—if I have to drag the base contriver of the plot into court—to the jail to effect——"

"No, Mr. Vance, you must not do that. If Emily Mordaunt—my brother's wife—is the guilty person, she must be spared. You would but strike at us, who have suffered as well as you have," interrupted Ethel hastily, and with a deprecatory gesture.

"Am I then to suffer the ruin of my whole life's happiness, Ethel, that this cruel woman be held scatheless? Is my name to be forever left blighted in your eyes? Am I to drift lonely and unhappily through life for this? I hold no malice, no revengeful desire to injure this woman. If I can attain my end without her injury I will leave her to herself and to God's justice, but if I cannot clear myself before you, and regain what is now lost to me, am I forever to bear in silence?"

"No, Edwin, you shall not. I will—— Oh! were I but sure!" and Ethel half sprang up to her feet, and in another moment would have been in his arms, his troubles over, but Mrs. Mordaunt, interposing, placed Ethel back in her chair, and said:

"No, Mr. Vance. You shall be aided in your search by all means in our power, but you must spare my son's wife. And now you have done very well for one evening. You must not expect too much at once. I am not sorry now that the interview has taken place, nor do I think that Ethel is either. 'Good evening,' Mr. Vance." She held her hand out to him in such evident dismissal that he had to take the strong hint.

"Good bye, Ethel, my darling, you need not doubt my love,

at any rate. Very soon, I hope, you will not be able to doubt my truth to you either," and the strong pressure of his hand upon hers was a not unpleasing assurance that his love was hers in any event.

He found a horse and carriage at the door awaiting him, and Mr. Mordaunt came out of the library to see him off.

"Why, Vance! what's come over you? You look like a different man. Have you good news?"

"Yes, sir! I've discovered all, and have light before me. The only difficulty is that Emily Dearborn is your son's wife."

"Yes, confound her! it was her doing then. I always thought it. But you will have to spare her now. You'll manage well enough, and can let her alone. I am on your side now."

"Yes, and I think Ethel has a tendency that way too. If I could but get the whole artful scheme cleared up at once."

"Well, I'm glad that Ethel's eyes are opening, poor girl! for it will make her happier. She has had trouble enough of late."

"Indeed, yes! You have all had sorrow. I can only apologize for intruding my own miseries upon you all this time."

"Good, I think, has come of your visit, Vance. Good bye to you."

Edwin jumped into the wagon, and they had just started, when Mr. Mordaunt called after him,—

"I say, Vance! I'll tell you what you had better do. Write to Horton, my brother-in-law, or, what is better, go to him and get him to take up this affair. He can do what he likes with Ethel, and he'll only be too delighted to enter into the thing. Something for him to do."

"Thank you, Mr. Mordaunt, I shall do so. It's a capital idea," he called back.

When Edwin Vance arrived at the hotel in Ten Lakes he found a telegram awaiting him.

It was from Sidney Wolverton, and ran as follows :

"TORONTO, —

"Come on at once. Very important business affecting your interests. Do not delay.

"SIDNEY WOLVERTON."

He had intended to see Ada Dearborn in the morning, but this message, which he did not altogether understand, changed his intention, and in an hour he was on his way to Toronto.

CHAPTER X.

A STOUT, WELL-GROWN LAD.

"A gentleman to see me in the library—sports his bit of pasteboard too. Well, he's an early caller," said Mr. Vance to the party assembled round his mother's breakfast table on the morning of his return to Toronto, as he took up the card from the salver handed him by the servant who had brought up the name.

"'Mr. Erastus Gooch,' What can he want, I wonder. Silly man, if he wants law so early in the morning. You remember Mr. Gooch, Agnes, one of the heroes of your dreadful adventure?" he added to Miss Seaforth, who, with her aunt, had been Mrs. Vance's visitors for a day or two.

"I am acquainted with Mr. Gooch, demurely replied the young lady, drooping down slightly her eyes as she spoke.

"Acquainted with him, Agnes. Why you were not acquainted with him a week since," answered Edwin.

And then with a laugh he continued—

"Looks rather romantic, does it not? Lovely heroine in danger and distress ; big hero to the rescue.

"Big hero heart stricken at charms of lovely heroine. Lovely heroine grateful. 'No cards.' A novel condensed. Mother, I know this gentleman. Can you not ask him up to take some breakfast with us?"

"Certainly, Edwin, if you will not tease Agnes with such nonsense. You can bring him up if you like, or ring the bell."

So the bell was rang, and a servant despatched to show Mr. Gooch into the breakfast room.

Had not Agnes, with that little shewing of consciousness too, acknowledged her acquaintance with him, it was hardly probable that Edwin would have asked his mother to invite Mr Gooch into their privacy, for he had not appeared in altogether favorable light during his remarkable interview with Mr. Hatchitfess.

But Edwin had come to the conclusion that there had either been exceptional circumstances with Mr. Gooch on that occasion or very rapid improvement, and invited he was to join them in the breakfast room, and in another moment he was among them.

But if that gentleman, on entering, betrayed not a little astonishment on finding himself very unexpectedly at a ladies' breakfast table, Edwin Vance, who rose to receive him, was equally astonished as he looked up at his visitor.

Could this be the same man who, with hat stuck upon one side of his head and in general rakishness, had held little Hatchitfess up in the air and talked alcoholic nonsense to him?

It was hardly possible, and yet there was no mistaking that six feet of stalwart humanity, who had sent up his card as Mr. Erastus Gooch.

The Erastus Gooch who stood before them now was a very different Erastus Gooch from "Govitry," the capturer of the fleeing Hatchitfess.

He was very carefully and handsomely dressed; in good good taste too, with a quietness which showed he was not deficient of knowledge of the world, and, notwithstanding his huge stature, a very good-looking young gentleman, also with the merry blue eyes glittering above them away near the ceiling

and the good natured and very pleasant face that at the moment bore so ludicrous an air of bewilderment.

All his wildness had disappeared; the reckless, rollicking medical studentism had departed, and he appeared, as he was, a quiet, respectable young gentleman.

"How do you do, Mr. Gooch?" said Edwin Vance. "I am happy to meet you again. My mother has invited you to join us at breakfast."

"Mother," he continued, "permit me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Gooch."

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gooch. Pray join us at breakfast. Have you resided long in Toronto?" said Mrs. Vance, as she acknowledged his bow.

"Yes, madam, or rather I am a medical student attending the university here. I trust that I have not disturbed you at your breakfast. I expected to meet Mr. Vance only," replied Mr. Gooch.

"I have already breakfasted, thank you, madam," he continued, and he turned to bow to the other ladies.

"No valid reason that, for a man of your size, Mr. Gooch. One breakfast more cannot injure your health. It cannot be accepted as a sufficient excuse, Mr. Gooch. Miss Springer—Miss Seaforth; ladies to whom I have great pleasure in making you known," added Edwin, mischievously, for he was well aware that they were already acquainted with each other.

"We already know Mr. Gooch," replied Agnes, but Mr. Gooch was not to be deprived of the pleasure of shaking hands with her for all that.

"Yes," he said. "I am happy to say I have that honour, not for a very long time back though, I am sorry to say."

"Oh, yes, we know Mr. Gooch very well!" exclaimed old Miss Springer, a happy, old maiden lady, almost helpless from age and infirmity, yet who lightened up the dreariness of her years with the sweet temper and pleasantness of her youth.

"Very well, indeed," she continued, "I think Mr. Gooch has fallen in love with me. He has come to see me two or three times this last week, but he appears to be afraid of me, though, for I notice that he knows that Agnes is at home to protect him, I suppose. Is this not correct, Mr. Gooch?" and the old lady laughed heartily.

"Certainly, madam ; going for the licence to-day," he replied.

"I fear, though, that you would rather see another name than mine gracing it, Mr. Gooch ; but how did you know that I was here this morning?"

"I did not know it, Miss Springer," said Mr. Gooch, as they sat down to breakfast. "I only came to see Mr. Vance."

"Oh, come now, too thin ! What do you want to see me for? For what does a medical student need a lawyer? Confess the truth and acknowledge fairly that you came to see Miss Springer or Agnes there," answered Edwin, laughing.

"But I am no longer a medical student. I've thrown aside the lancet, anatomy, physiology and rubbish. No more carving up Her Majesty's subjects for me, and I do require a lawyer," replied Mr. Gooch, ignoring Edwin's insinuations.

"Better to require something else, Mr. Gooch. Lawyers are dangerous articles of desire," returned Mr. Vance. "But what wickedness have you been about this time?"

"None in particular. But something has been done to me, though," Mr. Gooch replied, with a sly look towards Agnes, as though he would much prefer that any little past escapade be not made public. An old lady——"

"Ladies—always ladies, Mr. Gooch. Mr. Gooch I am astonished," interrupted Vance, delightedly.

"Old ladies too !" said Miss Springer. "Upon my word, Mr. Gooch, you are a deceitful creature. Do you wish to marry her after all you have said to me?"

"Oh ! that is too bad altogether, Miss Springer. How can

you imagine such things of me? I could not marry her if I wished it, for the poor old lady is dead. Don't tease me, and let me tell my story.

"This old lady, my mother's cousin, or her forty-second aunt or some other outrageous degree of consanguinity, for we are of Scotch descent, you know, took it into her head to die a few days ago, and very sensibly left all her property to me. For which act I am very much obliged to her, as there is a good lot of it. I am very sorry too, and all that sort of thing; yet as I have never seen her more than half a dozen times in my life, and then she resolutely declined to take the very slightest notice of me, I cannot cry very much. I certainly never expected to get her money though, and what do you think was her very exquisite reason for leaving it to me? Expressed it in her will too. Why, because 'I am a stout well-grown lad of my years; not like the rest of the Gooches, poor, feckless, miserable, undersized bodies, with nothing to them,' as she said. And yet there is not a Gooch that I ever saw—male or female—under six feet in height. They are all raving about it too, not getting any of the money, and being called names into the bargain.

"Sensible old lady, though," he resumed. "Scotch too—wise people the Scotch: never leave their money out of the family. Nice habit, very, and so I have come to Mr. Vance to fix things up for me. 'Legal formalities,' and so forth."

"I shall fix things up for you, as you phrase it, with great pleasure, Mr. Gooch. Not a very difficult undertaking, I expect, and I congratulate you heartily upon your good fortune. Excellent reason that for leaving her money to a man because he is 'a well-grown youth,'" answered Edwin, with a laugh. "I hope the fortune is as large as its recipient. You will need a wife, though, Mr. Gooch, to look after you. There will be a wedding soon, I expect. We shall all look for invitations."

"I think you had better insert my name in the license of which you spoke erewhile, Mr. Gooch," exclaimed Miss Springer.

"I could not allow that fortune to slip away from me. Remember that, for all the young ladies will be on the *qui vive*."

"Yes! you will be all the rage now, Mr. Gooch. The lion of the town. Is your good fortune known yet?" said Edwin.

"Why, I only knew myself a few days ago," replied Mr. Gooch. "Perhaps you might have noticed that, on the evening of our little adventure with that wretch Hatchitfess and Miss Seaforth, there—there—there might have been the faintest suspicion, the barest possibility that I had been imbib—well, yes, smelling the cork; so to say, a little. Had you noticed it?"

"Well, Mr. Gooch, now that you remark it, I remember there was just the very faintest possible suspicion, deducible from your manner, of something of the kind," answered Edwin, laughing heartily at the vast difference between Mr. Gooch's cool description and the reality.

"Faint suspicion! Bare possibility! There was most apparent certainty. You ought to have been ashamed of yourself, Mr. Gooch," exclaimed Agnes, with suspicious energy. "You were dreadfully inebriated."

"Well done, Agnes! I see you take decided interest in his good behaviour. That is right; don't let him get even near to the 'cork' henceforth," said Mr. Vance, looking at poor Agnes quizzically.

But Mr. Gooch came to her rescue.

"I was really very much ashamed, Miss Seaforth, and more so that you had been present. But I have been very different since, and shall remain good for the future, I can assure you. And that was, too, the solitary occasion on which I have transgressed. I had received the good news that day only, and probably I felt very glad, or very sorry, or something unusual, I suppose, and that was the way of it."

"Oh! that was the way of it, was it? Well, perhaps that makes the matter more excusable. One does not get a fortune

every day," said Edwin, in justification of Mr. Gooch in Agnes' presence.

"No, not every day; but were I to get a dozen fortunes again I would not repeat my indiscretion.

"By the by!" he continued. "As I came along the street this morning I heard that young Hatchitfess was found drowned near the steamboat wharf this morning. and ugly rumors of foul play are coupled with his death."

"Drowned? That young man drowned. How horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Vance. "What a terrible end to a vicious career. But is it certain? May there not be some mistake?"

"I think not; my informant was not in doubt evidently. Young Hatchitfess has been intoxicated more or less entirely for the past week; ever since the failure of his attempt to abduct Miss Seaforth. I met him last night in a terrible state; talking loudly, almost insanely, to a gentleman who seemed to be persuading him to go home. And to-day he is dead. He must have fallen over the wharf in his intoxication, though what had taken him into that vicinity I cannot imagine. It does not lie on his way home."

"How very horrible!" exclaimed Agnes, who looked as if she meant what she said. "Poor erring young man! From my heart I pity him. Such an awful week leading up to such an awful death."

"Yes! it is horrible enough. But you have no need to pity his death, Agnes, for it is better for himself that he is dead, as well as for society, to whom he was an injury and a disgrace," returned Edwin, gravely.

"The event is an unmixed blessing to you, my dear Agnes, for his malice against you, I happen to know, was unbounded. He was an evil speaker," said quiet Mrs. Vance, rather unforgivingly, for Hatchitfess' malicious assailings had come to her ears.

"His end was dreadful," she continued. "Yet in what better way could such a life be expected to terminate."

"Well, Mr. Gooch," said Edwin, after a pause, "as you appear to have finished your breakfast, we will go to the library and proceed to business, I am pressed for time to-day. I suppose you require my valuable services this morning.

"I have an appointment at eleven o'clock," he added, as they rose from the table.

"Are you coming to see me soon, Mr. Gooch?" laughed Miss Springer, when that gentleman was bidding her adieu.

"Yes, Miss Springer; most certainly; if you will allow me," answered Mr. Gooch, with awkward laugh and conscious look towards Agnes; amid which, he followed Mr. Vance from the room.

Their business was soon arranged to mutual satisfaction, and Mr. Gooch prepared to take his departure from the house.

He had taken his leave; had moved towards the door, and hesitatingly lingered there, as if he had something upon his mind, for which he could not bring himself up to the point of declaration, yet evidently was anxious to disclose.

He turned back to the table where Vance had remained standing; stopped half-way; thought a minute; moved on again another step; stopped; brushed up his hat; appeared to be remarkably uneasy, and at length, by a mighty effort found voice, and spoke:

"Mr. Vance, I have something to tell you; private and confidential, you know."

Mr. Gooch paused again, unable, apparently, to proceed.

"All right! fire away! Mr. Gooch. Always tell everything to your legal adviser. The best plan in the end. What scrape have you got yourself into now?" said Edwin, smiling at his client's evident perplexity.

"Oh! it is nothing about law. Worse than that," replied Mr. Gooch, who then went on rapidly. "I suppose you have

perceived—I know you have, by the way you have been poking fun at me this morning—that—that—that—”

“That you are head over ears in love with Miss Agnes Seaforth—you were going to say” interrupted Edwin, laughing.

“Yes! I very plainly have perceived it, Mr. Gooch,” he continued” One would be remarkably unobservant not to have perceived the very palpable fact. It is too plainly evident. Very little doubt of that, Mr. Gooch. You are a gone case.” And Edwin, sticking his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, squarely regarded his uneasy visitor in smiling enjoyment.

“Well! what are you going to do about it?” he queried.

“That is just what I want to know, Mr. Vance. What I wished to ask you about,” responded Mr. Gooch, earnestly. “I have done little else but think of her ever since the evening I met her with you, and I suppose every one can plainly see what is the matter with me. But she seems so far beyond me, so beautiful, so unreachable to me, that I fear for myself—for an ending that would be dreadful to me. Do you think I have any chance with such a girl as Agnes Seaforth? You know her so well.”

“Yes! I have known her from infancy, and I know nothing but good of her; a great deal that is very admirable. Miss Seaforth is a lady; high-spirited, accomplished, and of very elevated and refined sentiment. If you win her you will indeed be a lucky man, and I do not see why you should not win her. It depends, in great measure, upon yourself,” replied Edwin encouragingly. “But how did you obtain your introduction to her?”

“Oh! I spent all the next day after our meeting in pestering a married aunt of mine, who lives in Toronto here, and who knows Miss Springer, to call upon them and take me with her,” said that man of resource, Mr. Gooch.

“Very ingenious! Mr. Gooch. And I suppose you have now transferred the pestering to them. Very good,” responded

Edwin. "I do not think either that it will be found very unpleasing to the young lady. Little as I have seen of the affair, I can see that. But Miss Seaforth is a rather particular girl—sensitive and high-spirited. You will have to be very careful,"

"Yes! I know that. I have found out that already," said Mr. Gooch, lugubriously. "I was so anxious, so awfully overcome that my feelings got to be too much for me, and the second time I visited her I absolutely was wound up to the point of declaring my affection, but that she very adroitly stopped me."

"What! the second time you saw her. Well, you are a bold man! Did you expect to win her in a week? It is very lucky for you that she did stop you," answered Edwin. "But see you here, Mr. Gooch," he continued. "I must go; I cannot be pestered with your love affairs. Miss Seaforth, probably, will take more interest in them. Go ahead and prosper; but not quite so fast as a declaration within a week though."

And Edwin laughed; they both laughed.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Gooch. Make friends with my mother, and get her to assist you. Agnes and she are great allies. I think, too, that the old aunt is upon your side."

"Well! I am very much obliged to you. I feel better already, Mr. Vance! Good morning!"

They parted then. Mr. Gooch going his own way, to spend the day, probably in contriving a plausible pretext to visit his fair lady in the evening, Mr. Vance, to his appointment with Sidney Wolverton, who, by his telegram to Ten Lakes, had caused his abrupt return.

CHAPTER XI.

DID HE DO IT ?

Our hero, upon receiving the message from Wolverton, requiring his presence in Toronto, on important business concern-

ing his interests, had experienced not a little anxiety and alarm thereby.

So many accusations, by this time, had been made against the character of his friend, that with the suspicious occurrences in his own knowledge, Mr. Vance had come to seriously mistrust and doubt him, and gravely to suspect the disinterestedness of his friendship.

He had resolved, for the future, to keep clear of Mr. Sidney Wolverton, but this message had appeared to be imperative, and he determined to see for himself what meant this new move upon the board.

Miss Ada Dearboon, too, had implicated the man in the matter with which her sister had been connected in the malicious effort to ruin his engagement, so that he did not feel at all well-disposed to him who had been his friend. To think badly of him thus had been painful enough; but he could no longer shut his eyes to the fact that his friend's reputation was gravely attacked by very many people whose words bore weight.

He finally resolved that not again would he be entrapped by him, and there seemed every probability that Mr. Wolverton would not meet with a very warm reception.

At the appointed hour Sidney entered the office of his friend to find him there before him.

He entered rapidly and demonstratively, but there was a furtive and uneasy appearance in his manner which he would not conceal and which Vance did not at all like.

"How do you do? Mr. Wolverton," said Vance, coldly enough, shaking, in slight response, the demonstratively proffered hand extended him. "I am here as you see, as I wired you I should be. What is this urgent business whose importance requires my presence so hurriedly?"

"I am very glad you are here, Vance, for there is urgent necessity for your presence. Urgent and unpleasant, I fear, to

both of us," replied Wolverton, seriously. "Have you heard that Albert Hatchitfess was found dead—drowned this morning?" he added uneasily.

"Yes; I had heard it. But what has his death to do with this matter; this unpleasant business of which you speak? Its details I wish to hear at once. I am pressed for time, having to leave town to-morrow."

"His death will be found to have, I fear, but too much to do with the affair; to complicate it very unpleasantly, Vance. The news was a very disagreeable shock to me this morning, I can assure you," said Wolverton, visibly uneasy and, apparently, unwilling to press on with his statement.

"Pray! go on with your story at once. Let me hear the whole of it," responded Edwin impatiently. "I cannot as yet see what Albert Hatchitfess has to do with my affairs."

"You shall hear. I do not, however, find the subject very pleasant upon which to enter," said Sidney.

"I was compelled to come to this city three days since," he resumed, "to attend to various matters of business, and as the note for thirty-five hundred you so kindly endorsed for me last July falls due in a few days I came prepared to meet it. My other affairs completed, I repaired to the bank to take it up, but—"

"Oh, well, Wolverton, if the whole matter is that note it does not amount to anything serious. If you cannot meet it I can do so; in fact, I expected to do so," replied Vance nonchantly, apparently relieved.

"Unfortunately that is not the difficulty. I was prepared to meet it myself. Perhaps, however, you had better let me tell the story in my own way," said Wolverton in reply.

"I have to go back a little, Vance," he resumed directly.

"When a few days after you had endorsed the note for me, I arrived here to settle the pressing claim, to aid me to meet which I had asked it, I found difficulty in discounting the note.

My own name as maker was the objection, and I was told that another endorser would be required. I could not do without the money, and so I had to go to the Hatchitfesses to obtain their aid.

"Young Hatchitfess who was alone in charge," he continued, "positively refused at the first to have aught to do with the matter; but, very suddenly, he changed his mind; offered to endorse and obtain discount of the note himself if I would give him one hundred dollars as commission. The bargain was a hard one, but I had no other resource left me than to accept. He took the note, went out to discount it, returned in an hour with the proceeds, and I paid him a hundred dollars.

"Well, as I said before," he again resumed, "I went to the bank the day before yesterday to pay the note. To my astonishment and horror I found on its presentation that instead of thirty-five hundred the note was for thirty five thousand dollars. It had been altered."

"What! Do you mean to tell me, Sidney Wolverton, that the note you obtained from me is for thirty-five thousand dollars?" exclaimed Edwin Vance, springing to his feet in horror, his face turning pale with excitement. "Is this true? you villain. Altered! A likely story indeed. Altered! forsooth! This, then, explains my dim recollection of the spoilt note of that evening.

"Great Heavens!" he continued, "I remember now. I was forewarned of this by Ethel herself. Fool that I was. I laughed at her for her warning and trusted you instead, treacherous villain.

"It was for this, then, that I was drugged; that you might the more easily effect your robbery? and now, worse than villain, you would slander the dead. Conceal your crime by slandering the memory of this poor young man who has gone to his account. Wolverton, you are in danger; there are reports of foul play, and--"

But Sidney Wolverton, having got into the thick of the affray, warmed up to his work, had lost his uneasiness, his furtive watchfulness and embarrassment. He had recovered his self-possession and confidence.

With eyes flaming in indignation ; with outraged virtue mounting to his cheeks ; insulted dignity swelling his statue, he sprang to his feet, and appeared at first as if he would have rushed upon and annihilated his traducer. Vance had stopped his speech at the violent action, while Sidney, by a great apparent effort, checked himself, and calmly, quietly, yet forcibly, said :

“Mr. Vance, I expected anger on your part. I expected reproach, even violence ; but I was not prepared for insult such as this. Permit me to say, too, that I shall not allow it. You charge me with robbery ; with slandering the dead to cover the crime you allege, and you hint at something worse again than these.

“Very good indeed !” he continued. “Yet allow me to think that these little accusations are rather uncalled for on your part. From any other than yourself, to whom I am under great obligations, I would not have endured such words. You will find yourself in another moment compelled to retract them.” And Sidney Wolverton, coolly taking out his pocket-book, produced from it a paper and continued.

“Fortunately—very fortunately for myself, it would appear—I am sufficiently a man of business always to take and keep receipts for my payments of whatsoever nature. When I telegraphed you at Ten Lakes, at the same time I telegraphed my bookkeeper at Hopetown for this document, the positive and undeniable proof of my innocence and Hatchitfess’ guilt. Be so good as to read it,” and Wolverton extended the paper in his hand to Edwin Vance, who, still pale and excited, had remained standing against the table.

He received it and read as follows :

“TORONTO, July 27th, 1873.

“Received of Sidney Wolverton, the sum of one hundred dollars, in full of our commission account, for procuring the discount of his note, endorsed by Edwin Vance, dated July 24th, 1873, at three months, for thirty-five hundred dollars.

“JOHN HATCHITFESS & SON,

“Per Albert Hatchitfess.”

“Do I appear as the robber—slanderer—murderer—now, may I ask, Mr. Vance?” exclaimed Sidney, with a triumphant ring in his tone, and a perceptible accent of sarcasm. “Am I the treacherous villain now?”

There it was in his hand; palpable evidence to the generous mind of Edwin Vance; all generous when it judged his friend.

“Forgive me, Sidney,” he said, advancing towards his friend, his hand extended shyly, as if he feared rejection. “You said I should have to retract my uncalled for remarks, and I do retract them. Can you forgive me? You are right, and I am wrong; but why did you not show me this paper at first?”

“Why, I forgot it, I suppose,” as shaking the offered hand, replied Mr. Wolverton. “Could I have imagined that you would suspect me? Say no more about it though; I might have found your words more displeasing had I been, in reality, guilty.”

He said these things with a laugh, but he had not, however, given his true reason for the non-production of the paper at an earlier period of his explanation. Had he not desired a violent and theatrical denouement, that he might bring Vance to his feet, and had he not accomplished his purpose?

“I cannot so easily forgive myself, as you have so generously done, Sidney,” said Edwin, with self-reproaching visage, looking at his friend.

“Oh, say no more. It is all right now, and I shall not vex myself about it much,” Sidney replied, lightly.

“But seriously, Vance,” he continued, “this note business is grave for both of us, while young Hatchitfess’ death compli-

cates it confoundedly. The father will have to pay, but I fear there will be a lawsuit to force him."

"We must see him at once, Sidney. Let us go to his office."

But they did not find Mr. Hatchitfess there, as they might naturally have expected, on the day of his son's dreadful death, had they not been too excited to think of the matter, and they had moved to leave the office when the old gentleman walked in, passing through to his private room without noticing or seeing, apparently, a person present.

Vance sent in a message to him, and they were shortly admitted.

The case was stated as delicately as possible by Mr. Vance, the receipt exhibited, and Mr. Hatchitfess was requested to provide for the difference between what the note originally was and its present figure.

But this he positively declined to do.

"I shall not pay until I am forced to pay; until this thing is sifted to the very bottom. I do not believe that my poor boy, headstrong and imprudent though he was, has done this thing. There is fraud, gentlemen," he said.

"Do you charge us with fraud, Mr. Hatchitfess?" indignantly enquired Edwin Vance.

"There is fraud, gentlemen," coldly replied Mr. Hatchitfess.

"I shall not pay one cent until the law compels me."

Vance and Wolverton immediately left the office in high dudgeon at the implied insult, after informing Mr. Hatchitfess that the law should at once be set to work to enforce payment.

They then proceeded to the bank for an examination of the note in question.

They derived but little satisfaction from the visit. The note was shown them and critically scrutinized. It bore, apparently, a fresh and genuine look, at first sight, but close examination revealed traces about the word 'thousands,' in the body of the note, that seemed suspicious, while the figured numbers in the

heading were cramped up. But these would have passed without remark had not scrutiny been directed to them.

"Nevertheless, Mr. Vance," said the president, when the Hatchitfess receipt was shown him, with an explanation of the state of the affair. "Nevertheless, the note was discounted by us as you see it. The names are undoubtedly genuine, and you will have to pay. You have your recourse against Hatchitfess. You must remember, too, that I wrote you concerning this very affair, and you replied that all was correct. We hold your reply. This note will have to be met."

"The note shall be met, sir, at maturity," replied Mr. Vance, quietly.

He then called for a statement of his account with the bank, and found that the Hatchitfesses had paid into his credit the several large amounts they had received for him, at the conclusion of the lawsuit before mentioned, and all others as well, and this being found satisfactory, he, with Wolverton, left the bank.

"I will find it a very heavy pull to pay this amount, Sidney, and shall have to take steps to recoup myself at once. Fortunately I have the money on hand, but were it not for a judgment which has placed a very considerable amount in my hands, I should have found myself in a pretty fix."

"All that I have got, Vance, is the three thousand five hundred dollars which I brought with me to pay this note, and I do not see how I can raise more just at the present. But you shall not be left in the lurch like this. If you have to meet this note I will secure you against possible loss by mortgage, or in any way that you may prefer. All the Hopetown property is fortunately clear of incumbrance now, and, I am happy to say, in a prosperous condition. But we must take steps against Hatchitfess at once," continued Sidney.

"Yes! without delay," answered Edwin. "I shall, for my own interests, do so, and I am now on my way to a notary to appoint another agent to act for me.

"As to that of which you speak, Sidney," he continued, "I think you ought to secure me by some means against loss, as I derived no benefit from the transaction, which was merely to accommodate you ; but, if a mortgage will cripple you in any way or injure your credit, I shall be satisfied with other security. Think over a proposal for to-morrow, and let me know. You do not wish to leave town to-day, do you?"

"No ! not until this thing is arranged, or you are placed beyond the reach of loss. I shall meet you to-morrow at noon, and meantime will prepare the plan of an arrangement. But had we not better secure legal advice towards taking steps immediately against Hatchitfess? If possible an attachment should issue against the son's estate. He is full partner in the firm, and they are wealthy. If you choose, I will immediately undertake this."

"Very well, Sidney ; do so, for I am busy enough as it is. I have to secure my other property, for a part of which Hatchitfess is agent," replied Edwin.

"All right, then, Vance. Don't distress yourself over this matter, for you shall not lose a cent."

"By the-bye !" continued Sidney, "when does your marriage take place ; you have not told me?"

"Not for a time, at all events," said Edwin, seriously. "In fact, Sidney, I have had grave trouble lately, and have not yet come to its end. Through the wicked machinations and falsehoods of a young lady, with whom you are acquainted, Miss Mordaunt has been induced to break off our engagement."

"What ! To break off the engagement ! I can hardly believe it !" exclaimed Wolverton, stopping in his walk, as if in surprise. "Well, I am astonished ; astonished and very sorry for you, too. But, Vance, will it not come all right again?"

"Perhaps it may. I hope it may," was Edwin's answer.

"It will ; be sure. But who is the young lady to whom you

refer as the author of the difficulty?" queried Sidney, as if he did not very well suspect.

"Miss Emily Dearborn is the lady to whom I refer," replied Edwin, bitterly.

"Emily Dearborn? Surely you mistake! That I cannot believe. Have you proof, that you so asperse the character of an estimable young lady? Let me tell you that I hold so high an opinion of her that it is my intention to ask her to be my wife."

"Then you need not, Sidney," replied Vance. "You are too late. She is no longer Emily Dearborn. But a very few days since she eloped with and married Reginald Mordaunt, brother of my affianced wife."

"Eloped! Married!—to Reggie Mordaunt, too. That boy! Impossible!" exclaimed Sidney, turning pale and visibly shocked, for he halted his steps in the street and put his hand involuntarily upon his companion's arm.

"You will find it true enough, Sidney," replied Vance. "I regret your disappointment, but rejoice at your escape."

"Married to Reggie Mordaunt! The very last thing I should have expected from her. Whatever did she marry him for?" Wolverton said, though thinking aloud.

"Doubtless she had good reason for it, or she is not Emily Dearborn," answered his companion, with a bitter laugh. "She is not worthy your thoughts, Sidney. Not worth another moment's distress."

"You are right, Edwin, she is not worth a thought. I am over it already. I shall not distress myself over the faithless, mercenary jade, fair though she be," said Sidney, with answering laugh. "I shall stick to business instead. Better for me. But this is your notary's office, I suppose. Good-bye for to-day. I shall go on to my lawyers."

"Good-bye, then, until to-morrow, Sidney," said Edwin,

shaking his hand. "Your affections are not very deeply engaged, are they? All the better for you."

And Edwin entered the office.

Sidney Wolverton continued upon his way up the street towards Osgoode Hall in a curious state of mind. The news of Emily's marriage had affected him deeply. If it were possible for one of his nature to love strongly, he had loved Emily Dearborn, and had hoped to marry her in spite of his knowledge of her character.

"As good as done, at all events," he had thought.

But the chief sensation of his mind was anger at the trick which she had practiced upon him.

"Beware! Emily!" he muttered, with darkening face. "You have trifled with me, and I am not to be trifled with. Dearly shall you pay for this!"

"But what in the world did she marry that boy for? That is what I cannot understand. Old Mordaunt is neither dead nor dying.

"Well! there is one comfort, I am out of this note business splendidly. But what a price I paid for it."

Shuddering, he glanced with involuntary apprehension around him.

He stepped into an hotel, whose sign caught his eye, and fortified himself with a strong dose of brandy.

"That's the cure for nervousness," he said, as he came out and walked on again.

"Vance is all right. He shall have no mortgage from me. I've a better plan in view."

CHAPTER XII.

AGNES WRITES.

Mr. Edwin Vance, on reaching his home after his busy and exciting day's work, had pretty well reconciled himself to the

inevitable payment of more than thirty thousand dollars to meet the note which he believed that young Hatchitfess had altered.

He felt the payment of it to be a serious, though by no means a ruinous, drain upon his resources, and it had been a subject of anxious consideration to him during the day.

Yet as his signature was undoubtedly upon the note, he philosophically made up his mind that he had to pay it.

He had, during the day, consulted some of his legal confreres and they had confirmed his own opinion that Hatchitfess would have to make good the amount, while at the same time they had advised him to take some tangible security from Wolverton—a mortgage, if possible.

But his peculiar disposition of mind, which rendered him so unsuspecting of others, made him feel so adverse to pressing his friend; who, in his eyes, having proved himself guiltless of that of which, after much unwillingness he had allowed himself to suspect him, must be, of necessity, guiltless, altogether and wholly guileless. A friend who had proved himself trustworthy, and whom he could wholly trust.

His other business of the day had been satisfactory to him.

He had finally settled up and transferred to another the agency which the Hatchitfesses had had in their hands, and the old gentleman had promptly paid over to him a large amount by his cheque.

He had cashed that cheque immediately—an unusual proceeding for *him*, it might appear; but then had not Hatchitfess insulted and offended him?

Had Edwin Vance been so careful and suspicious with others it had been better for him.

But the bent of his nature, be it for good or be it for bad, ruled him, as it rules all of us; yet the cashing of the cheque, so immediately, was an unusual thing for him to have done.

Dinner over, he accompanied the ladies into the drawing-

room, and having thrown off the cares of business, proceeded to amuse himself, in doubtful manner, with the cares and troubles that beset his love affairs ; to think of Ethel Mordaunt and their separation.

He related to his mother and Agnes Seaforth the sorrowful events of his late visit to Lake Mordaunt, amid their warm sympathy for his disappointments and their deep indignation against the author of all the mischief.

Not a little of their indignation, however, was vented, especially by his mother, upon Miss Mordaunt herself, for daring to doubt *her* son's unimpeachable truth, and for being so deceived by a trick so very palpable.

To this, however, he would not listen, and was indignant in return that they should dare to doubt his peerless Ethel.

But when, in his narration, he came to describe, in deeply injured tone, that the basis of the plot was his pretended prior engagement to Agnes Seaforth, that young lady laughed loud and long at his distress.

"How dreadful that must have been! Poor fellow! You are really a much injured individual," and her clear young voice rang through the room in her—a *little sarcastic*—laughter.

"I don't see what you have to laugh at, Agnes," he replied, disgustedly. "You would not like it yourself, you know. You will be engaged, too, before very long, I expect, if your big Erastus is the man I take him to be, and then you will know how it is."

And Agnes laughed but the more.

"I have this much to say, Agnes," said Mrs. Vance, "that had it been yourself to whom my son had been lucky enough to have become engaged, there would not have been like trouble for him. You are too sensible a girl, my dear, too high spirited and too right-minded to have thought so little of your lover and of your own powers of attraction, or have doubted so very easily."

"Unfortunately Agnes and I have always been too good friends to become anything else. Why did not she fall in love with me then?" replied Edwin, lightly.

But he continued in a more serious voice—

"Perhaps, my dear mother, Miss Mordaunt has had previous cause to consider that I am not wholly perfect, which I am not by any means, and you must remember that the *prima facie* of the case brought against me was very strong."

"Well, it may be so, but were I a man, and my affianced had treated me in like manner, I should take her at her word. 'As good fish in the sea as ever was caught,'" said Mrs. Vance, decidedly, and it was very evident that her feelings towards Ethel had undergone a change.

"But not for me, mother," he replied. "I do not blame Ethel, nor do I think she is to blame. I shall do my best to regain her. If I can do so, well and good. If I cannot, I must try to spend my life in as much content as I can attain."

"If she is worth the regaining, you will regain her. I admire you for your loyalty to her, but I do not think with you that she is free from blame," said Agnes Seaforth, and with her remark the conversation dropped.

Before he retired, Edwin obtained, not without much difficulty, a promise from his mother that she would write to Miss Mordaunt to give her the real history of Agnes' relations with them, the impossibility of her aunt having been the author of the letter ascribed to her, the whole facts of the case, and a hint of Agnes' own love affair. Also that she would endeavor to get Agnes to write also; but it was only after long effort and a hint that the forged letter compromised her favorite's name, could Edwin induce his mother either to write herself or ask Agnes to do so.

The letters were written.

Mrs. Vance's production was very much to the point, very cutting and rather unpleasant in its tone, the letter of a mother

whose son had been injured, but it was admirably calculated to effect its two-fold purpose of clearing her son's name and of rendering its recipient uncomfortably conscious that her action was imputed to anything rather than the heroic cause.

The production which Mrs. Vance succeeded in eliciting from Agnes ran as follows :

“TORONTO, Wednesday, —

“DEAR MISS MORDAUNT,—

“Mrs. Vance, with whom I am at present on a visit, has requested me to write to you with reference to certain matters in which her son and yourself are concerned.

“I do so very unwillingly, for I do not see that there is any occasion that you should have caused the necessity for it.

“I beg to deny most explicitly that I am engaged to Mr. Vance, that I have ever been engaged to him or likely to be. Certainly it does not appear to be the wish of either that such an event should happen.

“I would, however, beg to remark that, had I been engaged to him, I should hardly have doubted his truth so easily, that, on the authority of a couple of letters laid before me by one whose motives and whose general moral character were so open to suspicion as those of the lady who dared to use my name in her forgeries—it should have seemed necessary, without verification, to cancel my engagement.

“Yet this you have deemed proper to do.

“Either your love for the man to whom you affianced yourself was so weak that you were not justified in promising to become his wife, or you very much undervalue yourself.

“I have to inform you, also, that I wrote to Mr. Vance during the period of his visit to Lake Mordaunt in July last, upon a mere matter of business, which at the time seriously perplexed and annoyed me. I never received an answer, although Mr. Vance has assured me that he wrote the same day that he received my letter, and I know him well enough to believe his statement, although I am merely a friend.

“His reply to me, I understand, is now in your possession.

“I must also beg to deny, on my aunt's part, that she ever wrote to Miss Dearborn in her life ; that she ever had occasion to do so, or, that if she wished it, she is capable, through infir-

mity, of holding a pen. Besides, her name is Springer—not Springle.

“All this you can, if to do so suits you, verify easily upon enquiry here in Toronto. You may, perhaps, also be surprised to learn that the word of Mr. Edwin Vance is considered worthy of credence in this city. At all events, it is credited.

“I was very sorry to hear of your long and dangerous illness, from which, I trust, you have wholly recovered.

“I have also to offer my warm sympathies to you for the great loss you have sustained in the death of your little sister. I earnestly desire, for Mr. Vance’s sake as for your own, that you may soon—both of you—be happy again in your love for each other.

“I am, dear Miss Mordaunt,
“Yours very truly,

“AGNES SEAFORTH.”

Rather in the nature of a lecture this letter; but then Miss Seaforth had meant it to be such, and had not yet forgiven Ethel that she had doubted the man whom she herself had proved to be a friend so good; whom she had so much cause to respect and admire.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIDNEY GETS HIS WILL.

The next morning when Mr. Edwin Vance had finished his breakfast and was making for the library, a hurriedly loud ring upon the front door bell told of a hurried visitor.

He opened the door himself, and was surprised to find his friend Sidney Wolverton, evidently too in a high state of excitement, standing upon the door-steps.

“What is the matter now, Sidney? I thought you would have torn the bell down with your outrageous ringing. What is the news this morning?”

“News,” gasped out Sidney. “There’s news that neither of us will find agreeable. Hatchitfess has——”

"Paid the money, I suppose," interrupted Edwin. "But come into the library, Sidney, and there relate the cause of your haste," and he led the way into that apartment.

"Paid the money, indeed!" exclaimed Sidney. "No! nor will he ever pay it. He has skedaddled—cleared out—cut and run for it, with every cent he could scrape up of his own or other's money. He's in the States now, safe and sound, confound him!"

"Hatchitfess gone? No! no! Sidney. I can hardly believe that little story. I should as soon suspect to hear of my worthy mother robbing a bank and levanting with the proceeds. No! no! for what should Hatchitfess run away? He is worth a couple of hundred thousand dollars."

"Yes! very likely he is worth it to-day, if he was not yesterday, for he has taken a considerable lot of other people's money with him. He is gone, I tell you, Vance, and has not left a dollar behind him either, as you and I will find to our cost. Just come down town and judge for yourself," answered Sidney, excitedly.

"Hatchitfess a defaulter! I can hardly believe it. Why he had the best name in the city, excepting that he was a regular Shylock. It looks cerulean for my thirty thousand dollars. We will go and hear the news, Sidney."

But on reaching the offices Edwin Vance found that it was all too true.

Hatchitfess had gone, and was far enough away by this time. Gone too with everything he could lay his hands upon, and leaving next to nothing behind him. His house, its furniture, his son's horses and equipages, with a few other trifling assets, were all that remained to satisfy a host of defrauded creditors.

*He had left a letter to his head clerk, telling him of his purpose. That an attempt was being made to rob him of a large sum, which he would never pay, and, as his beloved son was

dead, nothing left for him in life, he would go, with his hard earnings, where they should be safe.

He had enclosed, the clerk said, money sufficient to pay up his employees and to bury his son.

"He must have a lot of money with him too," added the clerk, "for though the young man spent an awful amount, yet Hatchitfess must have been very rich, and he has taken another vast amount of his clients' money. It is a very bad job, that's what it is."

"No use for us to remain here, Sidney," said Vance when he had heard all that was to be heard. "I shall have to pay the note, that is very plain. You will have to go half."

"Yes, Vance. I ought to meet it all, by right," replied Sidney. "But I have not the money. However, I have a plan to propose that will save you from loss. Let us go up to your office and talk it over."

They walked out from the scene of anger and dismay that filled up the place of business of him whose motto had been, "We may be very hard, but we are very honest."

"Had I been able to have got out an attachment yesterday we might have saved ourselves, Vance," continued Sidney, as they walked up the street. "But though I pressed matters vigorously, I could not get it done yesterday, and Hatchitfess must have got wind of it. My firm impression is, that he has cleared out merely to save himself from this payment. He could not make up his mind to pay out this thirty-five thousand dollars, and he has preferred to sacrifice a business which produces the amount every year."

"The affair is inexplicable to me. I cannot understand it. That his son's death affected him greatly, I can readily believe, but why he should commit a crime that will compel him to hide in obscurity for the rest of his life, and that too in enforced idleness, when the press of business, the scraping together of dollars

and cents, formed his chief happiness, I cannot understand," replied Edwin Vance.

"It is as I say," said Sidney. "He was willing to sacrifice everything rather than crack his heart-strings by paying a sum which is in reality but a trifle to him.

"But Vance," he continued, when they had seated themselves in his friend's office. "we have got to pay this note; we cannot clear out. Or rather, you will have to pay it, for I cannot, and I must repay you in some manner. You shall have a mortgage if you require it, as the Hopetown property is all clear of encumbrance. But if I do mortgage it my credit will become seriously strained, which I cannot afford to have strained. The property is all clear—not a cent upon it—while the total indebtedness of whole concern would be covered by one-half the stock of raw and finished goods. But the difficulty is that it is too large for my capital. As I say, if I put a mortgage upon the property my credit will suffer, and I fear that I will again get down into the mire, out of which with great effort I have raised myself.

"Now, if you will go in with me into the concern it will make everything as firm as a rock. I will give you one-half interest in mills, lands, stocks, everything, if you will pay this note and join me in partnership, and I will undertake to make more money for my half share than I now do with the whole, for the weakness of my credit cripples the whole concern."

"I would prefer not to do that, if anything else can be accomplished, Sidney; but give me all the figures on paper from your memory as well as you can, and we will talk it over."

They did talk it over, and before nightfall Edwin Vance had become a partner in the "Hopetown Manufacturing Company," as they agreed to call the new concern, on the basis originally proposed by Sidney.

Without examination, without reflection, but purely out of his amiable trust in human nature and in his friend, he had thus

put himself almost wholly in Wolverton's power. Had done the thing he had promised not to do, with his eyes opened to the light which they would not see.

Had done this thing which was, to say the least of it, a very unwise thing.

But it was done. He had signed the deeds ; he had paid the note ; his partnership was registered, and he could not retract even had he wished to do so.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the Hopetown property was in the same rather shaky condition that the previous July had seen.

The establishment was naturally a good one. It had been much improved by Sidney, and the thirty thousand dollars he had received from the proceeds of the note which he had so treacherously obtained from Vance, had put the whole concern into good order—free from debt—and with partially restored credit.

The only things that militated against its success were the incurably bad reputation of its owner, and his wasteful extravagance.

He thoroughly understood the business ; was energetic and economical in its administration ; but the wild and reckless life he led ; his gambling and dissipation consumed large sums of money, while his frequent absences in the pursuit of these pleasures, were not conducive to prosperity.

However, Edwin Vance's name would be a tower of strength to the concern, and if he would but make up his mind to spend his whole time at Hopetown, merely to watch his partner and keep him within bounds all would go well, while there was fortune, riches, profits without limit, before them.

But would he do this ?

Was not his time sufficiently engrossed by other duties ; his profession, his property, and above all the troubles of his disappointed love. As things stood on the day that Edwin Vance

signed his name to the deed of partnership it very much appeared that Sidney Wolverton would be left to act as he pleased as managing partner of the "Hopetown Manufacturing Co."

* * * * *

Mr. Sidney Wolverton left town the same afternoon, very well pleased to get away. His visit had been an eminently successful one; he had accomplished all he had hoped to accomplish, and more than he had hoped.

Yet he was very glad to get away from Toronto. A strong sense of relief overspread his whole being as the train got fairly under way and sped into the open country, all bright under the soft autumnal sun. Freedom, deliverance, safety seemed to open out to him. New thoughts, new hopes, new life, centered within his brain as the heavy eastern express rushed through a tract of forest lands, all gorgeous in its frost-reddened tintings—the glorious ending of the Canadian summer—and left its dividing belt between him and his fear.

He had not been stopped. And as this assurance settled itself in intense relief upon his brain, he threw away the past. Cast it away—a thing that was spent and ended. He looked now but to the prospering present; forward to a prosperous future.

"Well! Vance is a good fellow," he said, when his thoughts had become fixed once more upon the things before him. "Who else would have done as he has done? Who else would have trusted his friend as he has done me? But am I his friend—really his friend—a friend to him as he has ever been to me?"

"Sidney Wolverton, can you answer that question as it should be answered?"

"No! You cannot, Sidney Wolverton. A friend. Heaven help me, what kind of a friend am I for any one?" and the man's whole frame shuddered as recollection flew back to what he had so lately thrown behind him.

"Were this day but over, that awful thing safe out of sight

and forgotten, then could I start afresh. All is bright before me, except myself. But I will change. Why may I not come to the same as he came? I will change! I will change! I will do the fair thing too to Vance, who has — Yes! what has he not done for me? I will make these works pay him back the thousands of which I have robbed him.

“No more brandy—no more cards for you, Sidney Wolverton. To business, and shew your friend, your friend whom you do not deserve, that you can be a friend too. If I can make Hopetown mills pay, they shall pay, and for your sake too, Edwin Vance.”

In kindred reflections Sidney Wolverton's mind occupied itself as the fast speeding train had flown over a hundred miles of its journey; yet despite of them and his new made vows, when the train arrived at Hopetown, Mr. Sidney Wolverton stepped off from it in a somewhat intoxicated condition.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONTRAST UNPLEASING TO HIS PRIDE.

Having contrived to reach the end of the somewhat unusual press of business, professional and otherwise, in which he had found himself involved since his return to Toronto, Mr. Edwin Vance, a few days after the departure of his friend, Sidney Wolverton, from that city, finding himself free to do as he chose, resolved to make an incursion upon the territories of our good neighbour, Uncle Sam, and a raid upon the domicile and the peace of mind of his friend Mr. Horton.

The press of business over, nothing left to occupy him with immediate action, his unquiet and uneasy mind at once reverted to Ethel Mordaunt and the troubles into which he was thrown with reference to her and their broken engagement.

He had made, to be sure, some little headway in the difficult

and tedious work of restoration ; had obtained a vantage ground from which to make his charge upon the enemy, plain to his sight, and, consequently, was all the more anxious to commence the fray, and end the intolerable suspense that oppressed him.

He could no longer brook the delay, the misery and the doubts that laid their heavy load upon him, and he was determined that he would, if he could by any means, end them, and bring back again the brightness to his life, which had been so long, as it seemed to him, and so bitterly extinguished.

Accordingly Edwin having bid his "farewell" to his mother for a day or two, shaken hands with Agnes Seaforth and her aunt, who were still her visitors, and unmercifully joked Mr. Gooch, whom a few minutes before he had sent up stairs, with an irreverent laugh as sole answer to the utterly absurd and meaningless question concerning his legal affairs which had formed that gentleman's excuse for calling upon him, proceeded to the station and placed himself comfortably into a Pullman car for his night's journey through to Rochester, New York, and his first stopping place.

Safely arrived the next morning in that beautiful and busy city—"busy," the next best praise to "beautiful,"—he spent a few hours in viewing the place, which he had not before visited, and in refreshing the inner man after his night's long travel around Lake Ontario.

As he was shown into the dining-hall of the very handsome hotel to which he had been directed, the head waiter who escorted him, after a deliberate survey of his personal appearance from head to foot, spoke as follows :

"Yeu air a Britisher, neow, I imagine, stranger ; from Canedy too, I would expect, ain't yeu ?"

"I am from Canada, certainly, my friend, but I am not altogether a Britisher, as you call it. I am a Canadian," answered Edwin, a little sharply, as if the address had struck upon his

ear painfully, but replying, nevertheless, as he remembered he was now in the land of equality.

"Sho! neow, du tell. A Canadian, air ye. Wall, I calculate, stranger, that a Canadian and a Britisher air much of a muchness. Tarred with the same stick, I guess. Yeu air an aristocrat now, ain't yeu?"

"We have no aristocrats in Canada, my worthy friend. We are, unfortunately, extremely democratic in our ideas, and tarred too much with Uncle Sam's stick—the worst of the tar too. But I wish you would bring me my dinner. I am very hungry," said Edwin, laughing.

"Wall, yeu shall hev yewer denner, stranger, right off, though it's raither airly, ain't it neow, Britisher?" replied the waiter, and off he went, after placing Edwin at a table in the deserted dining-hall, the usual dinner hour not having arrived.

But as trains wait for no man, our hero had to take his dinner early or do without.

As he attacked the appetizing viands set before him, his loquacious attendant re-commenced his inquisitive discourse.

"I reckon, neow, stranger, that as you air from Canedy, yeu will know for cartain all about the two young folks who kem hiar to this hotel, a two weeks since; ran away from their friends, I calculate, and who got married in this hotel. Before the minister, too, I guess. That air so, stranger."

"How should I know every one who runs away from Canada to get married, do you suppose?" said Edwin, good-naturedly, for he was becoming amused at his questioner's persistence.

"Sho! I want to know. Yeu surprise me, stranger. Not know the young folks? But yeu must know 'em. They kem from Canedy, yewer place," returned the waiter, argumentatively.

"Canada is rather too large a country for me to know it's whole population. I'm very much afraid that I have not the

honor of the acquaintance of these people who so greatly interest you."

"Ya'as! I've heerd heow Canedy was considerable of a little place. Wall, I tell you, stranger, they kem from there, and you must know them. I want you neow tew tew tell me if their folks war'nt riled awful neow when they heerd as how they got married deown here in the States?"

"Well! I have no doubt that they were vexed, but as I don't know them, I cannot tell you for certain. Who were these people, and what were their names?" asked Edwin, with a laugh.

"Wall!" slowly answered the other, "I calculate as heow I don't exactly know the gal's name, any heow, stranger, and a right smart gal she was too fur a Britisher. It was that gal wheo got up that skedaddle, I reckon. Ya'as, stranger, fur the young fellar looked to be kinder soft and washy-like beside her, rather as if his eye teeth had'nt got cut through yet, mister. His name was Mordaunt, I calculate," and the waiter solemnly changed the plate as he finished the story he had ineffectually put to twenty people before.

"Mordaunt! Mordaunt; did you say?" exclaimed Edwin, with a start of surprise. "Yes, my friend, you are right. I do know them, and so they were married here?"

His curiosity aroused, he occupied the remainder of his meal in obtaining a full history of the affair from his attendant, so far as the latter himself knew it.

Edwin Vance started, by the noon train, again on his way to the large manufacturing town in which Mr. Horton resided, and a very pleasing journey he found it, as the train passed through the beautiful, well cultivated and thickly populated section of country which lay between him and his destination.

The numerous and handsome towns and villages, which lay thickly on his route; handsomely ornamented and planted with the lovely shade trees, which add so much to beauty and

utility ; the numerous factories, shops and evidences of industrial greatness that everywhere met his view ; the handsome farm houses, all neatly painted and ornamented, with their well ordered gardens and trim enclosures, so different from the ugly and slovenly generality of the Canadian farm buildings, while they pleased his eye and awakened his admiration and interest, could not but excite the painful reflection that the cause of all this prosperity, these tokens of wealth, enriching industry, that threw his native land, despite its equal, if not superior advantages, far into the shade—the sole cause of all these—“ un-compromising protection to native industry,” had not been brought to bear the same beneficent effect upon that native land of his—Canada—which seems so persistently to reject the enricher.

“ Why have we not our thousands of happy and prosperous workmen where now we have but hundreds? Why have we not, as they have here, tall factory chimnies piercing the sky in sight of each other? Towns at every mile—wealth at every door?” he thought, and the thought was humiliating to his national pride.

“ And what a hopeless prospect of attaining this great enricher—*protection to ourselves*—is before us. The present is bad enough, but a week, a day, may see, as events would seem to indicate, the advent to power, in our mis-led country, of a party whose leaders are practically committed to ‘free trade’ principles, which, well enough for England, who manufactures for all the world, are *ruin, stagnation, and the paralysis* of all industry—save the mere production of the field and the forest—of a new country like our Canada.

“ What sensible rulers we put over us—what a sensible people we are to permit our young and splendid country to remain an untrammelled pasture ground—a regular common for all the world to graze in. Very bare they leave it too, and in return they very wisely shut us out, with remarkable closeness, from

their grass. Our doors thrown open, a slaughter market for all the earth, our fatness goes to feed foreign nations, while our land is left ill-peopled, poor and unthrifty.

“How different does our shrewd Uncle Sam conduct his affairs. He keeps *his* fatness in his own land, as I can so plainly see, and how much better his land looks under the treatment too. *He* won't have any work done for him in foreign countries that he can do at home. No workmen for him scattered all over the earth, if he can help it, consuming one-half the value of his raw products to carry them there. The condition of working for Uncle Sam, I see, is that the workmen live with him, thus aiding to build up his strength and his power.

“*I am ashamed of my countrymen.*”

Occupied by his reflections and the survey of the country from which they sprang, the hundred miles he had to traverse was speedily accomplished, and sooner than he expected he arrived at his destination, and left the train.

An enquiry of the polite depot-master directed his way, and in a few minutes he was at the door of Mr. Horton's residence, a large, handsome and imposing building, in the midst of trim gardens and sightly groves that bespoke the wealth and taste of the owner, and had knocked for admittance. Upon giving his name to the servant who opened the door—who looked at him a moment as if to judge his quality—he was, without a word, ushered into the drawing-room, and into the presence of the master of the house.

Laying down the paper that he was reading as our hero entered the room, Mr. Horton looked up to see who might be his unannounced and unexpected visitor.

“What! Edwin Vance, is it you?” he exclaimed, rising from his chair in evident pleasure. “Who would have expected you here. I'm real glad to see you, though,” and he shook his guest's hand in hearty fashion.

“Well, I'm glad,” he continued. “Here, take off your over-

coat ; let me help you. You're going to stay here, you know. Have you brought your traps along ?”

“ No ! I left my valise at the station, Mr. Horton. I could not find a cab—all taken up, I suppose—and didn't mind the walk through your beautiful little town. Yes ! I've come to see you on a matter of importance to myself, Mr. Horton, so I will take you at your word and trespass upon your hospitality for the night,” replied Edwin to his host's queries and warm greeting.

“ Glad to have you. I am lonesome enough sometimes in this big house. If you had dared to go the hotel you need not to have come here about the business. I'll order up tea at once, and send a man for your baggage to the depot. When did you leave Toronto ?” continued Mr. Horton.

“ Last night. I came through by rail instead of crossing the lake, and a very pleasant journey I had to-day through this beautiful and prosperous country.”

“ Yes ! it is a fine country, both by the gifts of nature and by the improving hand of man, Edwin. We try to make it a country that men will come to to live in, happy and prosperous. We are ahead of your Canada in that respect. Although Nature has not endowed us more liberally than she has you, yet we are ahead of you, simply because we not only know, and use our knowledge, how to keep our population in the country, by providing them with profitable work to do, but to attract the people from your country and all other countries, by providing them the same benefits. We Yankees allow as little as possible to be done for us by foreigners, we prefer to do our work ourselves in our own country, and we have become rich and powerful in consequence. You Canadians don't understand the art, and don't seem willing to learn it either, so we are ahead of you.”

“ Yes ! I admit it ; the contrast has been forced upon me to-day ; a contrast sufficiently humiliating to my national pride,”

returned Edwin, "and it has made a protectionist, *pur et simple*, of me.

"I wish with my whole heart," he continued, "that every Canadian who has a voice in the ruling of his country would see, as I have seen, the difference which a national policy in this respect can effect. I fear, however, that but too many of them could not appreciate the course, so much do the shibboleths of 'Free Trade,' the sole unfortunate incident of our connection with Great Britain, pass current among us. They would not see."

"Quite likely they would not," replied Mr. Horton, "and yet Great Britain, until she had attained her pre-eminence as the manufacturing power of the world, was the most protective—the best protected nation in the world."

But as he said this, the stroke of a gong was heard, and Mr. Horton rose—

"That is the signal that our tea is served; you must be hungry; we will adjourn," and he led the way from the room.

During the meal—at which Mr. Horton's old housekeeper presided in solemn state—Edwin had not an opportunity to enter into the details of the affair which had brought him from home, and their conversation was limited to general subjects.

He saw that Mr. Horton was friendly—seeming as well disposed as ever—and he justly concluded that, being a near relative of his Ethel's family, he must have been informed of the unhappy events which had occurred to him and to them—that he did not blame him as the cause of the disagement between himself and his love, and he hoped the more strongly, therefore, for his aid and assistance towards the restoration of his own and, as he still felt assured, his Ethel's happiness.

When they were again alone—he had accompanied his host to the library for the enjoyment of a cigar—he found the ice broken for him unexpectedly, Mr. Horton remarking—

"Well! and so you people have been getting into mischief since I left you, it seems. Cannot you take care of yourselves without me to look after you, and what is all the nice scrape about between yourself and my niece? A pretty state of affairs—broken hearts, and so forth. I heard of it from Mordaunt some time since, and also of Ethel's illness."

"That is what I came to see you for, Mr. Horton—to get your advice and, if possible, your assistance, to put things right again. Miss Mordaunt has been very ill—very ill indeed, and is not yet convalescent. You have heard, I suppose, of their poor little Ally's death?" answered Edwin.

"Yes! I had heard from poor Florence; a bitter blow it must have been to them—the sweet little darling's loss."

"It was indeed! What with that sad event, Ethel's terrible illness and Reggie's heedless and ill-judged marriage, they were steeped in sorrow to ——"

"What! What did you say, Edwin? Reggie's marriage—Reggie's marriage—what is it you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Horton, amazedly, springing to his feet.

"Have you not heard it then, Mr. Horton, from Lake Mordaunt? I was wrong to mention the affair, perhaps, but I surely supposed you knew. It is too true, unfortunately; he married Emily Dearborn—married her here in Rochester too—eloped with her the day before little Ally died."

"Who? Emily Dearborn; he married Emily Dearborn—that girl of all others. Well! he has done it this time, I guess," said Mr. Horton, sinking into his chair again.

"Poor Reggie! Poor Reggie. Why it was that hateful girl who caused all the mischief between you and Ethel, don't you know it? Poor Reggie!" continued Mr. Horton.

"Of course I knew that she was the cause, but could not prove it, and Ethel's illness has prevented me from getting even a full history of the affair," replied Edwin.

"But whatever made Ethel such a fool as to believe that im-

probable story? Why, from what I hear, it is almost palpable on its face of falsehood."

"The two letters—one forged by her, the other stolen—had been ingeniously contrived for the purpose, and at first sight the story was very plausible. The worst of the matter is that these letters cannot be found, although thorough search has been made for them since Ethel's recovery."

"Yes! so I am told, and of course they could not be found by people who will not take the trouble to think. Of course they searched every place than where they were likely to be—where of necessity, under the circumstances, they must be. I'll engage to have those letters in my hand five minutes after I reach Lake Mordaunt. And now tell me all you know of the matter."

Edwin then proceeded to enter into a full detail of all the events that had passed during the last unfortunate month of his life; giving every particular which he could remember, and finally wound up with a piteous appeal that Mr. Horton should take up his case and aid him to regain his lost status, "for," he said, "her own father told me that you could do more with Ethel than any other person—himself and her mother not excepted—in fact, that you can do as you like with her."

"Yes! Ethel and I are very good friends. But now don't you consider yourself a remarkably cheeky young gentleman to come here and in the coolest manner possible endeavour to hunt me out on this wild goose chase, this precious undertaking to heal your broken hearts, and put you into good humour with each other once more. You have more brass about you than I gave you credit for possessing, Edwin Vance. Well! I can't blame you for it, seeing that you are utterly incompetent to mend matters yourselves. Ethel was a fool, in the first place, for believing the story, and putting herself into a brain fever over it, and you are another, too, for not being able to see what is plainly before your very eyes. A pretty lawyer you must be

if you cannot conduct a case better than you have this. You could not find the letters, eh? Not one of all you stupidly at Lake Mordaunt? and my sister a Yankee too. I know where those letters are concealed at this moment, but then I can use my wits, I guess.

"Why, I'll engage" continued Mr. Horton, "to lay the evidence, taken from your own statements to-day, which points out to me with certainty the hiding place of these letters, before you, and you'll be none the wiser as to where they are than you are now."

"Do so, Mr. Horton. I should be very glad to know, and would much like to hear your convincing evidence," replied Edwin, unable to resist laughing at the very complimentary speech of his companion.

"But you shall not know, though," returned Mr. Horton. "If I agree to take this matter into hand, not a step shall you take, not a word shall you utter in reference to it until I give you leave. I am not afraid though to lay the convincing evidence you speak of before you, for you'll not see its force. Now listen. Ethel says she kept the letters and has them somewhere in her possession. A servant saw her accompany Miss Dearborn to the door when that worthy young lady left the house after presenting them—very warm weather during September last. Ethel was discovered senseless afterwards in the same room in which the interview had taken place, has been ill in bed ever since—the letters cannot be found—now where are they? tell me that, Mr. Vance? You are a lawyer, you know."

"That room and the whole house have been thoroughly searched, Mr. Horton," answered Edwin, after a moment's pause.

"Ah! I thought so. I expected as much. I guess as heow yeu air right smart folks up in Canady, anyhow, but yeu will hev tew git a live Yankee to pull the wool eout of yewer eyes for yeu," said Mr. Mordaunt, mockingly, in his native vernacular, and he continued:

“Well! Edwin, I’ll take up this affair for your sake and for Ethel’s, and though I cannot guarantee success, otherwise than to prove you have been slandered. To-morrow you go back to Toronto to your business and remain there, for not a movement of yours shall I allow in the matter until I give you full permission. I can’t trust you, you know, and your Ethel is a romantic little fool or she would not have made the trouble at all.”

“I cannot blame Ethel, Mr. Horton. I cannot blame her even that she could doubt me as she did, for you may be very sure that the plot which Emily Dearborn would originate must have had plausibility about it to deceive any person, and again I must confess that I had given her a previous cause to doubt me. I broke a promise—a solemn promise—which I had made to her,” said Edwin, at the last words, lowering his head.

And he related the whole story of his adventures at the cricketers dinner and the subsequent events of the evening. Without reserve or hesitancy he told it, made a clean breast of all, painful though it was to do so. But his auditor was a gentleman and a man of the world, who understood human nature, the actions and the motives which work upon men; viewed them by the tempering light of long experience, which had worn away Phari-seeism, so he merely replied—

“Oh! yes, I understand. You are a gentleman and too unsuspecting. Wolverton made you tipsy for his own purposes, I suppose. He, too, is concerned in this black business. In all probability it was he who stole your letter to Miss Seaforth at her instigation.

“I cannot think so,” Edwin replied. “Sidney would not commit an act so base. He has proved himself to be, within the last few days, entirely above suspicion.”

“But I say that he would commit any act, no matter how heinous it be, and I repeat that he was concerned with Reggie’s precocious wife in the plot against Ethel and yourself,” replied Mr. Horton, energetically.

"You don't believe me," he continued. "Will you believe what I say when I send you word that the letters are in my possession, eh? Well you *are* — But I'll say no more about it. There is one thing certain that you will have to lower your opinion of human nature or you will not be able to live in this world."

"My opinion of human nature! Why should I change it?" answered Edwin Vance. "What has human nature done to me that I should change it? I see no reason. I am aware that there are villains in the world—Emily Dearborn, for instance, but why should I undervalue my race that there are a few villains among its millions?"

"Now you go back to Toronto and get to work. Or go down to Hoptown to look after your precious partner and stay there," replied Mr. Horton, good-humouredly sarcastic of speech. "Probably you will there obtain a chance to see human nature in a light new to you. I don't say that all is bad in your Wolverton, but there is a great deal too much of it in him—more than there is good; and though you have been a friend to him that no man ever had better, yet take care that he does not ruin you. Go to your mills and look after him. At any rate—after your visit here—keep out of my way until I send for you.

"Look here, Vance," he continued. "At any day there may be a general election with you in Canada—this Pacific Railway matter will throw out your present government—why then do you not run for parliament? You will be of use there, more than you are at present; moping about, and do good to your country. I have your love-affairs in hand; throw aside all thoughts of them until I want you, and run for parliament, now that you will have a chance so good.

"What is all this Railway rumpus about, at all events," queried he again.

"Pretty hard to tell you what it's all about. The press will

give you the surface appearance of affairs, but the root, the hidden spring of all, lies in the deep, the widely extended debauchery of the political morality of Canada. The whole political sentiment of the country is low and debauched—always has been debauched, and so will remain until a radical change of the entire system is effected ; a change however, that cannot be effected until ignorance, the too comprehensive suffrage and paid parliaments are abolished. Education, a suffrage of education as well as of property and unpaid parliaments will accomplish the reform if aught can do so.

“ The half-dozen great statesmen who are our real rulers—” continued Edwin “ have engaged the country irrevocably, wish the building of this Pacific Railway ; a work of stupendous magnitude, but necessary for the binding together and the strengthening of the new confederation ; and there has been, as there always has been in such cases, a little bribery and corruption afoot. Such, it really seems sad to say, appears to have been the case with all great public undertakings—you own Pacific Railway for instance—but the underhand means which have been used to fledge our bantling have possessed the additional demerit of an early discovery, and there will be a great row made over it, as every individual Canadian is virtuously indignant that all his fellow countrymen are of political tone so debased that such things can happen. Of course there will be a great re-action, but the worst of the matter is that the exposure will in all probability defeat the very promising scheme for building the road, and delay it for years to come.”

“ Yes ! probably, and your government will have to take the work into its own hands ; an expensive method. You’ll get no foreign capital with which to construct the road now. The present ‘ promising scheme,’ as you call it, will be knocked on the head by these revelations ;” answered Mr. Horton.

“ Yes ! that is certain. Yet the road will have to be completed in any event. The country has engaged itself and will

have to complete its engagement ; notwithstanding that the incoming party are bitterly opposed—for reasons incomprehensible to no one save themselves—to the work, and will make delay,” returned Edwin.

“ I judge from the tone of your sentiments that were you to enter parliament you will be opposed to the new Cabinet.”

“ Yes ! though more that I am a Protectionist than for any other principal reason. The leaders of the incoming party are committed to ‘ Free Trade’—a policy, in my estimation more damaging to the country than the non-erection of a dozen Pacific roads. If I enter parliament at all, it shall be as a Conservative,” replied Edwin Vance.

“ All right !—go for either party you like, so long as you keep away from troubling me concerning these other affairs until I send for you. I’ll start for Lake Mordaunt in a few days,” replied Mr. Horton in reply.

“ I suppose we have now said all that there is necessity for upon this subject,” he continued. “ We will go for a walk, if you would like it, and to-morrow we will see the sights of the place.”

The conversation closed and they went for their walk.

CHAPTER XV.

ADA THE MENTOR. A SMART YANKEE.

The soft autumnal haze of a lovely, mid November day—mild, calm and delicious—lay over the landscape, all gorgeous in frost reddened foliage and beautiful in the many tinted, mel-low brightness of the Canadian fall.

In this the most pleasing of her seasons, the mild air, the rich colourings of the forest—all red, gold and bright yellows the dying leaves ; mixed in among the dark greens of the pines and firs—the russet fields on which the hazy sunshine falls in

tempered glory ; attractive to the feet, invite the house-dweller out to sweet communion with beautiful Nature in the tender softness she assumes ere around her she draws her white winter mantle, and falls asleep with the dying year.

And how delightfully did the soft beauty of the scene fall upon the eyes of Ethel Mordaunt ; who, for the first time—this charming day—convalescent, yet pale, weakened and thin, has left the house since her heavy illness.

How rapturously she felt the touch of the bright, soft air upon her face as she moved along in new-born pleasure after those many weeks of confinement to a sick-room.

How her heart thrilled within her as the glories of fresh Nature poured their varied beauties into the eyes that for long had been accustomed to nothing brighter than the dim dreariness of a darkened chamber.

How the kindly golden beams of the soft autumn sun fell upon her and gladdened her, as she held out her white wasted hands to bathe them delightfully in the glancing brightness, and laughed with the new exquisite pleasures.

She gathered the frosted scarlet maple leaves, and long russet grasses ; she searched for slender ferns and delicate mosses ; eagerly with the keen enjoyment of a little child—Nature's truest lover ; the delightful zest that only long deprivation could yield.

How lovingly she gazed upon all the well-known objects that seemed to smile back upon her again ; the prized little views, that were prized the more that they were become almost strange. What pleasure—so utterly fresh and new—to stroll from walk to garden ; from wood to lawn and feast her eyes upon everything around her.

The fresh fall air ; the lovely scene ; the delightful sense of this new freedom, revitalized her frame, and sent colour to her cheek and sparkle to her eye.

Ethel Mordaunt drank in her pleasure, and felt happiness

again ; almost happiness—for never cast aside altogether is lately-come sorrow—as she walked with bright pleased face and newly springing step along the carriage-road towards the lake.

Every thing was so beautiful, and it was such pure delight to be out in the beauty again.

“ I will never forget you though—Ally—my little angel sister, lying in your quiet grave. It is wrong for me to be so pleased,” she said to herself as the sense of her pleasure came upon her.

“ I will never forget you, my darling, never ! never ! and I never can believe that I shall be happy again.

“ Your sad early death, my lost little Ally ; poor Reggie's unfortunate marriage ; my own unhappy love would appear to make that a certainty ; yet, after all, what a beautiful world is this of ours, how much there is for which to live, to be thankful and to be happy.”

Ethel walked on, finding a new interest, a new delight with every footstep, but still her thoughts would fly back to the dear past scenes of her sorrow, which are better relegated—if they can be relegated—to deep oblivion.

“ What an ill-timed, what an ill-starred engagement has mine been. I'll starved from its first days. Even in its bright opening that dreadful Wolverton came and sowed dissension between us ; degraded himself—he tried to degrade, and struck at our bright confidence ; so on and so on until came the end.

“ Yet I have been cruel and unjust to Edwin Vance, I fear, I very much fear. I can no longer disbelieve the evidence which has daily accumulated. His mother's and Miss Seaforth's letters I cannot disbelieve, and I have been cruel and unjust.

“ But although I must acknowledge this to him, and freely admit the wrong I have committed, all else had better remain as at present. The engagement was ill-starred, and better for both

of us that it has been ended. He could no longer respect or—
or love one who was so ready to believe ill of him.

“I am to blame, I suppose for so easily doubting; his mother and Agnes Seaforth assert this plainly in their rather cruel letters. I shall acknowledge that also, but all else shall remain as at present.

“I must try to render my life a contented life, and spend it, if I can, for the benefit of others.

“I am not to taste happiness; I suppose.”

But as footsteps approached, Ethel looked up from her reverie, and beheld a well known girlish form with active pace come round the turn of the road before her, and she halted as she recognized Ada Dearborn.

“It *is* Ada—yet surely she cannot have walked from Ten-Lakes. How glad I am to see her again.”

Ada perceived Ethel at the same moment she was herself seen, and started visibly while an expression of pleasure swept over her face. She quickened her steps, but suddenly hesitated and approached doubtfully as if she were not sure of a welcome; for poor sensitive Ada deeply appreciated the fact that through one of her family, great suffering and injury had been brought home to the Mordaunts.

“Am I not a Dearborn—one of a race to be hated and feared by this young lady, upon whose innocent head we have poured agony,” she thought as she came forward, and the thought brought the hot blood to her cheek, and embarrassment to her girlish ease as she met Ethel Mordaunt.

“Why should she recognise me? why should I expect that she should? even though I was her friend and I love her, yet still I will fulfil the duty that has brought me here.

“Miss Mordaunt—Ethel,” she said, and could say no more. Looking up then in the face of her she addressed, a glance told her that it was not as she feared. The sweet face bore a smile, all reassuring, though the blue eyes held a surprised look at the

hesitating words. Ethel, at all events, had not harbored the thought that the mere tie of blood should hold the guiltless as the guilty.

“Miss Mordaunt—Ethel,” repeated that young lady, laughing. “Why do you say Miss Mordaunt, Ada? Are you afraid of me this morning, or are you so astonished to see me out again that you cannot speak to me. But I am very delighted to meet you, at all events. How have you been, my dear? Why have you not come to see me before this? Now that you have come, though, you shall help me to spend my first bright morning away from the sick room.”

“Oh! Ethel, I’m so happy—so glad to see you again. I hardly could believe my eyes that it was indeed you out walking this morning,” replied Ada, with loving warmth. “But I was afraid of you, Ethel, for a moment. I was afraid until I looked up into your sweet, good face that you would not speak to me; to one——”

“Afraid that I would not speak to you. Why, Ada? Why should I not speak to you; do I look so very cross?” interrupted Ethel, with her old merry laugh.

“No; not that, certainly. You could not be that, Ethel. Yet I might well question, after all which has occurred, that you could bear to look upon a Dearborn,” answered she seriously.

“Oh! Ada, do not say that. We are not going to speak of disagreeables. We are sisters now, and a brave, fearless, true little sister you have proved yourself to be.”

“I wish I were not your sister-in-law, dear Ethel, when I became so in such manner as it occurred, but very proud to be your friend.”

“Both, Ada, I hope you and I shall ever be. Surely though you have not walked all the way from Ten Lakes; where is your carriage?” said Ethel.

“Yes! I walked. I could not get the carriage this morning, while the walk is nothing this beautiful morning, and I wanted

to see you, Ethel. I have something to shew you which may be of importance."

"No disagreeables, I hope, Ada. Let us enjoy ourselves together this beautiful morning—my first morning under the blue sky, in the bright air, and feasting my eyes once more on God's beautiful works," replied Ethel, gazing around her with sparkling eye. "It seems to me that the word 'important' is so often linked with unpleasant things, Ada."

"I do not think that my business with you, though perhaps important, will be very unpleasant to you, dear Ethel even if it is to me. It is necessary, however that you should be made acquainted with the facts I have come to tell you—necessary that right be done to all."

"Oh! yes; I know, Ada. I have been told of your courageous and most honorable statements to Mr. Vance; statements which so few—so very few—would have made under the circumstances. By none but the right-minded would so hard, so painful a duty, have been accomplished. But you need not have the pain of repeating them to me, dear Ada."

"It is not of that I would speak, Ethel, although belonging to the same shameful story. Pray let me go on," said Ada, rapidly, as though she wished to accomplish an unpleasant duty as speedily as she could.

"Yesterday afternoon," she resumed, "my mother sent me to the room which had been occupied by Emily to gather up and pack away any articles belonging to her which she had not taken away with her upon leaving for their new home some time since. When I had accomplished this, and was engaged in rearranging the apartment, I accidentally came upon a letter which had evidently been tipped over the back of the little drawer of her toilette table.

"As Emily sometime since had made repeated and anxious enquiry for a letter which she stated to have lost, I glanced at the signature and address in order to discover if they would

throw any light upon its value. You may imagine my astonishment upon finding that the letter which I had thus found in my sister's room was addressed by Miss Seaforth to Mr. Vance.

"I have brought it to you, Ethel, for I very much fear that it too strongly confirms, found where it was found, the almost absolute certainty of my sister's guilt in the plot which caused the ending of your engagement."

And Ada, as she related this story, took from her little hand-satchel a letter which she handed to Ethel.

The latter took it mechanically, paused a moment in thought without looking at what she held in her hand, and raising her eyes, replied—

"'Miss Seaforth to Mr. Vance.' Then the letter belongs to Mr. Vance, Ada. I can have nothing to do with it or read it. Why did you not send it to him directly to Toronto?"

"Because from what I have seen of this letter I think you will find it important to yourself as well as to Mr. Vance, and that you should read it. If you will look at the date you will see that he probably received it on the day of our cricket match against the 'County.' You may remember, also, that he received a letter from a lady that morning, for Mr. Mordaunt made some laughing remark to him about his fair correspondent. The date may be important, for Emily was with you here that day, and was not this letter found in her private room?" replied Ada.

"I do not see why you should not read it," she continued, "for if Mr. Vance is innocent towards you he can have no objection; if not innocent, the sooner his guilt is proved the better. Remember too, Ethel, that Mr. Vance states that he wrote to Miss Seaforth, which letter she never received, on the evening of the day I mention; probably the reply to this."

"Yes! and Miss Seaforth, in a letter to me lately, tells me

she wrote to Mr. Vance on a business matter while he was here at Lake Mordaunt. Still I do not like to read the letter," said Ethel, uncertainly.

"I do not see that you should not. This letter you hold in your hand may be an important link in the chain of evidence."

"Yes! I see that the date agrees; he would receive this letter on the Saturday of the match," replied Ethel, who then glanced rapidly over the pages of the epistle.

"Why? What is this that I read? How extraordinary," she exclaimed. "You found this letter in Emily's room, you said, Ada. What a coincidence! How glad I am, and yet how ashamed for myself.

"Ada," she continued, "this is important, for the letter addressed by Mr. Vance to Miss Seaforth, which Emily so successfully induced me to believe as proof of her allegations—as a love letter in fact—is evidently but the rational and reasonable answer to this which I now hold in my hand. Written hurriedly, perhaps, and carelessly, but a natural reply to this.

"Oh! I remember now," she added, "how it came to be so hurried and careless," as her thoughts flew backwards to the events of the evening which followed the cricket match.

"How unjust I have been to him; how unjust and how cruel must I have seemed to him. As I now seem to myself, as this letter throws the light upon conduct all honorable to him, where I imputed it all dishonorable. His steadfast and generous loyalty to her who was left to his care, his father's last legacy; his noble obedience to that father's dying commands; his kindly sympathy for this high-spirited young girl who had made a discovery painful to her honorable pride; have I not in my blind jealousy imputed to his dishonor.

"How wicked I have been. What have I not lost," said Ethel, and, sitting down upon a fallen tree beside her, she dropped her face into her hands and fairly burst into tears.

Ada looked down upon her for a few minutes in silence, un-

willing to interfere, then stepped forward, placing her hand upon her friend's shoulder, and said :

"This is not the right way, Ethel. You have nothing to cry for thus. Your place it is to rejoice. It is I who should rather weep, for is not my sister even now proved to you to be that which I dare not name? Are we not all disgraced? It is I who should rather weep and you rejoice. Have you not discovered for a certainty, which most of us have known for some time past, that you have been deceived by falsehood and fraud. You should rejoice for your undeception."

"I do rejoice, Ada, but I have been so cruel and so hard, and I am ashamed of it."

"In so far that you broke from your engagement without making proper enquiry to verify your apparent cause for so doing, and were in too great haste, you are to blame ; nevertheless, you had apparent cause for your action. However, you owe reparation to Mr. Vance, and you should rejoice that you are enabled to make it," replied Ada gently, but with firmness.

"Yes ! I will make reparation to him in so far as I can, by acknowledging the wrong I have done him, and my own hasty precipitancy in doubting his honor. I have wronged Miss Seaforth also, and must repair that as I best can," sadly replied Ethel, who was yet in tears.

"You must call him back to you, Ethel. That is the best reparation you can make him ; the reparation you are in duty bound to make," and Ada's firm young voice rang upon her ears with new decisiveness.

"That I cannot do. Never again—never again can it be as it has been with us. This terrible thing between us, how could I be his wife ? A wife that he could wholly respect ? No ! All that has passed away. Better as it is," returned Ethel, with lowered head and yet tremulous lips.

"Ethel, this is not right, not like yourself, not like Ethel Mordaunt as she really is," said Ada Dearborn, as she stood be-

fore her friend—a young mentor—a resolute upholder of the right.

“You owe it to Edwin Vance to make him full, complete reparation, and to recall him to you again, else you make but the pretense of justice. What a mockery would it be to him to admit the innocence, which he knows he never lost, yet seek to retain him in the status of the guilty, and to refuse to restore to him that of which you have wrongfully bereft him.”

“To give him back that which is now valueless,” answered Ethel, gloomily. “Could I become his wife after all this? I have forfeited the right.”

“But he has not forfeited *his* right, and it is left to him alone to judge. You are his affianced wife; you must fulfil your engagement,” quickly replied Ada.

“The engagement is at an end; finally closed, and no longer exists,” said Ethel.

“Ended in so far as he is concerned if he chooses, I grant, but not so with respect to yourself. He is at liberty to consider it ended, yet you cannot. If he claims to be free you have not a word to say against it. If he claims the fulfilment of the engagement, you are in justice bound to fulfil it,” returned Ada, with decision and perhaps a little tone of impatience.

“You broke your engagement with Mr. Vance heedlessly and in haste—for certain reasons which imputed bad faith—to say the least, to him,” she resumed, “for conduct if of which he had been guilty, you would have been justified in its abrogation. But he is not guilty; his innocence has been proved, and he still holds towards you the same relation that he did when first you pledged your faith to him. He is to-day the same that he was to you then, no more and no less, and you are as much bound by your solemn promise as you were the day you made it,” continued Ada, with the same marked manner.

Ethel paused a moment ere she replied, and looked up in

some surprise at the determined teachings of the young girl she had herself so often taught.

"What you say may be very true, Ada; nay it is the truth. But he may not wish it. Could I be his wife; could he wish me to be his wife when I have brought down upon him all this misery and undeserved obloquy?"

"For which undeserved misery and obloquy you would repay him by making it life-long. You would continue the misery for him and also for yourself. Nonsense, Ethel! You are not yourself to-day or you would not pervert by a diseased sensitiveness, the relic of your illness, most probably your innate sense of right," exclaimed Ada, rather more forcibly than politely.

"Listen to me, Ethel," she continued. I am a Dearborn—one of a family whom you have no cause to love, and, perhaps for that reason, I have no right to speak as I have done, but yet, I think, the sacrifices I have personally made, the mental pains I have endured to bring about this great good, which you so persistently wish to throw aside, give me the right to speak.

"Can you think," she continued, "that since the day when, in my loyalty to the right, I made these statements to Mr. Vance which inculcated my own sister that you should be restored to each other, can you think that my life has been a happy life?"

"Can you imagine that I did not know when I made these statements what I should have to suffer from Emily's angry revenge, my mother's bitter reproaches for the unnatural conduct, as she termed it, rightly enough, perhaps, and my father's saddened face?"

"Can you imagine that it was pleasant to me to bear all these—to prove my sister a criminal—to bring down disgrace upon us in the eyes of the world—to make my father and mother

hold down their heads in shame when they think of the guilt that has come to a daughter of theirs ?

“ I knew all these things, yet still I told the tale because it was right for me to tell it.

“ Would it not have been more pleasant, more easy for me to have held my peace ; saved myself from disquiet and mental pain ; saved my parents from humiliation, misery and disappointment by keeping these things locked up in my own breast, seeing how all these sacrifices appear to have been uselessly made ?

“ Why, I am but a pariah in the house—even my father, though he knows that what I did was right, will not speak to me ; for he cannot but feel that my rightful act has brought shame to him and his. There was a terrible scene the evening that Emily returned from Lake Mordaunt—a terrible scene—but I had to endure it. I had done that which was right, and I did not count the cost.

“ Why do not you, also, do that which is right, Ethel Mordaunt ?”

“ Oh ! my poor Ada. I never thought of this, selfish, unreflecting that I am,” said Ethel, springing to her feet and clasping the out-spoken girl in her arms. “ My brave Ada, you are indeed a heroine. You are better, infinitely better, than I am. Who else would have had the moral courage, the undeviating rectitude to have faced these things which you have faced for the sake of two people almost strangers to you, to right them because you felt it was right. I have to learn from you, Ada.”

“ No, Ethel, not that, not that. It is I who have learned from you. It was you who taught me to do the right, and oh ! what an example have I not had in my poor sister. But, Ethel, she is not all bad. She has sinned against you grievously, I admit, but she is not all bad,” said Ada, becoming, in her turn, affected.

“ No, she is not all bad, Ada, far from it. She has many

good qualities—many brilliant qualities—though she perverts them. But was Reggie present at the—the terrible scene of which you speak?” asked Ethel, breathlessly ; horror in her eyes at the very thought.

“Fortunately not ! Emily was too wise for that. She sent him out upon an errand,” Ada replied. “He loves her—loves her devotedly, and a very good trait I observe in her is that she endeavours to keep his love by appearing to him, at least, worthy of it. She will make him, I am confident, a good wife, if she is helped and aided,” replied Ada.

“I hope so—I sincerely hope so. We must all aid her in her endeavour,” answered Ethel, fervently.

“The best thing for her, now that she is Reggie’s wife, their destiny irrevocable, would be forgiveness and secrecy to her fault, with, if it is possible, recognition from her husband’s family as his wife. She is not all bad, and would, I think, if thus aided, turn her undoubted talents and advantages to their proper use,” said Ada, with earnestness and feeling.

“She has my forgiveness, at any rate,” exclaimed the generous and noble hearted Ethel. “For Reggie’s sake, and in time I hope, for her own. If she will allow me, I will be her sister in reality, as I am in name, for she is Reggie’s wife.”

“And you will not, in your generous forgiveness, allow her design to succeed by throwing away your reconciliation with Mr. Vance, will you, Ethel?” asked Ada.

But as she spoke, a wagon driven at a rapid speed, appeared round the turn of the road near which they stood, and in another moment had drawn up beside them, while the laughing face of her uncle looked down upon Ethel.

“Uncle Edward ! Is it possible. How glad I am. From whence have you dropped down upon us ?” she said, looking up in his face with bright pleasure as she sprang to take his hand and his kiss.

“From the States, to be sure. You do not suppose a Cana-

dian sky could let fall so good an object, do you? How are you, my pretty girl? and you are really out of doors again," exclaimed Mr. Horton, jumping out of his carriage beside them. "Kiss your old uncle, Ethel, who is glad to see you so well again. But how thin and pale you are. You little goose for what did you make yourself so ill crying over your spilt milk.

"Miss Dearborn," he continued, "I'm very glad to see you once more, and very glad to see you two together also. You are becoming very pretty, Ada—quite a belle. Were I not so old I would ring the belle."

"Such a vile joke. If your brain is not capable of better than that specimen you would be wiser to try Canadian air for a while and improve," replied Ethel, laughing.

"A capital idea, Ethel, as Ada here would find if she will permit the experiment. You have been reading letters, I see. You are improving fast when you get back to that again, Ethel. But no mischief this time, I hope."

"No, Mr. Horton," Ada answered. "I brought this letter to Ethel for her inspection, and have at length convinced her that her very ill-used affianced is not the villain she has believed him to be."

"Oh! that is it. Very good, indeed; the time for a change has come. Give me the letter, Ethel," interrupted Mr. Horton, hastily.

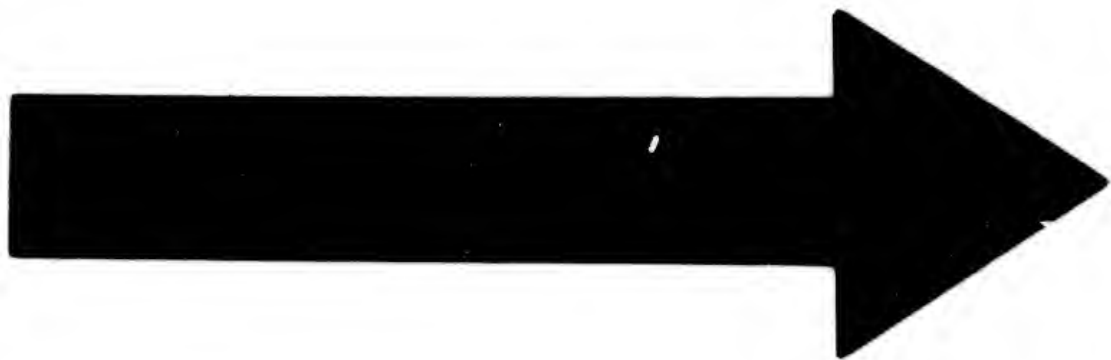
"But it is not mine, uncle. The letter belongs to Mr. Vance," replied Ethel.

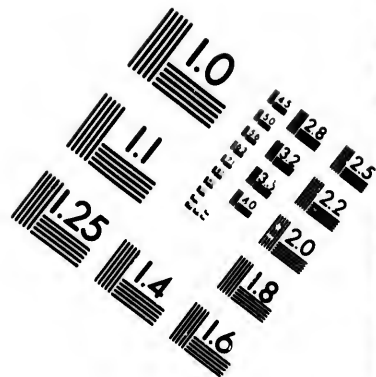
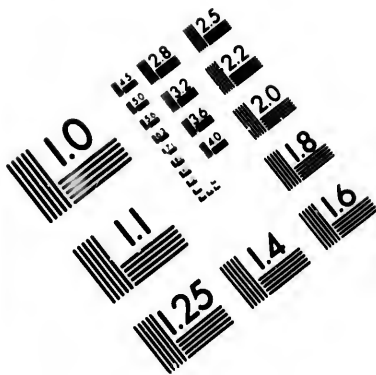
"Give me the letter, Ethel. I want it," he repeated, and advanced to take it from her.

"I cannot, uncle. You should not ask me. It is Mr. Vance's letter."

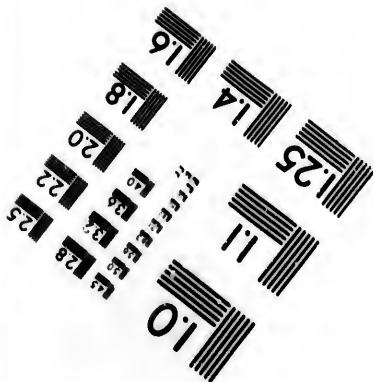
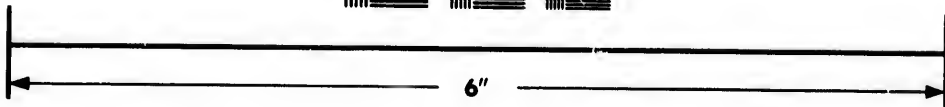
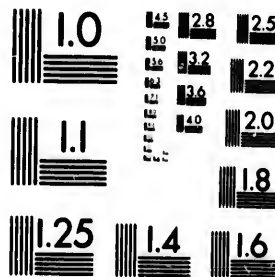
"Give me the letter," and this time he very coolly snatched it from her hand and proceeded to place it securely in his pocket-book.

"But, uncle——" recommenced Ethel.





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"But, Ethel," he repeated, laughing. "This letter is safer in my hands than yours, and I require it. Is my sister at home and Mordaunt?"

"Yes, uncle; both at home. Give me back the letter, uncle. It is not right you should take it, and I shall not allow——"

"Good morning, young ladies. I have no time to waste in conversing upon trifles. I shall see you by and bye when you get back to the house."

Saying which Mr. Horton nimbly jumped into his carriage, letter and all, and drove onwards.

"Drive us home, uncle," exclaimed Ethel after him. "Drive us home with you."

"Could not think of it, ladies; very sorry to deprive myself of the pleasure of your charming society, but I shall have time now to search all your goods and chattels before you can reach the house. You have something which I propose to appropriate on Mr. Vance's part, and the moment seems opportune. Farewell!" Mr. Horton laid whip to the horse and drove off, laughing at them.

A few minutes afterwards when Ethel and Ada entered the house—the latter having, with some difficulty, agreed to allow herself to be driven home in place of walking back again—they arrived in time for a little dramatic scene.

Mr. Mordaunt and Mr. Horton sat conversing together in the large hall, while at the moment of their entry Mrs. Mordaunt came in from the stairway with a lady's dress hanging upon her arm, which dress Ethel immediately recognized as her own.

"Here it is, Edward: the dress which Ethel wore on the day that she was taken ill. But what do you want with it? I am sure I cannot imagine what use you are going to make of Ethel's dress," exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt to her brother.

"Give it me here, Florence. I'll show you directly to what

use I will put it, and make you blush for all your thick heads," replied Mr. Horton, as he took the dress from his sister's arm.

"What are you doing with my dress, uncle? What business have you with it? You steal my letters first and now my pretty dress. One of my nicest summer dresses, too. What are you going to do with it?" exclaimed Ethel, running up to snatch it away from him.

"What am I going to do with it!" he replied, putting aside her hand and laughing at her. "I am going to do what none of you had sense to do. I am going to look in the pockets," and with clumsy manipulation Mr. Horton tumbled up the dress in search of the desired receptacle; not a very easy task for any gentleman. His perseverance was, however, at length rewarded; his hand accidentally slipped into the hole, as he irreverently termed it, and he drew it forth holding three letters.

"See here! numbsculls; these are the letters for which you have searched the whole house for weeks past," he exclaimed, holding them up in triumph before them.

"You a born Yankee too, Florence. I am ashamed of you. Not smart enough to think of this dress, when everything pointed to it as the hiding place of these letters," he continued, in mock indignation. "I verily believe the Canadian air makes gross and fat the brain. Did you not find Ethel insensible in the room in which her interview with that arch deceiver Emily had taken place? Certainly you did, and it follows as a natural consequence that if the letters had not been left upon the table, they must be in the pocket of the dress which Ethel had worn that day. Frankly acknowledge this now, stupids."

"How polite you are to-day, Horton," said Mr. Mordaunt with his good natured laugh. "But are these the letters that all the rumpus has been made about?"

"Yes! Certainly they are—two of them at least, and I have had to come up from New York to find them for you. A good thing, you'll admit, to have a Yankee in the family to show you

how to be smart now and again," replied Mr. Horton. "But there are three letters here. I only require two of them. Here! Ethel, you may have this one; I've read two or three lines of it, but it is *too* sickening. All love, pah!" and Mr. Horton tossed over to Ethel the letter she had received from Edwin Vance on the morning of her illness.

"These others I impound upon the part of my client, Mr. Edwin Vance, whose amateur lawyer and detective I now have the honour to be," continued Mr. Horton, putting them away into his pocket-book. "Here, Ethel, you may have this dress too, I don't want it any longer; but you may have it again if you like. It is of no use to me," and with an air of sublime generosity he threw back to Ethel her ill-used dress.

"Thank you, uncle, you are very kind indeed. I thought, perhaps, that you wished to steal it also, as you did the three letters which you have respectively robbed from my hand and my dress," returned Ethel, with a little of her old sauciness.

"Since when, pray," she continued, have you resumed the *role* of private detective for—*for—*for——"

"Mr. Vance you would say, Ethel," interrupted her uncle, and completing the sentence for her. "You little goose, are you afraid to mention his name?"

"Well! he came to see me down at my place some time ago," he continued, "with tears in his eyes, begging me for pity's sake to take hold of this terrible affair for him, and get him back his—what shall I call it, Ethel?—sweetheart, affianced wife, dearly beloved, anything you like—for him again. As he certainly has been very badly treated I very good-naturedly consented, especially as I wished to see you all, and so I am here as Edwin's advocate.

"I also intend to act as Ethel's advocate and judge of the cause into the bargain," he resumed, "with consequent prospects of its speedy termination."

"Yes! I told Vance that he had better go to you as the

person most likely to aid him and bring Ethel to her senses." said Mr. Mordaunt as he rose and prepared to leave the room.

"Oh, you did, did you, Mr. Mordaunt? Much obliged to you, I'm sure, for dragging me four hundred miles from home, with the prospect of a couple of thousand more or so before I return, for an affair that happens to be pretty well settled already, from what I hear from Ada," replied Mr. Horton, facetiously.

"Indeed! I did not know it. What news have you brought Ada?" exclaimed Mr. Mordaunt, turning to her curiously.

"A letter, which I have accidentally discovered, Mr. Mordaunt, and which is now in Mr. Horton's possession, has convinced Ethel that it was not Mr. Vance, who——"

"Is the big rascal she so politely claimed him to be," interrupted Mr. Horton, quickly, to save Ada the pain of further explanation.

"Thanks, Ada, my brave girl," he continued. "I fear, though, that the case against your sister—now Mrs. Reggie Mordaunt—looks rather black just at present; but, by your goodness and courage, your unflinching conscientiousness, your innate right-mindedness, you have redeemed her, my dear girl, and it behooves us all to forgive and forget this matter, which is now happily deprived of its harm."

As he said the words, he went over to Ada, and shook her heartily by the hand, with many a kind word and compliment, until poor Ada's eyes filled with tears as she disclaimed them.

Mr. Horton, on returning to his seat, took from his pocket-book the three important letters, which he had obtained from Ethel's hand and her long-hidden-away dress, and devoted himself to a careful perusal and comparison of their contents.

"All very evident: they carry their conviction with them," he said, when he had concluded his reading.

He handed them, then, to Mr. Mordaunt, who had remained conversing with Ada, with the words—

"Read these letters, Mordaunt, you can judge for yourself.

These two are the proofs which Emily gave Ethel, in support of her allegations, and which I obtained from the dress. Ethel will recognize them, I suppose. The other is that of which Ada has just spoken."

Ethel's father and mother, for the first time, then read the letters that had wrought so much unhappiness for them all. That the perusal was of deep interest to them, may well be imagined, for from these two simple letters, what sorrow had not come. Illness that had so nearly brought their lovely daughter to the grave, unhappiness, misery to her, the bitter cup that awaited her recovery ; and, lastly, their son's marriage—that very bitter cup—which seemed the culmination of all the evil.

It is not to be wondered that their attention was absorbed—that it was with heartstirring emotions they read the letters which had done all this, and rejoiced that the evil was in some measure passing away.

"Yes, it is all very clear!" said Mrs. Mordaut, as she rose from the perusal of the dismal records. "Mr. Vance has been wronged ; bitterly wronged, and we have all been very unjust. Poor Ethel! How hard, and how cruel has all this been upon you !"

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Ada, "very hard and very cruel for both. But the deception has come happily to light, and Mr. Vance must be righted." As she spoke, she turned meaningly towards Ethel.

"What could have been Emily's motive for her so apparently unnecessary, yet cruel, interference? Can you imagine, Ada?" continued Mrs. Mordaunt.

"I would prefer that you did not ask me, Mrs. Mordaunt, if you can spare me. I may say, however, that I think, at the first—at the first, only—she desired herself to marry Mr. Vance, for the reason that he was a rich man. Afterwards, other reasons impelled her, I suspect, which I would rather

not mention, if you would excuse me," returned Ada, politely, yet with decision.

"If it will not pain you too much, Ada, please tell us all. She is our daughter, now, and being such, the sooner all is forgiven and forgotten, the better it will be for us all; but to that end we should know everything, else the forgiveness cannot be, as it should be, perfect and lasting," said Mrs. Mordaunt, appealingly to her young visitor.

"Mrs. Mordaunt, I am very certain that Emily most bitterly regretted from her heart the cruel and wicked act which she had committed, when once she realized its terrible consequences. I know, now, that she regrets it. I know, also, how desirous she is to be—and, I am sure, that you will find she is—a good wife to Reggie. I know that she strives to be such, and that she strives to retain his love and his respect. Probably, her very desire in this not unamiable trait, will be the means of making her again a good woman, and to this end, she should be aided in the attempt," answered Ada, speaking in generous sisterly terms. She then continued—

"I will tell you, therefore. Mrs. Mordaunt, the little that I know, in order that this help be thus extended to her. I think she would have altogether abandoned her design when she discovered how delusive had been her hopes of Mr. Vance, if you had not, unfortunately, as it proved, asked me, in place of herself, to accompany your party to Cacouna this last summer, and if she had not become aware that Reggie's attentions to her had been forbidden. She was very much angered at this, and a little disagreement which I understood she had had with Ethel, relative to a remark she had made concerning Mr. Vance, shortly after the cricket match, confirmed her in her design.

"But after Ethel's illness became known to her, she was in a terrible state of remorse and fear, as I can now explain, although I did not then understand," continued Ada, in her loving right-mindedness, certainly not imputing the worst motives.

"Yes, she had not thought before-hand of the mischief she would occasion," said Mr. Horton, "But, as I have taken all these affairs into my own hands—Ethel's, Vance's, Emily's, and Reggie's—I must forbid either of you present to interfere by word, deed or, especially, by letter—unmanageable articles,—in any way, whatever, until I give you leave. Vance has agreed to this condition ; you must, also, and I will bring all out, as well I can from the slough of despond.

"The dinner-bell—sweet sound. I'm hungry." With which remark, Mr. Horton closed the conversation.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN HIS MERCY.

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

"He loves me as I do not deserve to be loved. He thinks of me as all that I ought to be, and am not. Can I bear to lose his love?"

"Can I endure that he shall see me as I am?"

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

So Emily Mordaunt questioned herself : questioned herself in anxiety and miserably painful thought : her beautiful face drawn, and her white brow contacted with the lines—the pained lines—of distracting fear and regret.

"Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell him?"

Her lips moved with the unuttered words ; her eyes strained themselves with greater fixedness, as she gazed from the pretty bay window, where she stood among her flowers, over the broad, placid waters of Lake Ontario ; gazed, yet saw not, so intent with its burning reflections, was her laden mind.

Bright Nature lay spread out, all glorious and inviting. In soft, pure beauty, calling to mankind to see—and rejoice in the seeing—the bright world God gives them in which to be happy:

to drink in the lavish beauty, that, the influencing lesson, it shall teach, should make them happy, as it refines them from the evil to the good.

Emily Mordaunt gazes out upon the radiant scene, yet sees not. Over the sparkling waters, all bright as the golden sunlight, over the charming autumnal landscape, green, and gold, and scarlet, over the pretty Lake-shore village wherein they have taken up their abode; upon the bright blue sky, arching down its heavenly bounding-in over all, her eyes rove—yet see not; for she is not happy.

As she stands, among her flowers, in her pretty drawing-room window, she is still the same Emily Dearborn to first appearance.

Handsome, as splendidly handsome as ever, she yet conveys an indefinable sense of change, some mocking difference from the Emily Dearborn of the past.

Beauty is ever pleasing; and, as Emily Dearborn, she had been beautiful; as Emily Mordaunt, she is still beautiful—more beautiful. Even although the sharp markings of painful thought are visible upon her face, she is yet more beautiful.

Quiet, neat, well—not showily—dressed, she has come to look like a lady; the dash, the fastness, the vain pretension of the Emily Dearborn of past days, all gone from her; and, as she is the more pleasing, so is she the more beautiful.

So she stands in her pretty drawing-room all day, in the bright morning, waiting for her husband, and drowns him in harassing thought. In the midst of light and beauty, she is yet miserable and unhappy.

Yet the scene was very fair, her every surrounding pleasant. She had not gratitude, it is true, or riches, but all about her was bright, useful, and handsome. Everything that, to appearance, should have made her life a happy life, was here; if more comfort constituted all requisites for happiness.

Her husband loved her, was devoted to her, a diligent consci-

ously looked up to her. She had no lack of material wants, or even luxuries. Her house was pretty, the drawing-room in which she stood, was tasteful, handsome and cheery. If there were not the evidences of wealth around her, there were not either the evidences of poverty. If she could not command pretentious display, she could command everything to make her days bright and pleasurable.

She should have been happy ; but, to-day, she certainly is not happy.

“What is this that has come to me, this change that makes me fear ? Am I not as safe now, as upon the day I married Reggie Mordaunt ? Why then do I fear ?

“What has made me the coward that I am ? Am not I his wife, and safe in that ?

“Yes, Emily Mordaunt, in so far as personal safety lies, you are safe. That you can answer yourself, yet it does not now satisfy.

“Could I bear to lose his fresh, young love ? Could I bear that he should look upon me with other eyes ? Not for all that earth can give me could I endure the thought that he might some day, look upon me as other than the fair, young girl, so fair, and so true, in his imagination, whom he loved and married ?

“How can I tell him the terrible story, and tear from around myself the bright halo with which his fond eyes have invested me ?

“To him I am all good, all fair, all that I ought to be, and am not. How can I tell him, to lose all these prized investings ? Lose the love that has become so dear to me ; that has become so necessary to me !

“Shall I give him my own version, deceive him again, and keep his love ? Shall I risk that the dreadful truth be made known to him by another in all its baleful lights ? Better this. How can I again deceive his trusting young soul ?

“Shall I tell Reggie ? Shall I tell Reggie ?

“Would I do again this thing that I have done? Now, as I am—would I do it again, in like circumstances? No, not for worlds, not for all the bright earth could give; I shudder at the thought! Not for worlds would I do it!

“Why? Why, then, would I not again? Am not I the same woman—the same in all things that I was when I committed my sin—as I was the day I married him, whom I looked upon as a mere boy, whose only merit was that he could save me from the consequences of my sin?

“But, do I look upon him as that mere boy to-day, whom I married—without love—to save myself from the prison cell?

“Emily Mordaunt, you are changed; changed, indeed!

“My Reggie! Your true love—blind, foolish, unthinking though it be—has made us own reward, all worthless though it is. Reggie! I love you! I love you! and I fear, I tremble, for your love, that I may lose it!

“But he has not been told! He may not be told the story that is now known. If I could but think it might always be so!

“How generous have these Mordaunts been? How noble, and how kind? For weeks they must have known all; yet not one word. Though I have injured them so very deeply, not one word in retaliation. Can I wonder that they do not like me as their son's wife? I do not like myself in that quality. Even though their reticence may be for that son's sake, yet it is for my sake, too, that his wife may be in his eyes the wife she ought to be in reality. How noble! How generous! How kind!

“But Mr. Vance may not be equally forgiving. Why should he be? Has he not suffered vilely through me, at my hands? Why should I look for mercy at his?

“Shall I tell Reggie? Shall I tell Reggie?

“Oh, how hard to decide! What is there for me to do? Why may I not keep him, my bright young lover, the hus-

band whom I love? Keep him, as when he loved me at the first, when he deemed me all that was lovable, as he deems me still; for I have tried to keep his love.

“One day more—one day more of the trusting love and faith that has conquered my heartlessness and made me his, that has forced me to strive to be worthy of him.

“How shall I decide? Shall I tell him to-day?”

“He will forgive me, that I know; but, how can I endure that he should think that it had become necessary to forgive? How can I endure that the fresh brightness of his love shall be dimmed in shame for his wife?”

“How shall I decide? Shall I tell Reggie?”

So ran her thoughts—painful, harrassing, distressed—as she still stood gazing out over the broad waters.

Doubtful, hesitating, fearful, her mind, in its agony, veered from the dark picture that confronted her on one side to the equal terror that arose on the other for her, to find not aiding light, nor shining hope in either.

Emily Mordaunt was indeed changed. This surely was not the Emily of the past days?

For where was now the rapid capability, the brilliant inventiveness of deceit that would—in those days—have so easily circumvented a worse difficulty, and safely tided over her self-reliant feet from a more threatening flood.

Where was all that now? What had brought to her the change?

Why was there now raised before her the menacing sword of avengement, when she no longer dared to avert her eyes; when she dared no longer seek to turn aside from her the glittering edge.

In His justice or in His mercy had the silent workings of the Omnipotent Hand brought to her the change that she might see when again was upheld the threatening tower. Upheld in

threatening that she might see. Withheld to be—in His mercy, how well we may know—if she saw.

In His mercy—for he reckes not of His justice before His mercy. He—unseen acting—had touched with warm life the cold heart, that through her love, she might fear and see.

In His loving mercy to His creatures; in His high justice.

Still she stood at the window, intent upon her thoughts, and gazed out, unseeing, upon the wide landscape. Still she stood, and thought her pained thoughts, until, at length, her eyes fell—fell with meaning light—upon the approaching form of her young husband. She started up from her reverie, and rose to meet him at the door with her welcoming kiss.

“Is it you, Emily? The sweet little wife that always meets me at the door,” he said, as he took the tempting proffer. “How pretty you are, to-day, with your soft, bright eyes, and sweet, pale face!”

“Is breakfast, ready, Emily?” he continued. “I’ve had a long walk of it, and I am as hungry as a young bear.”

“Yes, Reggie; in two or three minutes you shall have your hunger appeased. We had to await your return,” she said, and walked with him into the little breakfast room.

“Have you any letters for me, this morning, Reggie?” she asked, as he threw himself into a chair by the window, gaily humming a tune, as he looked out and awaited breakfast.

“Yes, I have, Emily; I forgot them, before, by joy. Here is one for you—from Ada, I think, and I have one from my father,” he answered, as he rose, and handed her a letter.

“From Ada?” hastily ejaculated Emily, in a tone of mingled surprise and disquietude, and, as Reggie seated himself again to read his letter, she took hers to the other side of the room, ere she broke the seal.

“THE LARKS, Nov. 30th, 1873.

“MY DEAR SISTER,—

“As an occurrence, affecting yourself in some measure has,

within the last few days, taken place here, I think it is but right that I should inform you, although you will not probably thank me for my share in it.

"However, though that may be, it is but right that you should be made aware of the facts.

"While arranging anew, by my mother's request, the apartment which you had occupied when at home, I, accidentally, found a letter at the back of the little drawer of your toilette table, and at once perceived that, although it had been in your possession, it was addressed by Miss Seaforth to Mr. Edwin Vance.

"Surprised and disconcerted as I was by this discovery, I kept it to myself, until, upon long and painful reflection, I saw that it was my duty either to send it to Mr. Vance, or, under the attendant circumstances, take it to Miss Mordaunt.

"The latter of these courses, and, as I think, the preferable for all parties, I have adopted.

"Knowing, as you must know, the contents of this letter, I need hardly tell you that, when once Miss Mordaunt was induced to read it, all doubts of the honesty and truth of Mr. Vance were removed from her mind.

"It is not for me, my dearest sister, to add a word beyond the bare statement of facts. I have, therefore, but to say—although I am not, perhaps, justified in saying what I know—that all now rests upon yourself, dear Emily. Your own happiness, your husband's reconciliation with his family—I dare add—your own, also, all rests upon yourself now; upon a word.

"With fond love to yourself and Reggie,

"I am, your affectionate sister,

"ADA DEARBORN."

Emily quietly finished her letter, refolded and put it away carefully. Excepting that the little pained lines became again visible upon her face, she did not shew, outwardly, that she was disturbed, but there was a tremour in her voice, as she asked Reggie, "what news he had from home?"

"Nothing from home, in particular, Emily, excepting that Ethel is quite well again, and Uncle Horton is with them. Papa writes though, strongly urging that I should go back, at once, to College, to prepare myself for a profession, of my own choice,

too, and he offers—my generous father—upon condition that I agree to do so, to allow us another thousand dollars a year, and, in addition, to pay the University fees. He does not wish me to remain idle, he says. But, wonder of wonders, Emily! You are very kindly mentioned! What is coming next?” replied Reggie, happily, a pleased expression brightening his face.

“They mentioned me, kindly, did you say, Reggie?” said Emily, after a moment, in a voice she, with difficulty, restrained to steadiness.

“Yes, they did!” answered Reggie, looking up from his letter, surprisedly. “All of them. Why shouldn’t they? It was time, I think.”

Emily did not speak again for a few minutes, but sat, lost in thought, while Reggie re-read his letter. At length, however, she woke from her reverie, and asked—

“Do you think of going to Toronto, back to College, Reggie?”

“Well, what do you think of the scheme, Emily? I’ll do that which best pleases *you*,” he replied.

“Then go, Reggie. We will go at once, as your father wishes.”

“By Jove! Emily, considering the way in which you have been treated by them all, I did not expect that that should have been your reason. If you had assigned the doubling of our income as the motive of your advice, it is what could only have been looked for. You possess more Christian charity than they do, my darling,” replied Reggie, warmly, and looking upon his wife, whom he so invested with the good that was not hers.

“No, Reggie, not that! Not that! If you but knew all, you would not say so,” returned Emily, with rapid deprecation. “It was not of the money, though, that I thought, really. But we will go to Toronto, I would like it, and your father is right.”

A pause ensued; when, in low, tremulous tones—for coming

upon her in her already softened mood these further kindnesses —“coals of fire,” under which she could no longer bear up, she continued—

“Reggie! Listen to me for a moment, please. I have something to tell you. You believe me to be a good woman, who——”

“What? Believe you to be what? What are you driving at, Emily?” interrupted Reggie, but as he spoke, a loud knock at the door *interrupted* him, and he sprang to his feet.

“Who can this be, I wonder?” he said, as he looked out of the window to see for himself.

“It is uncle, as sure as I’m alive, Emily! What in the world brings him to see us, I wonder?” and Reggie ran out to open the door, without waiting for the servant’s coming.

“Hallo, uncle! How are you? From what strange cloud did you drop down upon us? I’m awfully glad to see you! Come in. Why, I thought you were at Lake Mordaunt?”

“Well, Reggie, you’re looking bright enough, at any rate!” replied Mr. Horton, shaking hands with his nephew. “Of course I was at Lake Mordaunt, but I’m here now, and I want some breakfast. Where’s your wife?”

“Just sitting down to breakfast. Here, let me help you off with your over-coat,” said Reggie, energetically citing his action to his words, and tugging off the garment in question with frantic eagerness. “In this way, uncle, you’re just in time. If we had known you were coming, we would have had pork and beans, pump’n pie, and fish-balls, and doughnuts, and New England rum and cider, and I’ve got in one that a Yankee could like, ready for you,” continued the volition Reggie, as he fairly pulled his uncle along.

“You donkey! I’m not a Yankee, I’m a New Yorker! Do you think I want all these things for my breakfast? Certainly not the New England rum, at any rate,” replied Mr. Horton.

In another moment, he found himself in the presence of Emily Mordaunt.

"Good morning, Emily. How do you do?" he said, holding out his hand to her, while he looked her steadily in the face, as if to learn there what had passed, or was passing in her soul.

She shewed some embarrassment; she blushed as she rose to receive him, and she was not at ease.

He knew that he had come upon a delicate mission, and he knew, also, that *she* knew that he had not come solely upon a visit to see them, that she must be aware that there lay something beneath; and he, notwithstanding his mission, being wholly unabashable and coolness itself, resolved that she, also, should not feel uncomfortable.

He had noted, too, the embarrassment and the blush, so unwonted for Emily Dearborn, as he had known her, and he mentally determined to discover, if he could, why there had come the embarrassment and the blush. He continued then to her—

"I am very glad to see you, again, Emily, and to see that you are looking so well. Reggie, also, well and happy. Very comfortable, too, I perceive;" as he glanced around the room, and out upon the bright Ontarian waters.

"And I have come to ask for some breakfast this morning, my dear."

"I am very glad of that, Mr. Horton. It shall be served in a moment. I am very pleased that you came to our little house, in place of going to the grand hotel," replied Emily, with a smile, although the startled expression of her face had not disappeared.

"Oh, I came on purpose to see you both," answered Mr. Horton, laying a little stress upon the last word. "How are you getting on together in your new life? You both seem happy and comfortable enough."

"Why should we not be happy, uncle? I am, I know, even

though I did run away with Emily contrary to the wishes of my friends. I don't regret the step."

"Oh! I do not suppose that you do regret it, Reggie. I do not suppose, either, that you would regret any step that you might take, be it right or wrong," replied Mr. Horton, laughingly. He turned and added, "But what say you, Emily?"

"I do not regret *that*, Mr. Horton, either, but if you would —"

Emily could not finish her sentence, but her large, bright eyes, which he saw became damped by a tear, were raised to his face with a glance that was imploring.

Their breakfast was served, to which Mr. Horton and his nephew, at least brought good appetites. The former enjoyed his meal hugely, as he chatted away in all pleasantness and good nature with Reggie and his wife. He was merry and cheerful, he used his happy wit that they might feel at their ease and laugh; he was jubilant, and he laughed himself.

He questioned Emily as to her housekeeping and her employments; her servants, and her cookery-book, and was complimentary when he learned she kept but one servant, and supervised her own cooking. He questioned Reggie as to his occupations, and gave him a homily upon his idle life.

He anecdoted—as his countrymen would say—and related laughable stories of his experiences, striving to shew them that he was at ease, and that he expected that they would be at ease with him, also.

But beneath the current of his pleasant talk, there ran the counter current of his thoughts.

"What an anomaly is this human nature of ours—this strange, inexplicable created nature, of which we have our being? What are not the inconsistencies, the devious changes and swayings with which it yields, or adapts itself to the force of its surroundings? How it is bent towards the good or drawn towards the evil, as its daily contact is with the good, or with the evil.

“The things of to-day that forcibly impinge upon its easy impressions, obliterate, wipe away and replace the firm, imprinted teachings of but a yesterday's date. The good shall supplant the evil, the evil the good ; insensibly, inappreciably, unconsciously—but none the less effectually—as the good or the evil shall be the nearest influence surrounding ; and from that nearest influence, be it good or be it evil, our poor human nature—chameleon-like, a mere reflection—takes, in some degree, at least, its immediate colouring.

“The firmest principle, the highest, the purest inclination for good cannot endure, for a day's space even, contact with evil, and retain unsullied spotlessness. The impressible mind takes bias of its surroundings.

“Nor can the evil nature, however evil, breathe evil altogether in an atmosphere of good. The beneficent influence will prevail and leave its leaven, even though the to-morrow may wash it out by its new surroundings.

“Poor, unstable, human heart ; with the good always, it shall turn to to the good ; with the evil always, it bends to the evil.

“And this woman who sits before me, an example, I begin to think ; for if this is the same Emily Dearborn, who used to be, I cannot quite believe.

“Handsome, brilliant, clever as she was, what an unamiable, what a detestable character she presented, but a few weeks since, to those, at least, who could see her as she really was. An incorrigible flirt, a pretentious, dashing young lady of the day ; blatant, impertinent, loud, yet a deep and scheming intriguante, selfish and designing, capable of almost any baseness to advance her ends ; determined to advance them, and who has committed crime for the mere gratification of personal spite and revenge.

“Marrying, too, a man whom she did not love, with the sole object of saving herself from the consequences of her sin ; a marriage which did not bring her wealth or any of her darling

ambitions ; neither love, money, high place, or power. A marriage which, viewing her in the light she has always exhibited, could fairly be said to be most disappointing ; into which nothing but pressing danger could have driven her ; a marriage from which discord, unhappiness, and ruin for both, could safely have been predicted, and yet from which, neither discord, misery nor ruin, seem likely to spring.

“ In all this evil of hers, there must have been some latent good ; she is shewing it unmistakeably. She has made her husband happy, and she tries to make him happy ; in that very trial, if I mistake not, she is herself happy and better. She has been in contact, of late, with good, instead of the former evil.

“ I can see, also, that the shadow of her sinful act has fallen upon her from her very happiness. She regrets, and she fears it, which she would not have done before. Why ? From whence springs the change ?

“ She knows that the worst injury likely to be inflicted upon her now, would be the making known to her husband of the thing she has done.

“ Would she have cared for that a month ago ? No ! She would not have cared, not one straw.

“ But she fears that now ; she feared *me* when I entered her house, one short hour ago. She fears me now.

“ She wishes that her husband should think well of her ; she endeavours that he should think well of her, and she has succeeded. Emily Mordaunt is not the Emily Dearborn of passed days ; she is a better creature.

“ Her face shews it, her dress shews it, her every movement shews it ; her husband shews it, and her house shews it. Nor can it be the deception-working of the old Emily Dearborn spirit either, as it was impossible that she should know of my coming upon them to-day, for the good reason that none but myself and the Mordaunts were aware of the intention.

"No, she is a changed woman! But what then has created the change?"

"That she still desires to rise is probable, her natural tastes and proclivities would still lead her on to that, but it does not follow, therefore, that she should commence her rise by making her husband happy and her home pleasant.

"The Emily of passed days would rather have resorted to subtle intrigue, some grand, immediate scheme, which would have left her careless of these; would rather have chosen old devices in old evil ways for the purpose.

"What has created the change?"

"I have it! I have struck the key-note, and all—all that I have seen to-day—strikes in unison with it!

"Emily Mordaunt is not the old Emily Dearborn, because she has learned to love her husband!

"Her marriage fixed her destiny; placed her in new surroundings; struck away the evil promptings and ambitions in which she lived; replaced them with those of a better origin, and—more than all—she has learned to love her husband!

"I have struck the key-note; I'm convinced. I shall be very glad if it is so; nor will it be a very great work to discover the truth."

In such direction ran the current of Mr. Horton's thoughts as he sat at the breakfast table with his young hosts, while he chatted, laughed, and made the meal pleasant to them.

Reggie was at ease from the first, while from Emily he had taken her embarrassment, although his keen eye could yet see the anxiety and doubt in her face.

Still he had made things pleasant, and he liked her none the less that he could trace her shade of fear.

His next object was to get rid of Reggie for the morning, as his self-imposed mission lay with Emily, alone, and he cast about in his mind for some method by which to achieve his desired object.

When they had risen from the table, Reggie, however, settled the matter himself, unexpectedly, thereby saving his visitor the trouble of getting him away from the house.

"Emily," he said, turning towards his wife, "I'll have to leave Mr. Horton to your care this morning, for a time, unless he would like to go with me, for a sail upon Lake Ontario. I have promised some young gentlemen of this place to accompany them to witness the last yachting races of the season. I do not suppose I shall be away all day, at any rate. A ten-mile race around the island, that is all.

"Will you go with me, uncle ? or, should you prefer to stay at home, with Emily ?" he continued.

"Thanks, Reggie ; I'd rather remain with Emily, and talk. I do not care for yachting at this late season, it is too cold. I am tired, also, with last night's railway travel. You go and enjoy yourself ; never mind me," replied Mr. Horton, very glad of the opportunity.

"A yacht race ! Oh, Reggie ! You musn't go to-day ; the season is too late to be safe. Stay with us, Reggie, don't go to-day !" exclaimed Emily, stepping forward in alarm, and only restrained from further demonstration of it, by Mr. Horton's presence. She did not, probably, relish, either, the prospect of the *tete-a-tete* now rendered inevitable with that gentleman.

"But I must go, Emily. I promised to go. There is no danger, you goose. I could drink up the dirty little pond before it could drown *me*. You shall see me back before four o'clock."

"Oh, be careful, Reggie ! Promise me you will be careful !" exclaimed Emily, with the vain anxiety which ladies exhibit when their liege lords mention an inclination for cold water in quantity larger than a pailful. "Why did you not tell me of this before ? I shall be so anxious, I wish you were not going."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, I suppose. Never thought of it. But come and help me on with my great-coat, Emily, there's a

darling, and don't bother about danger. I must be off for I am late," he answered, lightly, and, in another minute he had left the house.

When Emily returned to the apartment in which she had left her guest, she knew that a trial was before her, and that it would soon be made manifest whether Mr. Horton had come for peace or for war. She knew that he possessed power against her to wage a terrible war upon her and her's, and her heart sank a little in view of the coming ordeal. But she had never been one to flinch from an ordeal, however fearful its prospect, or to evade it by escape.

"Shall we adjourn to the drawing-room, Mr. Horton? You shall have an easy chair and the morning papers, if you wish them?" she said, as she led the way to the apartment in question.

She seated herself, and took up some work dear to ladies, while her visitor amused himself for a few moments at the window, speaking upon indifferent subjects and the pleasant view before his eyes. At length, however, he approached, took a seat beside her, and said, kindly—

"You seem to be very comfortable, here, Emily. Comfortable and home-like. A pretty little house, and very pleasant surroundings."

"Yes, Mr. Horton, we have nothing of which to complain, Reggie and I," she answered, without, however, raising her eyes from her work.

"And, Reggie appears to be happy, also, I imagine, Emily?"

"I am very glad that you think so; I hope that he is happy, I believe that he is happy," she returned, still without looking up and busily moving her fingers.

"So much the better for him—and for you, also."

He paused then for a minute or two, as she did not reply, while he surveyed the graceful, but uneasy, figure before him.

"She is very pretty and lady-like, now that she dresses more quietly. Her marriage has improved her in some respects, at all events," he thought. I wonder, though, if the change has reached her heart? If so, there is happiness for Reggie, yet. But let me get back to my work, while I have the opportunity."

And then, quietly, in his pleasant accents, he said—

"Emily, my dear, I am come to-day, expressly to see you. I have something to say to you."

There was a little start—a little pause—an evident tremor on Emily's part.

"I am ready to hear anything you may have to tell me, Mr. Horton," she answered, in a low, yet distinct voice. "Pray go on!"

"Would you be surprised to hear that a reconciliation will soon take place between Ethel Mordaunt and Edwin Vance? The difficulties which caused their separation having been overcome. There has been a full discovery of all—of all, Emily. As you were concerned, you know, as we all know, in that separation, I wish to tell you this at first."

Mr. Horton, as he said these words—which bore a significance so startling for his listener—leant over towards her still speaking in his same kind tones, but with earnest seriousness, while he looked steadfastly into her down-bent face.

The work that Emily held dropped from her fingers; she sat, still and motionless in the same down-bent attitude, save that her hands twitched nervously, until she locked them together. Her trial had come upon her, as she expected it would come, when her husband's uncle had entered her house, an hour ago, and she must prepare herself for its endurance.

What a flashing of thought there was through her brain, as the significance of the words developed themselves to her sense. The Past, the Present, and the Future, in vivid limning held up, in instant, but deep-striking impression, their pictured story for

her heart-reading : The Past that had gone beyond recall ; the Present, here, with its happiness ; and, the Future, coming, all dark and doubtful, and danger-menacing to her.

The picture reversed itself again. She saw what might have been for her, if but her past—the gone-away—had been different. She saw, in instant, yet, all bright distinctness, the still smiling and happy present, how much happier without the doubt and fear, in which she had love, and hope, and joy ; the future that would have been equally brightened, smiling and happy, as it passed away into the long-marching years.

All these and crowding others, flashed through her mind, while the danger that the menacing Future held forth aroused her and awakened her to its pressing threatenings.

A moment's pause ere she raised her head ; her large eyes fixed, flamingly bright, upon his face, while upon her own lay a deep-dyeing blush. Excited she doubtless was, for her mouth trembled and her breath came hurriedly between the parted lips, but nothing born of fierceness or anger overlaid the hunted expression ; there was no passion or defiance in the tone in which she spoke—

“ And have you come merely to say this to me, Mr. Horton, merely to say this to me, or are you here to bring discord and misery between me and the husband who loves me ; who has now none other to love but his wife ? Are you here to end, if you can, the little happiness that is left to him, his loving belief and his trust in me ? If so, Mr. Horton, you might well spare him. Say what you will to me, I shall endure patiently all you may wish to say, but spare Reggie this last blow ! ”

“ You mistake me, Emily, I am here for a better purpose, I hope,” replied Mr. Horton, calmly and kindly. “ Not here to destroy Reggie's happiness, but, if possible, to confirm it, and, if you will allow me, your own, also.

“ But, Emily,” he continued, after a moment's pause, “ this

all rests with you ; rests upon yourself, alone, this morning."

"Rests with me, Mr. Horton ! I do not understand you. What rests with me? Reggie's happiness? Poor fellow ! He has little other left him than his true love for his wife. That I will retain, if I can retain it," she replied, her voice growing firmer with each of these words she spoke.

"Emily," returned Mr. Horton, "have I not told you that all is known to us, now ; all is known of the means employed against my niece and her betrothed ; all, even to the proof against her who so cruelly used those means.

"I do not come to you to insult or injure, but rather to bring peace and restoration ; I bring forgiveness from those whom you have injured ; forgiveness, forgetfulness, and silence as to the past, if you will have them. You can restore a son to his parents in full reconciliation, you can become as a daughter to them ; and, Emily, you can save yourself.

"Of all who know these past events—and, they are few who know them—Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt, Ethel, Mr. Vance, your sister Ada, and myself, being all to whom silence has not been kept ; not one—not one who will not rejoice that you come back to us again ; not one who bears malice towards you, not one who would not rather forgive and forget. Emily, you have committed a great crime, it is your duty to make atonement."

"What am I to say ? What am I to do ?" exclaimed Emily, bowing her head into her hands, and the bitter sobs told of the struggle within her.

She knew what was expected of her now—the little, the easy ending for her heavy sin.

But was it so easy ?

Was it not hard—very hard—for her, to say the words ?

To wash away in entirety the old leaven of the years gone by, to replace entirely the old thoughts, motives and desires by those of a new life ; to effect the sweeping change of her

whole mental being may not be done at a moment's impulse. It was not so easy.

It was hard upon her, very hard. She felt now all the bitterness ; she deeply realized now—as she was, with her new life upon her—the dire rewardings of her sin.

“Emily, your husband loves you ; loves you, trusts you, and is happy in his love. His future life lies in great measure in your hands ; does he not deserve all from you ?

“I have found, also, my dear,” he continued, “that you have tried to be a good wife to him, when it was hardly expected of you that you should have been ; that you *have* been a good wife to him, and I have discovered, Emily, that there has come to you, the great good to love your husband, as he loves you—a very great good—why do you not make it the turning-point of your life? Save yourself, Emily, save yourself, now, at once, in this very time.

“I know that you did not love your husband, at the first,” he resumed, as he rose from his seat, and, standing over her, gently laid his hand upon her bowed head, and gently touched the wavy masses of her bright hair. “I know you did not love him then, for I knew, my dear, the reasons that induced you to marry him. Yet it has come to you love him. Who sent that love to your heart ? Why was the love sent to your heart ? Why do you refuse His proffered mercy ?”

“I do love him ! I love him with my whole heart !” exclaimed Emily, springing up to her feet from her bowed-down attitude of shame and sorrow, but with tearful averted face, and in a trembling voice, “I have tried to be as good a wife to him as was possible for me to be, so that I might keep his young, kind, all-true love, and I have come to love him. For his sake I would do all. What can I say ? What can I do ?

“Mr. Horton, I am Reggie's wife, the wife of his love ; unworthy, oh ! how unworthy, but not unworthy in that I have tried, since I am his wife, and through him I am saved.

“ I am Reggie’s wife,” she continued, “ and being that, I cannot say the words which you expect me to say.

“ But, on my knees, I ask God to forgive me my sin !”

* * * * *

And Emily’s prayer ascended to Him who hears.

* * * * *

Mr. Horton turned away to the window, and looked out over the wide waters, upon which the sun’s rays glanced in golden flashings ; out upon the beautiful world in its brightness, and its ever fresh delighting, moving on with its living creatures all safely under the Great Merciful Hand ; and in his sight it was then very beautiful, although a tear stood in his eye.

For a few minutes, he stood thinking of all that had passed in the last, few short minutes, thinking of what then passed through the soul of that one of God’s creatures, upon whose head the Great Merciful Hand had been laid, and he did not regret that he had come to see Emily Mordaunt.

Then he approached and stood over the kneeling figure, bowed down over the chair, trembling, sobbing, entranced, enthralled under her great emotion ; no longer in despair, or fear, or agony, for the Great presence she had entered was around her, and in healing mercy she knew that her sin was forgiven her, according to His everlasting promise. Mr. Horton took her hand, gently raising her up, and said—

“ Emily, my dear, you must not make yourself ill. Calm yourself down in the knowledge of the great good that, to-day, has come to you: God has forgiven you, Emily, as we can but know, and when He forgives, shall man’s poor pardonings be withheld ?”

As he tenderly placed her again on her chair, holding still the nervously clenching fingers, which told how terrible had been her trial, he continued—

“ You have saved yourself, Emily. You have made yourself the worthy wife of the husband you love ; you have given back

their son to a father and mother, you have given them, also, a daughter—yourself, a daughter to be loved and cherished. All is forgiven and forgotten, Emily, and now will you and your husband go back with me to Lake Mordaunt? Here are my credentials,” and he handed her a note from his pocket-book.

“Not yet! Not yet! I could not yet, Mr. Horton! I could not yet look into the faces of those who—in return for the deep injuries I inflicted upon them—have been so generous and so noble to me. In a little time I will meet them, but not yet,” she answered, tremulously.

“Well, do just as you please, my dear,” answered Mr. Horton. “I shall not press you. Perhaps you do right to defer your visit for a space. You might find it too hard yet.”

* * * * *

“Will you tell Reggie when he returns, Mr. Horton, or shall I?” she said, after a silence of some duration. “He must be told, yet it would be very dreadful to me to have to tell him.”

“Tell Reggie what? What should be so dreadful?” was the enquiry in reply.

“To tell him of that which has passed to-day.”

“Neither shall tell him. He is not to be told; he must never be told. It is all driven back into the past and forgotten. His wife has become really his wife now; let him keep his first faith and trust in her. He is not to be told, Emily.”

“Yet I had commenced to tell him this very morning, when you knocked at the door, Mr. Horton. If I could tell him then, why should I not now?” answered Emily.

“My arrival was opportune, it appears. No, Emily, he is not to be told. If he was to have been told he would have known before this day. That is all past now. Let us talk of something else. Tell me of your plans, Emily. What does Reggie intend to do. He cannot live on, as he is living now, in idleness.”

“We shall leave this place very soon. Mr. Mordaunt wishes

Reggie to return to college to pursue the study of a profession. He has been very generous, also, for he has offered Reggie an additional thousand dollars a year to enable him to do so," replied Emily.

"Well! I am glad of that; very glad. You are right to go. Mordaunt *is* generous about it, too; a good father deserves a good son. I hope that Reggie will now show that he appreciates the fact by becoming a good son."

"I am sure that he will, Mr. Horton. It shall not be my fault if he does not," she replied earnestly.

"I will undertake to tell Reggie all that is necessary concerning Vance and Ethel; the former must be put right in his eyes. You may trust me in the matter, Emily, as your friend, which I really now am.

"*You* can tell Reggie for me, though," he continued, "that he will find every year an extra thousand to his credit as a present from his old uncle to him and to you, also, my dear girl. Now I think I will go out for a walk. I shall not be away long, and I should wish to find a bright face when I come in. You have struck upon the right road to-day, Emily. Keep to it always."

* * * * *

At dinner that day, as Reggie, looking in the sweet face of his fair young wife, very quiet and a little sad still, but with its anxious lines of care dispersed, and a new soft beauty shining in its place, lifted up his boisterous young voice and said—

"What have you been saying to Emily this morning, uncle, that she has made herself look so pretty? Have you been paying compliments and flattering her vanity? All said and done, I do not think I have any cause to regret having ran away with her from Ten Lakes that summer's day two months ago."

“No! Nor do I think she has. It was really a happy day for her,” replied Mr. Horton.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN M. P. IN PROSPECTU—HOPE!

When Edwin Vance returned from his visit to the uncle of his Ethel, enlisting him into his cause, as general regenerator and the righter of his wrongs, he settled himself down to the duties of his profession with the firm determination to abide by Mr. Horton's condition of non-interference in the delicate affairs which he had entrusted to the skillful hands of that gentleman, and to quietly await for the hoped for result which was to be achieved.

But even a short fortnight of this waiting had proved to be a very severe trial to his patience.

To give his promise of non-interference had been sufficiently easy, but to keep it intact as the slow days wore on he began to find increasingly difficult.

He had not received a line or heard a word from Mr. Horton during the time, from Lake Mordaunt or Ten Lakes either, nor had he any reason, according to the arrangement, to expect a word or a line; yet still he worried and fretted, while the time seemed unendurably long to him.

He assiduously occupied himself with his professional duties; he amused himself with watching the fast progressing courtship of Mr. Erastus Gooch; he endeavoured to keep himself contented and satisfied; to think of the troubles of his love as little as he possibly could; to pass away time as quickly as it could be passed; but yet it moved slowly and more slowly as day succeeded day.

“Anything to end this wearying suspense,” he thought. “Why cannot Horton write? A fortnight—an age—without a word.

He has been mistaken, I rather suspect, as to the very easy finding, he promised, of the two letters on which so much seems to depend, or some other difficulties must have arisen. How terrible it is that when trouble once comes home to a man it is so very hard to oust again the unwelcome guest.

“How I would like to run up to Ten Lakes and Lake Mordaunt to see for myself how affairs progress.

“How I would like it; but yet, I suppose, I must abide by the rather inconsiderate promise I made to Horton. Yet I can endure this harrassing delay but little longer. I must have a change of some kind from this uneasy restlessness that consumes me or I shall go demented.

“The very thing! I’ll run down to Hopetown for a thorough looking into the affairs of that new venture of mine. That shall pass away three or four days for me, and if, when I return, there should still be nothing from Horton, I shall most decidedly go and look after him in addition.

“Yes! I will take this trip down to Hopetown for a change and a relief in the first place, and I must look closely into that matter as well, for it will not do to leave everything blindly to Sidney, the more especially as the wise ones hint that there are distant but intelligible indications of approaching calamity to the commercial world, which if not immediate, perhaps, is not the less certain to come in the end, and if their prophecy be worth listening to it would necessitate preparations for the taking in of sail in readiness for the storm.

“I’ll go down to-night to see what Sidney is doing, and have a general overhauling.”

Acting upon this determination he departed the same night for Hopetown, in which place he spent the next three days in a close examination of the affairs of the great mills in which he had become interested.

He found Sidney Wolverton at his post actively engaged “up to the ears,” he said, in business, for orders were brisk, large and

plentiful, and the mills were running night and day to their full capacity.

And certainly the establishment and all around it looked prosperous and stirring, full of business life and vitality, which impressed Vance, pleased and interested him.

Wolverton, no longer crippled for means or with doubtful credit, had taken new interest in the concern and had infused new life and energy into its management by his presence and example, and had been enabled to put things on to the very brisk footing which he liked best to see, so that when Edwin Vance paid his visit the great factory at Hopetown presented a busy and thriving aspect.

"Wolverton certainly must be a good business man for all here gives evidence of it, at any rate," he thought, as he noticed the good order and condition of the buildings, plant and machinery; the busy hum of industry, the crowds of workmen and the systematic management which appeared to prevail in each department of the works.

The close examination of the books of account into which he entered did not tend either to lessen his satisfaction. All appeared to be as it should be, and his rigid search but confirmed the declaration of Sidney in Toronto concerning the lightness of the liabilities. That the concern was in a prosperous condition appeared evident, and the hard day's work spent on the books but brought the same conclusion more strongly home.

He noticed, however, that instead of taking in sail, Wolverton had spread out more to the wind, was increasing the scope of the business, had been purchasing heavily of late, and had put the works to their full capacity.

This Sidney explained by the statement that business was brisk, orders large and numerous, and if filled altogether from their finished stock would soon produce them empty warehouses.

Vance was satisfied to give a few cautions to his friend, and said nothing more upon the subject.

Another point which had attracted his attention was that the books showed that at the time Sidney had asked for his assistance during the past summer he must have had a considerably larger command of means than he had acknowledged, for there was evidence that payments to a very heavy amount had then been made.

To Vance this seemed strange, and for an instant his mind reverted to the note for thirty-five thousand dollars which he had had to meet, but the idea was as quickly dismissed from his mind as he remembered Hatchitfess's receipt which so plainly proved the innocence of his friend.

"If then," he thought, "Sidney had at that time so much more money than he acknowledged to have had, it is all the better for me, seeing he has invested it here, and my position with regard to the property is so much the safer."

Edwin Vance returned to Toronto satisfied sufficiently with his visit to Hopetown, by no means regretting his adventure therein, and looking forward to it as a source of increased riches for his partner and for himself.

Another source of gratification had come to him during his visit, one, too, of a wholly unexpected nature, and with which his thoughts on his journey home had been pleasantly occupied.

He had been surprised, on the last evening of his stay, by a visit from several gentlemen of Hopetown and the adjoining county, who, when they had congratulated him as a new proprietor among them, and themselves upon the fact of his becoming so, had proceeded to invite him to consider the propriety of standing for their county in the general election for the Dominion, which present events would indicate as being of not distant date.

The county, they had represented to him, to be strongly Con-

servative, but likely to suffer to some extent from the influence of the unfortunate Pacific Railway scandal, and it became necessary that their candidate, to ensure success, should be *par excellence* a strong man, unblemished as to character, above suspicion, and above all in a position that no personal grounds of dislike could be brought against him. He, being a new comer among them, could hardly be supposed to be thus affected, while he was relieved from the charge of being a stranger whose interests lay elsewhere by his connection with and stake in the county.

They had concluded with a strongly-worded desire that he should come forward as the representative of the party, and assured him that they were not unauthorized in their invitation, as they had been informally delegated by the county organizations.

He expressed his gratification at the honor they had thus conferred upon him, and had promised acceptance of their invitation if the contest should arise, or if he found there should be a probability of success.

He therefore departed for Toronto in a pleasant enough frame of mind, satisfied as to the prospects of his new investment, looking forward with sanguine pleasure to his probable future seat in Parliament, a very attractive idea to one of his temperament and intellectual cast of mind, for, devoid of selfish or purely party ends, he could, as he fondly imagined, from that high standpoint best serve the interests of his country and his fellow citizens.

But these subjects, interesting though they were to him, did not exclude all others from his thoughts or even hold the prominent position in his mind.

He had one greater, more engrossing idea—Ethel Mordaunt and the restoration of his engagement.

When at last the wakeful influences of the insomniac Pullman car were counteracted by his fatigue, his last conscious idea

was the wonder if he should receive a letter from Mr. Horton in the morning.

* * * * *

“And so, my dear Edwin, you have found your visit to your new property at Hoptown as satisfactory as you could wish,” said Mrs. Vance to her son as they were seated at breakfast together the morning of his arrival home.

“Very satisfactory—very satisfactory indeed, my dear mother. I find I have no occasion to regret my investment there, so far as anything appears at present. The prospects of success are even better than I had anticipated,” he replied, cheerfully.

“I am very glad to hear you say so, for I must confess that I have felt anxious. Manufacturing is an unknown field to you, Edwin,” said his mother.

“Well! Perhaps it is so. But in order to save myself from heavy loss I was compelled to enter into the partnership, and I am only too well pleased that things have so bright an appearance with regard to it,” he answered. “But, my dear mother, how would you like the prospect of seeing your son an M. P. I have been invited to accept a nomination for that county.”

“Indeed, Edwin. You astonish me; but of that I am very glad. I sincerely hope you will succeed in obtaining your seat. Are you not almost a stranger to them there, though?”

“Well! that they seemed to consider an advantage, and I have no reason to object to the idea. I shall certainly run the county when the time comes,” said Edwin.

“My dear boy, you deserve success. How proud I shall be to write to you at Ottawa and add the two magic letters to your name,” his mother answered, kissing him affectionately. “But, Edwin, I have some news to tell you in my turn. What will you think of it? Agnes Seaforth is engaged to be married.”

“Agnes! Seaforth engaged! Well! that is news, mother,” he echoed. “Although it was to be expected, is it not a trifle

soon, though? Their courtship has not certainly been very protracted. Mr. Gooch, I suppose, is the happy man."

"Yes! Mr. Gooch is the happy man. Their engagement comes upon us a little earlier than I expected, but Agnes has her own reasons for acceptance, I suppose, and I know that she likes him," said Mrs. Vance.

"I could see that she did not dislike him, at all events," said Edwin, laughing.

"By the way, Edwin, she wishes to see you on the first opportunity that you can make. The old story, I suppose. The proud spirit that will not brook a thought that does not carry independence."

"I suppose so. I shall call upon her this evening as she wishes me to do so, but she will find her arguments to no purpose in the old story. And now I must be off. Good morning, mother. There are not any letters for me here, you say?"

"No, Edwin. None came to the house, and I did not send down to your chambers. Good bye!"

But Edwin found at last a long-desired letter awaiting him among the collection of his few days of absence. It is very certain that it was the first selected for perusal.

"At last," he said, as he tore it open.

"LAKE MORDAUNT, Dec. 13th, 1873.

"MY DEAR VANCE,—

"Meet me at Hopetown on Tuesday next. I wish to see you.

"You may prepare for a few days of absence from home.

"Perhaps you may find—but I shall say nothing until we meet.

"I found the letters just as I expected, within five minutes, too, of my arrival at the Lake. You could not guess, though you tried until we meet.

"Your trip into New York was not lost.

"Be at Hopetown on Tuesday.

"Your affect. friend,

"EDWARD J. HORTON."

"Hopetown on Tuesday! Why at Hopetown? It surely must be Cascades that he means. But no! he never makes mistakes. 'Perhaps you may find.'

"How aggravating he is, to be sure. Could he not have told me something. How provoking and how inconsiderate. Well! so the letters are found, that is one good thing. 'Trip into New York not lost.' What can he mean by that but all is right again? I hope so—I hope so. How glad, how happy I should be if I but knew that. If he had but given me one little assurance.

"Saturday, Sunday, Monday—three mortal days to wait. How shall I ever get through all their long hours. Three drawn out tedious days of suspense.

"Yes! but with hope to brighten them. Hope shall brighten them if it cannot make their long hours fly faster.

"Light at last, I trust, I fondly trust," he continued. "After all these dreadful months. It must be so. The happy, longed-for hour has arrived at last.

"Horton would not mock me with delusive hopes. Had it been aught else than the sweet hour of renewal for our love, he would have written plainly and to the point.

"Oh! Ethel, Ethel; have you come back to me again? my loved—my betrothed."

A dozen times he read over the letter, as if to extract from its wording—some turn of its few sentences—a firmer assurance of his ardent hopes.

The letter gave him hope, to be sure, but it did not give him the assurance.

The long drawn out and weary hours! how would they not spin out their lingering space for him?

A day, another and another. An age to his restless longings, his anxious suspense, his unknowing, unsatisfied, miserable disquietude.

"Let me get to work," he said, "and finish one of the three protracting torments as unthinkingly as I may."

And, very wisely for Mr. Edwin Vance, he went to his work, and found in that sufficient to absolutely occupy the day for him. Expecting it to be long and tedious, he found that labour had winged it into the desired shortness, and with surprise to himself he noted the early darkness falling upon the scene of his duties.

"One day gone, at any rate," he said to himself as he walked quickly homewards. "This evening I must devote to Agnes Seaforth's affairs, whatever they may be."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LIGHT AT LAST.

"I wish you joy, Agnes," said Mr. Vance, taking Miss Seaforth's hand as he was ushered into the little drawing-room of her little house, where, in addition to Miss Springer, he found Mr. Gooch, the would-be "benedict," before him.

"I wish you joy, Agnes, with all my heart, and hope you will be always happy," he continued. "You the same, Mr. Gooch, faithful cavalier, who, I verily believe, never leaves his fair lady's side for a single instant. Wish you joy, Miss Springer, on the happy prospect of getting rid of your troublesome niece." And Edwin proceeded to make himself comfortable at the side of the latter personage when he had finished his salutations.

"I say, though, Goochy," he resumed shortly, "you have not lost much time in bringing affairs to a successful termination. Have you a love philter? Come, tell me your secret."

Thus addressed, irreverently, the newly-engaged laughed in the joy of his heart, as, with a mischievous little glance at his fair *fiancée*, he replied—

"The more hurry the *more* speed, Mr. Vance. 'Never put off proposing when it's in the day's disposing.' These are the

secrets," and he bestowed his huge frame as near to his betrothed as he in conscience could do.

"Capital idea, don't you think so, Agnes?" exclaimed Edwin, gleefully, for the day's good news had raised his spirits to the point in which others' affairs than his own could again be of interest.

"I think nothing at all concerning the matter, Mr. Vance, and, allow me to add, I would consider myself very much obliged if you would *say* nothing concerning it, either," answered Agnes, in a tone so marked that there could be no mistaking her dislike of the subject.

While, to Edwin's open delight, Mr. Gooch came in for some spirited little asperities on his want of propriety, to which he listened, as in duty bound, with adoring deprecation and humble protestations of improvement for the future.

"Doth not your too prophetic soul already shudder at prospect of the days to come?" enquired Edwin, mischievously, of the beleaguered benedict upon the ending of his dire besiegement.

"Hold your tongue, can't you, Mr. Vance? Do you wish to bring me further disgrace? Be quiet and talk reasonably," he replied, with a twinkle of his good-humored blue eyes.

"Well, Agnes, I shall have to limit my conversation to business, it appears. What may you require of me to-night? You sent for me, I believe. The drawing up of the marriage settlements is the only possible business you can have to transact with a lawyer. If so, I'm all ready."

"No! it is not, Mr. Vance. There are no marriage settlements to draw up. What is the matter with you this evening that you persist in making yourself so disagreeable?" replied Agnes.

"I had some good news to-day, Agnes; consequently I can be happy to see others happy," he said, rubbing his hands together in his pleasure.

"Good news! then it must come from Ethel Mordaunt. I am very glad for your sake—very glad that your unhappinesses are over, and I forgive you for all your rudeness to me just now. The privileged words of a friend, you know," she added kindly, as she congratulated him.

"Yes! Vance, I am very glad for your sake. I have really felt quite guilty in my own happiness while you were in trouble," said Mr. Gooch, warmly.

"All over now, or soon shall be, I hope and believe. But, Agnes, what do you require me to do for you to-night? Tell me that I may do it and take myself off out of the way," replied Mr. Vance.

"You are not in the way, Mr. Vance," she replied with a warning look. "The matter concerning which I wished to see you is this annuity, which, contrary to my wishes, yet so generously, you have purchased for me. You must take it back, as I ——"

"Yes! Mr. Vance, interrupted Mr. Gooch, rising and advancing towards him. "Miss Seaforth has told me of all the circumstances connected with that affair, so honorable to your late father and to yourself, and she wishes, in which I heartily concur with her, that the annuity be transferred back to you. Agnes cannot accept it, and, excuse me for saying, I should prefer also that she did not"

"No business of yours, Mr. Gooch; the annuity belongs to Agnes, and can never be yours," replied Edwin, with a laugh.

"Agnes," he continued, "you know just as well as I know that I have nothing to do with this affair. It was my father's not mine. Good evening, Agnes! Good evening, Mr. Gooch! I'm off. I did not come here to talk nonsense," and Edwin moved off as if to leave the room.

"Stay, Mr. Vance, I beg of you," exclaimed Agnes, laying her hand detainingly upon his arm. "I am serious in this, that I cannot accept this money. I have not done so since I wrote

you at Lake Mordaunt, and I never shall. Do not think, I pray, that I am ungrateful for your noble generosity to a ——”

“No generosity at all about it, Agnes,” interrupted Edwin, hastily. “My father left you what he considered was fairly yours. I have nothing to do with it. It is yours, not mine, and I shall not have it. No use for us to speak further about it. Let us have some music in place of your disagreeables, or I shall go away.”

“Hear me, dear Mr. Vance,” exclaimed Agnes, appealingly. “You must know by this time my determination in this matter, for I have told you so often. In any event I shall cause the annuity to be transferred back to you to-morrow.”

“You cannot do it, Agnes, for I shall not accept. I shall not sign; you cannot make me sign. You will have to keep it, I fear,” replied Edwin, laughing at her seriousness.

“But we shall not want it, Mr. Vance, we shall have enough of our own,” said Mr. Gooch, determinedly shoving in his great oar.

“Very likely, Mr. Gooch, in fact I know very well you shall not want it; but suppose, for argument’s sake now, that you were some day to become again ‘transported with joy,’ as you were on the celebrated evening that we met in the college grounds and make some bad speculation or other entailing the loss of your overflowing wealth, would not Agnes’ little trifle come in very well for her?” and again Edwin laughed.

“A very far-fetched supposition, Mr. Vance. Very little likelihood of its occurrence. I am highly flattered, also. No fear of that now,” responded Mr. Gooch, in mock indignation.

“Well! I do not think you require much reforming, and I am very sure that your Agnes here will keep you in order. You need not blush, Agnes, you are engaged you know. Yet still there are such things as losses in the best regulated households,” answered Edwin.

“Still, Mr. Vance, the fact remains that I shall never consent

to accept this money upon any terms. I will starve first. If you do not cancel the arrangement the money shall be left untouched to accumulate for you," said Agnes, erect, and with determination.

"For yourself, Agnes, not for me," he replied.

"Mr. Gooch," continued Edwin, with a vexed laugh. "It is my firm opinion that you have to be very thankful to this annuity that you both make so much fuss over; had it not been Agnes' ardent desire to get rid of it, you might not have found your wooing come so quickly to its desired attainment, notwithstanding your mutilated proverbs either. Be sensible now and take a lawyer's advice, don't meddle with that which you cannot help. Leave well alone."

"Well, it is Agnes' affair, not mine," responded Mr. Gooch. "You are both pretty obstinate, and I shall have nothing more to say."

Mr. Gooch, as he said this, turned away to converse with Miss Springer, determinately, as if done with the subject.

"Did you really mean the words which you said just now, Mr. Vance?" said Agnes, with blazing face. "That I, to get rid of this hateful money, had listened too soon to—to—to—"

"No! I did not, Agnes. A mere joke," interrupted Edwin. "Do you think after all these years of our friendship that I do not know the high spirit of Agnes Seaforth. And I know, too, your reason, my dear girl. You—well, we will say—like Mr. Gooch, and he loves you. You will be very happy, and I congratulate you, Agnes. You have made a good choice; he is good; he is honest and a gentleman, even if he is not so clever as his wife-to-be is."

Edwin carefully sank his voice at the latter part of his sentence, but Agnes turned away with a smile, and the conversation became general.

* * * * *

But the interminable hours that intervened for Mr. Vance between him and his desired Tuesday passed away one by one as do all our hours.

Their tardiness or their swiftness, so purely imaginative, yet so very real, as we look forward to a goal that seems distant to us or near, is but apparent tardiness or swiftness endowed to them by our thoughts. The hours march on the same, unchanging, unalterable.

But it is very probable that his hours were very tardy to Edwin—very tardy, and his goal very far off to his view.

But the days passed on, and it came close to him at last.

As the rushing express train, thundering eastward, passed station after station in the early morning after its long, dark night journey, and Hopetown was no longer distant, his mind recognizing how close he was coming to his fate, became unmistakably anxious and excited.

“Hopetown is indeed the city of my hope to-day,” he said to himself, as, his toilet thus early completed, he looked out from the window of his Pullman car upon the fleeing landscape, all cold and desolate in the dim grey morning light. “I awake to a morning whose dawn may be very bright for me. But what if my hope proves but delusive again; but bitter disappointment and weary delay that I go to meet?”

“Can I longer endure such? Can I bear again the crushing down of my charmed castle in the air?”

“Yes! bitter as the blow may be I must bear it. I will bear it, for though years may pass in this anxious misery, I am determined that I will work my way to my own again, and Ethel is my own—my very own. She plighted herself to me; she confirmed again her troth when she held the right to take it back from me at the time I fell from my promised word that I had given her. She is mine, for I have not forfeited my right.

“If I must, I will spend my life in the attempt to regain the

love she owes me, and in that endeavour I shall but do as I ought to do.

“But no! There is hope for me—my journey to Hopetown I accept as a happy augury. I go to meet the confirmation of my hope.

“Had Horton required my presence upon any mere business affair, or even some newly arisen obstacle in the way, he would have written more plainly. The very dubiety which his letter conveys is strength to my hope.

“Oh! Ethel, Ethel. I am tired of waiting; my undeserved punishment has fallen heavily upon me. May this be its last delay.

“Oh! my darling, what would I not do, what would I not give to see once again your hand outstretched to me in the old confidence; to see again the trusting smile upon your face, the tender light in your eye? Shall I ever reach that happiness? Shall that day ever dawn for me?”

The loud whistle of the great locomotive aroused him from his reveries; the shrill scream of the steam brake and the sudden relaxation of the speed of the huge night express told him that he had at length reached his destination.

In another second he stood upon the station platform at Hopetown amid the hurrying crowd who scrambled off or hustled on to the waiting train, which, impatient to rush onwards again over its long drawn out iron road, whistled and screamed in the chill morning air. In an instant more it was gone; the hurrying crowd dispersed, and Edwin Vance found himself confronted by his friend Sidney Wolverton.

“From whence did you spring down, Sidney, at this untimely hour? I did not notice you on the train,” he exclaimed in surprise.

“Very likely, Vance, seeing that I was not on board, and was quietly awaiting your arrival here,” answered Sidney, as they shook hands.

"You awaiting me, Sidney. Why how did you know that I was to come? It was Mr. Horton I had expected to meet," said Edwin, his surprise unlessened, but his bright hopes commencing to fade way.

"Yes! so I suppose, but he went away last night," replied his friend, looking into his face with an amused smile upon his own.

"Gone away! Gone away! did you say? Impossible. I have an appointment to meet him here to-day," exclaimed Edwin, blankly, with down-cast expression and despair written upon his features.

"Well, Vance, I'll grant the impossibility, nevertheless, he went away last night. He left, however, a note for you, in explanation, I suppose," answered Sidney, with provoking coolness and a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he proceeded with methodical slowness to produce his pocket-book, and from it the missive of which he spoke.

"Quick, Sidney, give it me. Don't be all day getting that thing opened."

Edwin, when he got it into his hand, tore open the envelope with nervous haste.

"HOPETOWN, December 21st, 1873..

"DEAR VANCE,—

"Follow me to Lake Mordaunt as fast as you like.

"I have finished here all I wished to finish, and cannot be bothered waiting until to-morrow for you.

"I have reorganized your precious partner upon a sounder basis.

"Perhaps you may see—but I am too tired to write more, and you will know all when you arrive, which, I suppose, will be to-morrow evening.

"Yours affect.,

"EDWARD J. HORTON."

Vance was so angered with what he considered Mr. Horton's trifling that he had to read this note over two or three times before he could gather its meanings at all.

That he was to go to Lake Mordaunt he at once saw, and that was happiness, for he would be near, at any rate—he might see even—her whom he had so faithfully loved, but he did not, at the first, pick much further comfort from the vexatious little epistle which had thus so delayed his knowledge.

“I say, Vance,” said Sidney, “the train for Cascades does not start for an hour to come. Had you not better come over to the hotel for some breakfast? Come, don’t look so discouraged. You’ll be at the Lake before night, and that is better, certainly, than meeting a sour old Yankee Senator here.”

“All right, Sidney, but how do you know that I am going to the Lake?” answered Vance, recovering himself from the disappointment he at first experienced in the brighter hopes of his new destination. “What was it, too, that induced Mr. Horton to leave without fulfilling his appointment?” continued Edwin, as he picked up his valise, and walked on with his friend.

“Oh! he told me that you would only be too glad to follow him, but his reasons for leaving are unknown to me. He hurried through his examinations of the mills and the books as quickly as possible that he might get away, and a precious ‘wiggling’ he gave me, too, before he left. I know that I, at any rate, was very glad to get rid of him,” replied Sidney, with a laugh. A laugh, however, which was rather forced, and he looked as if the ‘wiggling’ of which he had spoken had not been altogether pleasant.

“He went over the mills and the books, did he?” said Edwin, in some surprise. “Then he did not send for me to come here for anything concerning them, it would appear?”

“No, I imagine not. I thought, though, that you had sent him upon your part. He told me when he had finished, that he found matters better than he had expected, in a tone of condescension, too, as if he had been the proprietor, and I his book-keeper,” answered Sidney.

"Then, what in the world did he appoint me to meet him here for? I cannot understand," in vexation, replied Edwin.

"Oh! I imagine there is a surprise in store for you at the Lake, Vance. I cannot say anything further, though," laughed Sidney, as they entered the hotel.

"He ordered me peremptorily, to deliver the note to you without fail, on the station, when you arrived. He is a remarkably cool personage, I can tell you," he continued.

"And for what high crimes did you receive the blowing up, Sidney?" asked Edwin, when they had entered a sitting-room and ordered breakfast. "Anything about the mills?"

"No, Edwin! a lecture upon—upon—concerning my moral character. He went in for my reformation," was the reply given, too rather seriously.

"Well, has he succeeded?" asked Edwin, with a smile.

"I do not know. If I can do so, I shall try to profit by his advice. I have promised some things which he asked me to promise; in fact, he made me promise. Had we not better speak of something else until breakfast is ready?"

"Sidney," asked Edwin again, after a pause, "did he say anything to you relative to my—my—my—to my connection with Miss Mordaunt? I would not ask you were it not that I am so anxious."

"I can see that you are anxious, Vance," replied Sidney, with a smile. "Yes, he did speak of the affair; but, I am unable to tell you anything, I promised him. You have, however, no occasion to look so down-in-the-mouth, as you do at present, that I can say."

"You think so, Sidney, really, do you think so? How awful is this suspense to me. How I wish I were now at Lake Mordaunt," said Edwin, with a sigh.

"Well, you will be there by dark, and then you will know all. Let us go down to breakfast. You have not much time to spare."

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How slowly seemed to move the train that bore him on his way to Cascades. How slowly it seemed to force its unwilling way into the interior.

How numerous all the useless little stations at which to stop, and how vexatious the delay that was made at them. How slowly ran the train for his feverish haste; how long the minutes spun themselves out; how wearisome the slow dragging on of the hours.

And yet his train seemed to travel at very fair speed for a branch road. His fellow passengers did not seem to find their journey so very tedious, for they laughed, chatted and enjoyed themselves. Their four hours of travel to them, was a pleasure trip, if it was not to impatient Edwin Vance.

It was only he who, every five minutes, took out his watch with useless perseverance and automatic nervousness to consult its slow-moving hands. It was only he who, each five minutes, sprang uneasily from his seat, as the train slacked-up deliberately at each way-station, and strode up and down impatiently, until it moved on again.

But the five minutes followed the gone five minutes in regular unending succession, as usual. Time runs on, steadily, surely, unceasingly, while we—in our haste for the future, always in our eyes so bright—waste it. The minutes roll themselves into hours all certainly, and—no matter how slow they may seem to us, future-aspiring, who would fain anticipate their distant bringings—they weave on, unchanging, their ceaseless web.

The train duly reached Cascades, on time, too, though, to Vance's impatience, it was hours behind. He, seizing his valise, jumped down to the platform, almost before the train had reached it, and hurried over to the hotel, as fast as he could move without absolutely running for it.

As he entered and rushed into the office to order a team, a well-remembered voice saluted his ears.

"Arrah! now, Mishter Vance, and is it forgittin' yer frinds ye are, this day, in yer hashte. I cuddent have belaved it av yer; but it's plazed I am till see ye wance again, sorr, so it is. And it's waiting I am till dhroive ye up till the Lake."

Mr. Barney Conley, as he uttered the words, held forth his right hand, in all the conscious dignity that the stove-pipe hat, the long, black coat, stiff collar and uncomfortably compressed windpipe thereby, could confer upon a man.

"Barney, it is you, then. I am delighted to see you, too," said Edwin, the very sight of the familiar face of the old Irishman, bringing back to him again the bright days between which and his present hour had been a blank so horrible. "How are you, my old friend? But have you really come to drive me up, Barney?" he continued.

"Faix! I have thin, and it's proud I am av the pleasure. The ould Yankee General sint me down aafter ye. It's getting out the baste I'll be at wance," replied Barney.

"Barney," insinuated Edwin, "would you not like to go and drink my health, with success to my trip to Lake Mordaunt?" and Edwin, in utter contravention of temperance principles, slipped a bank-note into Barney's hand, which caused that individual to skip for joy, when he afterwards broke it in the bar.

"Begorra! Mishter Vance, is it dhrink yer health, I will? Yis, sorr, and some wan else's health, too, I'm thinkin', and botheration till thim that kem betune the two av yez. I'm thinkin' as how ye'll find yer vishit an agraaable wan this time, sorr," and Barney proceeded to order out his horses.

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The early darkness had fallen over the raw, cold December evening, as Edwin Vance and Barney drove around the head of the well-remembered little lake, and dashed up the road towards the house, whose lights—warm, bright, comfortable, welcoming and hospitable-looking—had come into view.

But the warming aspect of the lights did not fall so warmly upon Edwin's eyes, as he had expected they would have done. His heart that had beat so high with his hope that day, sank a little in the immediate prospect of the unknown—though desired—that lay so directly before him.

In one short minute further, would not the decision, the fixed destiny of his life, to which he was alone unknowing, be made known to him. On the momentary edge he stood and feared. Life-long happiness, or life-long misery, as it seemed to him, to be revealed in one short minute's space.

"Is it to be as I hope, I wonder? Does a welcome await my coming, or are my steps still to be dogged with wretchedness?"

There was no time, however, for his fears, no time for his anxious forebodings.

Barney dashed up to the door, drew up his animals with a jerk, and Edwin Vance stood again on the well-known verandah at Lake Mordaunt.

Ere he had time to ring the bell, or even recall his scattered thoughts from dire confusion, the door opened, and Mr. Mordaunt stood before him.

"How do you do, Edwin?" he said, holding out his hand. "We have been expecting you. Come in. I am very glad to meet you again as we meet to-day."

"Oh! you are there, are you, Edwin?" said Mr. Horton, as he entered the hall. "I thought you would find your way up. How did you enjoy your visit to Hopetown?"

"I received your vexatious note, and came, as you see, Mr. Horton," was all Edwin's reply.

"Vexatious, eh? You will not think so long. Take off your overcoat, and tidy yourself up a little, there is some one in the drawing room," answered Mr. Horton, helping him, and in another minute he found himself ushered into the apartment where "some one" awaited him.

Mrs. Mordaunt, the mother of his Ethel, and now no longer

his enemy, rose, on his entrance, advanced a step to meet him, with her hand held forth in welcome—

“I am very happy to see you again at Lake Mordaunt, Mr. Vance.”

He knew now that all was right with his Ethel's parents. His hope was growing, it was nearing the long-sought fruition. Where was his Ethel?

But he could not reply to Mrs. Mordaunt; he uttered a few inaudible words in his glad confusion, in the sudden lightening of his heavy chain, and then his eye rested upon the beloved form at the further end of the room.

He advanced, doubtfully, timidly, hesitatingly. He advanced as if he had not the right towards his Ethel.

As he came forwards, she rose.

He looked into that dear face, and in its light, all was light henceforth to him.

“Can you forgive me, dear Edwin, for all this miserable past?”

Her white fingers were held out to him, her bright eyes were upon his face in timid, beseeching light, his beautiful Ethel had asked him to forgive her, in her tender words.

Oh! superfluous asking; as if it were not enough to him to be there, with her, and the past thrust back into dark oblivion.

“Dear Edwin,” she had said. The meaning flashed upon his sense, and the light once more shone upon his face. The sad, pained look that had dwelt upon his features for the long, sad months, now ended, disappeared, as her voice fell upon his ear, and Edwin Vance was once again the same Edwin Vance who had won his Ethel's love by the little lake in the bright summer far fled.

“Ethel, my darling, my own again, what have I to forgive? You have forgiven much! Oh! how happy I am again.”

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clasped his unresisting Ethel in his arms, and imprinted the seal of their reconciliation upon her rosy lips. He ended their troubles with his kiss.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE BRIGHT SPRING-TIME.

The bright spring-time has come again, with the budding of green leaves, the springing of grass, covering the renewed landscapes that had lain dead under the white mantle of winter, with its soft, green carpet of summery life. The birds sang once more in the enlivened woods, and glorious Nature put on again her brightest change.

The white, cold winter had passed away, rapidly, joyously, let us hope, to all—as it had to Edwin Vance and his fair Ethel. A happy winter, that had brought no dreary storm to them, for they were once more all in all to each other.

On a bright May morning—the sun shining, the birds singing; green nature all beautiful; the blue sky arching over all its bright tintings; the flowers springing; the fair Canadian landscape alive with sound and light and beauty after the long, silent winter's sleep—Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt stood together in the Church at Ten Lakes, where so oft they had worshipped side by side, to take upon themselves the solemn vows that should bind them irrevocably to one another, with no dread of further separation to harass, until Death should place between this his dread parting hand.

For better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; for this world, and—as we all hope—for the world to come. The words were said, the solemn vows paid, that made them one.

One for ever; no more Edwin Vance, with his life; no more Ethel Mordaunt, with her life; but, one together.

One for this world; one in thought, one in hope, one in everything.

One, to use their lives—now one life—in the way that their God ordains, for His glory. One to use their life, if they but use it as He ordains, wholly together.

Together for the good, together in pain, together in happiness. Together bearing this world's inevitable ills ; together forbearing, forgiving, smoothing each others inevitable human foibles, follies and evils.

Together working ; together striving—as they walk forward on the great road that past millions have trod ; that present millions are treading ; that future millions shall tread—the great road that leads poor humanity from earth to Heaven.

Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt became man and wife. In that they had become such they were very happy ; together to take up their way upon the great road, their love to lighten and ease the toilsome march.

Reverently they took up their vows ; reverently they took up their march, in each other's happiness to lighten the road. To be for each other, to help each other, to aid each other until God in His goodness should take them home. To be happy in each other's love ; in each other's strengthening hand on the way that all have to take.

Together to reach Him, if so be His good will ; to meet together, accepting His mercy, and in His good time reaching His heavenly recognition.

Edwin Vance and Ethel Mordaunt plighted their vows in God's Church, before Him, and the world's sight, to be good and true man and wife together. In trustful joy and faith they plighted their troth, and they were happy in each other.

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The grand words of the Church that blesses the blending of the two lives into one life—for God and for the world, had been said, and Ethel Vance turns to receive the soft blessings of her earthly friends.

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them, but where is her brother ? Why is he not here ? Why has he not come to-day ? she thought, as she looked around for that absent face.

But he is not absent. He also comes—his kiss upon her cheek, also ; and, then comes forward—Emily.

With hesitating step, timidly, doubtfully, with large, bright, soft eyes, fixed wistfully upon her face, Emily comes forward to Ethel.

The first time that they met since the terrible day that has been washed away—for which little Ally's last day of earth had been the peacemaker ; with a new, quiet beauty that had not been Emily Dearborn's—that is very lovely on the face of Emily Mordaunt—Reggie's wife stepped forward—

“ Ethel, may I kiss you ? ”

“ Emily, my sister, my brother's wife, and my dear sister, let me kiss you, *We are* sisters,” said Ethel, as the two, beautiful exceedingly, clasped each other in tender embrace—there, in God's House.

Then came the joyous handshakings of the hundreds who had known and liked her, the neighbours, the townsmen, the men, women and children, who had crowded from miles around to see Ethel Mordaunt married.

Foremost among them, and absolutely gorgeous, comes Mr. Barney Conley—new beaver hat carefully tucked under his arm, new black coat shining in brilliant glossiness, longer, larger, more awe-inspiring than even the old displaced beauty : white collar of fabulous cut, which covered completely, instead of merely rasping off his ears ; new, gorgeous and glorious from head to foot, came up Mr. Barney Conley.

“ Begorra ! an' it's the grate day intirely for Tin Lakes ; a grate day, so it is. An' a proud day it is fur ye, Mishter Vance, Mimer av Parlymint, though ye be, an' it's the purtiest young lady in Canedy ye're afther takin' aff wid ye. Miss Ethel, me darlint, sure an' its not forgittin' the ould Lake, an' ould Barney, ye'll be, now ye're marrit' an' laving us. Ye'll come back till see us all, wance in a while, wont ye now, me purty, swate jewel av the wurruld ? It's missing, I'll be, the swate face and the kind wurd for many the long day,” and Barney, with Ethel's warm

grasp on his honest, hard hand, had to brush away something from his eyes.

"If I forget the old Lake, or you, Barney, my dear old friend, I shall no longer be the Ethel Mordaunt who has lived all her life with you, Barney. That will not be in this world," answered Ethel Vance.

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The wedding breakfast was over, the speeches made, the joyous congratulations repeated, the tearful farewells whispered, and Ethel, with her husband, had started upon their new life.

As the fast horses sped over the road towards Cascades, commencing the journey that separated Ethel from her girlhood to begin her new life, her proud and happy husband turned towards her, and said—

"Ethel, my wife, my own, for ever, whom nothing can now divide from me, listen, my darling, to what I have to say, in my great happiness.

"In this crowning of the dearest hopes of my life, when all the world is bright before me, when, in my marriage with you, my darling, my life is made a prized life to me ; when, to have lost you, would have been its ruin ; when, by God's kindness, I am made happy, let me tell you, Ethel, my loved wife, from my deep unworthiness, in my self-knowing humility, that I have to acknowledge that, although in her bright love, my wife has become my wife, she might have done better !

"Your bright young life, Ethel, has been seared with trial, dimmed with sorrow, wet with tears, and overcast with bleak grief, through me, through my selfish love.

"The 'Before' your life, before your marriage, which now commences your new life, has not been so bright as it might, as it should have been, my love, not since I have known and loved you, at the least. But I pray, I humbly trust that, when the story of its 'After' comes to be chronicled, it may reveal a brighter page.

"God grant that as you have entrusted your beautiful young life to me, my darling wife, that I may be rendered worthy of the care, that He may help me ; help us both to walk before Him together in His way ; His grace aiding, until we come to the Everlasting Kingdom."

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