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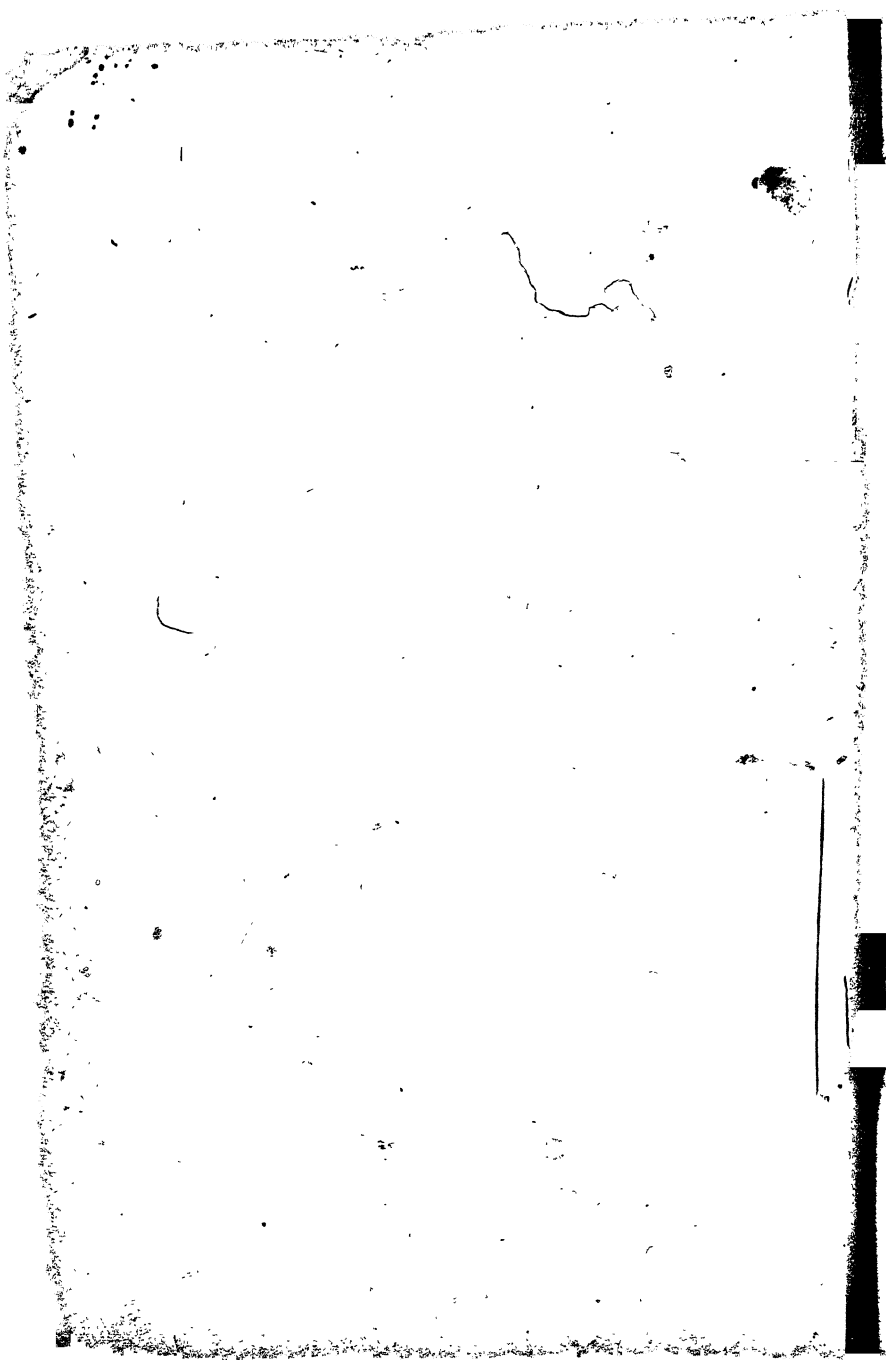
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WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE;

OR,

AGNES WILTSHIRE.

BY

MARY E. HERBERT,

AUTHOR OF "ÆOLIAN HARP," "SCENES IN THE LIFE OF A HALIFAX
BELLE," &c.

I saw her on a nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman, too;
Her household motions light and free, —
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good,
For human nature's daily food,
For transient pleasures, artless wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

— WORDSWORTH.

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WOMAN AS SHE SHOULD BE;

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AGNES WILTSHIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE Sabbath day was drawing to a close, as Agnes Wiltshire sat at her chamber window, absorbed in deep and painful thought. The last rays of the sun lighted up the garden overlooked by the casement, — if garden it could be called, — a spot that had once been most beautiful, when young and fair hands plucked the noxious weed, and took delight in nursing into fairest life, flowers, whose loveliness might well have vied with any; but, long since, those hands had mouldered into dust, and the spot lay neglected; yet, in spite of neglect, beautiful still. There was no enclosure to mark it from the fields beyond, that stretched, far as the eye could discern, till lost in a rich growth of woods, but a few ~~ornamental~~ trees and graceful shrubs, with here and there a plot, now gay with autumn flowers, alone kept alive, in the heart of the beholder, a remembrance of its pur-

pose. A quiet scene of rural beauty it was, and so thought the maiden, as, rousing from her reverie, she gazed on garden, fields, and distant woods, but more lovingly and lingeringly dwelt her glance on a lake that lay embosomed between the meadow and the grove, partly skirted by trees that grew even to its edge, and partly by the rich grass, whose vivid color betrayed the influence of those placid waters, that now reflected every glowing tint, and every delicate hue of the peerless sunset sky.

Quiet at all times, the stillness of the scene was now unbroken, save by the twittering of some belated swallow, the chirp of the cricket, or the evening hymn of the forest songsters, ere they sank to grateful rest. All was peace without, but troubled and anxious was the heart of the solitary occupant of that apartment, who, though for a moment aroused from deep, and, as it appeared from the expression of her countenance, painful thought, by the beauty of the landscape, again summoned her wandering thoughts, and returned to the theme which had so deeply engrossed her.

A slight tap at the door once more aroused her, and in answer to her invitation, "Walk in," a lady entered the room, and affectionately addressed the young girl.

"Forgive my intrusion, my dear Miss Wiltshire, but I feared, from your remaining so long

in your room, that you were not well, and have come to ascertain whether I am correct or not."

"I am much obliged for your kindness, but I am quite well, in body, at least," was the reply, while the lips quivered, and the eyes were suffused with tears.

There was silence for a few moments between them, for Mrs. Gordon was too delicate to allude to emotions, which her companion evidently strove to conceal, and with the nature of which she was totally unacquainted. At length, however, she broke the quiet that had reigned for some moments in the apartment, by an observation on the service they had both that day attended.

"Accustomed, as you are, to city churches and city congregations, it could scarcely be expected that our unpretending house of prayer, with its humble worshippers, could have found much favor in your eyes, Miss Wiltshire?"

"And yet, strange to say," exclaimed Agnes, lifting her fine dark eyes to Mrs. Gordon's sweet, though pensive face, "that unpretending church, those earnest worshippers, and, above all, that simple, faithful discourse, affected me far more deeply than any heard from the lips of the most eloquent divine, in a gorgeous edifice crowded with the *elite* of the city, and where the solemn notes of the full-toned organ ought, perhaps, to have filled the soul with sacred and heavenly thoughts. Those words, so thrillingly pro-

nounced, shall I ever forget them? 'To whom much is given, of him shall much be required.' They seem still to ring in my ears, for I, alas, am among those who have received much, yet rendered back nothing."

The speaker paused, overcome with emotion, but the countenance of the listener grew radiant with delight, — not that delight which arises from the realization of some worldly hope, but, rather, a heavenly joy, which lent to the pale and pensive face a beauty not of this world; it beamed in the sunken, yet soft blue eye, and flushed the hollow cheek; it was the joy of a saint, nay, it was the joy of an angel, at the return of the stray sheep to its Father's fold. But it soon found expression in words.

"I cannot tell you how happy you make me, in speaking thus, dear Agnes," said she, affectionately clasping her hand. "Since you first came here, I have been thinking so much about you, and praying, too, that you, so rich in all that makes woman lovely and beloved, might possess that grace, which will but add lustre to every other endowment, qualifying you for extensive usefulness here, and glorious happiness hereafter."

"But you know not, my kind friend, what mental struggles I have passed through this afternoon, nor how conflicting feelings are yet agitating my soul. I hear the voice of duty, but it calls me to tread a rugged path. Could I always

remain with you, secluded from the gay world, far removed from its temptations and allurements, then, indeed; would I gladly make my choice, and say, 'This people shall be my people, and their God my God;' but in a few days I must depart, and, again, in the haunts of the busy city, and surrounded by the gayeties of fashionable life, I fear I shall feel no more those sweet and sacred influences, which have been as the breath of heaven to my soul."

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest!' Is not that a sufficiently encouraging promise, dear Agnes? Had you nought but your own strength to rely on, you might well fear; but forget not Him who has declared, 'If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given.'"

CHAPTER II.

AGNES WILTSHIRE was an orphan. Her father had died during her infancy, her mother during her childhood ; but a happy home had been thrown open to her, by a kind uncle and aunt, who gladly adopted her as their own, and lavished on her every tenderness. Mr. and Mrs. Denham were generous and warm-hearted people ; their dwelling was elegant and commodious ; the society in which they mingled, as far as wealth and fashion is concerned, unexceptionable. What more was wanting ? Alas, they were thoroughly worldly ; their standard was the fashionable world ; their maxims were derived from the same source ; and while regularly attending the stated ordinances of the church, and esteeming themselves very devout, — for were not their lives strictly moral ? — they, in reality, knew as little of heart religion, as the dwellers in a heathen land.

Such was the character of the people among whom Agnes Wiltshire had attained the age of eighteen ; and, surrounded by such influences, what wonder that she, too, partook of the same

spirit, and was content to sail down the sunny stream of life, without one thought of its responsibilities, without one glance at the future that awaited her. Long might she have continued thus, still pursuing the phantom of pleasure, seeking ever for happiness, but never seeking aright, had she not been suddenly startled, in the midst of worldly pursuits, by the unexpected death of a gay and favorite companion, who, surrounded by all of earthly happiness, was torn from her embrace. In the agony of delirium, Agnes had beheld her, gliding, unconsciously, down the dark valley and the shadow of death, and she trembled, when she felt how totally unprepared she was to meet the King of Terrors, and yet how soon she might be called to do so. In the midst of the gay dance, at the festive board, where mirth ruled the hour, and honeyed flatteries were poured into her ear, she was still haunted by that pallid, agonized countenance, and by the voice, whose heart-rending accents she still seemed to hear, as distinctly as when it cried, in imploring tones, "Save me, oh save me, from the deep, dark waters. They surround me on every side; have pity on me, for I sink, I sink, I sink."

So deep an effect had the loss of her young companion, and the remembrance of her last hours, produced on Agnes, that she fell into a dejection, from which nothing could rouse her,

and her physical powers soon gave unmistakable evidences of their sympathy with the mind, by alarming prostration of strength. The physician, on being applied to, recommended the usual restorative, change of air and scene ; and a pleasant summer's retreat was selected as Agnes's residence, for a few weeks. Mrs. Denham would fain have accompanied her niece, but a violent attack of the gout, to which Mr. Denham was subject, rendered it impossible for her to leave him, and with many tender charges and injunctions, Agnes was consigned to the care of a friend, travelling in that direction.

Great was the change to Agnes, yet not the less beneficial on that account. The absence of the glitter and show of fashionable life, the quiet that reigned around, the beauty of the scenery, the kindness and simplicity of the scattered inhabitants, — all delighted her ; and the group of admirers, who were wont to surround her, would scarcely have recognized, in the warm-hearted, enthusiastic girl, who, in simple attire, might daily be seen rambling through the fields, or, with a book in hand, seated beneath a favorite oak, the accomplished and fashionable Miss Wiltshire.

The lady with whom she resided was a clergyman's widow, who, deprived by an untimely death of her natural protector and provider, sought to augment her scanty means, by opening

her house during the summer months to casual visitors. She had been beautiful once, and she was young still; but the glow and the freshness of life's youth had vanished, not so much before time as sorrow, for peculiarly distressing circumstances had attended the loss of her dearest friend, and now, disease had almost, unsuspected, commenced its insidious ravages on a naturally delicate constitution.

A mutual friendship was speedily formed between these two, so strangely thrown together by circumstances. Agnes was charmed with Mrs. Goodwin's sweet, pensive face, and gentle manners, while her character, so beautifully exemplifying the power of religion to give support and happiness, under all circumstances, won her deepest regard. On the other hand, the genuine warmth, the unsophisticated manners, still uncorrupted by daily flatteries and blandishments, the lofty and gifted mind, all delighted Mrs. Goodwin, who had never before formed an acquaintance with a female possessing so many attractions, and she gazed at her with wonder and admiration, not unmixed with a sentiment of tenderness and pity, as she thought of life's slippery paths, and of the injurious influences of worldly pursuits and worldly gayeties.

But to the city Agnes must again return, for the roses have come back to her cheeks, her previous dejection has vanished under the kind

and salutary ministrations of her friend, and she has no reasonable excuse for remaining longer ; besides, her friends have become impatient at her stay, — the light and life of their dwelling, — how can they consent to her tarrying longer ; so the long and interesting conversations on high and holy themes, which she had scarcely ever before heard alluded to but in church, must be relinquished, and the quiet scenes of Nature exchanged for the bustle and show of city life.

CHAPTER III.

A TWELVEMONTH has elapsed, since the events recorded in our first chapter. In the drawing-room of a spacious mansion, in the suburbs of the city where Agnes Wiltshire resided, is seated a young man, apparently perusing a volume which he holds in his hand, but, in reality, listening to a gay group of young girls, who are chattering merrily with his sister at the other end of the apartment. Scarcely heedful of his presence, for he is partly concealed by the thick folds of a rich damask curtain, — or, perhaps, careless of the impression produced, they rattled gaily on, for not one of them but in her heart had pronounced him a woman-hater ; for were he not such, could he have been insensible to the sweetest and most fascinating smiles of beauty ?

But the last sound of their retreating footsteps, the echo of their merry laugh, has died away, and Arthur Bernard emerges from his retreat, in the enclosure of the window.

“I declare, Arthur, it is positively too bad,” exclaimed Ella, his sister, a gay and pretty young

girl ; "you are certainly the most agreeable company in the world. Not a syllable to say beyond 'yes,' or 'no,' 'good morning,' or 'good evening.' I am really ashamed of you. You are a woman-hater, I really believe. I am sure the girls all set you down as such."

"I am much obliged for their good opinion, and shall endeavor to deserve it," was the smiling reply. "But, can you imagine what I have been thinking about, while you and your merry companions have been talking all sorts of nonsense?"

"No, indeed. I should like to hear your wise meditations, most grave and potent seigneur. Doubtless, they will prove very edifying, as the theme, of course, was woman's foibles."

"I have been thinking rather of what woman might be, than of what she is. What an exalted part she might perform in the regeneration of the world, did she but fulfil her mission. An archangel might almost envy her opportunities of blessing and benefiting others ; and yet, with so many spheres of usefulness open to her, with influence so potent for good or evil, the majority of your sex do nothing, or, worse than nothing, injure others by their example. I am not a woman-hater, Ella ; but I must deplore that so many are unmindful utterly of their high calling, and careless of everything but how to spend the present hour the most agreeably, instead of being found actively sustaining, as far as

in their power, every good word and work; and ever with a smile and a word of encouragement to the weary toilers in the path of duty. That there are such women, I have not the least doubt; but I have never met with one yet. When I do so, and remain insensible to *her* charms, you may then call me a woman-hater," — and a smile concluded the sentence.

A merry, mocking laugh from his sister rang through the room.

"I thought as much. We, poor women, are not good enough for your most serene highness; nothing short of one endowed with angelic qualities will suit you. I must really try if, in my long list of acquaintances, I cannot find one to come up to your standard; though I am afraid it would be rather a difficult task. And now, in reply to that grave lecture of yours, (what a pity the girls were not here to be edified,) for my part, I always imagined that woman's mission was to be as charming as possible, and I am quite content with being that," — and Ella looked up into her brother's face, with an irresistible smile.

"But may you not be charming and useful both?"

"Well, I don't know about that; I should like to know what you would have us do."

Do! what might you not do, if you were disposed? What an incalculable amount of good, and that in the most unobtrusive manner. So-

ciety takes its tone from you, and waits to be fashioned by your hand. But, I verily believe, running the risk of speaking very ungallantly, that there is not one in thirty, fifty, or perhaps a hundred of your sex, who have the slightest idea of exerting their talents for the benefit of others. You laugh and talk, and enjoy yourselves, careless of the impression your example may produce, and conform to the usages of society, without one inquiry, as to whether in those usages may not, sometimes, lurk frightful dangers, if not to yourselves, to others who follow admiringly in your steps."

"Frightful dangers! Really, brother, you are growing enigmatical. I should like to have that sentence made a little plainer, for I certainly do not understand you."

"Perhaps an incident that occurred not long ago, which I will relate to you, may explain more clearly my meaning. I can vouch for its correctness, for it came under my own observation. You have frequently heard me speak of Henry Leslie, my room-mate at college, one of the noblest and most gifted of young men, but who unfortunately had contracted a taste for intoxicating liquors. Unfortunately for himself, his agreeable manners and fine qualities rendered him a great favorite with the ladies, and no party seemed complete without him; and thus constantly exposed to the seducing influence of the wine-cup, the habit of

imbibing largely grew so strong, that he scarcely had any restraining power left. I remonstrated with him, and, as I trusted, with some success, for he solemnly promised to abstain totally from the intoxicating beverage, — but the very next day we found, on returning home from a walk, an invitation to an evening party lying on our table. It was from the mother of the young lady to whom report alleged he was deeply attached, and whatever influence I might have possessed in dissuading him from attending any other social gathering, I found I was powerless in this case. But he again renewed his determination to abstain from intoxicating stimulants.

“I know what you fear, Arthur, but I have made the resolution to “touch not, taste not, handle not,” as the teetotallers say, and I am determined not to break it.’

“I made no answer, but prepared to accompany him, with a heavy heart; for I felt certain, in my own mind, of the result, at least to some extent, of that evening’s visit. I need not enter into particulars; suffice it to say, that Henry Leslie bravely withstood all solicitations, from our sex, to partake of the destroying beverage, and I was beginning to hope that my fears would prove unfounded, when the daughter of our hostess, the young lady to whom I before alluded, approached him with a glass of sparkling wine in her hand. She was beautiful, — I cannot but acknowledge

that,—and I shall never forget her appearance as she stood there, a fascinating smile lighting up her animated countenance, and, in her sweetest tones, begged him to take a glass of wine with her. I thought of Satan, disguised as an angel of light, and trembled for the result, as I stood anxiously listening for his answer. It came in the negative, but the hesitating, half-apologetic tone was very different from the firm and decided one, in which he had resisted all other solicitations. But she was not yet satisfied. Womanly vanity must triumph, no matter how dearly the victory may be purchased.

“‘You surely will not be so ungentle as to refuse a lady so small a favor,’—and her eyes added, as plainly as words,—‘but much less can you refuse me.’

“‘You see how society is degenerating, Mr. Bernard,’ she said, turning to me, ‘there was a time when a lady’s request was deemed sacred, now we poor women have little or no influence over your sex.’

“‘I devoutly wish you had less, Madam,’ was my ungentle reply; but she scarcely heard me, for Henry, taking the proffered glass, and in a low tone, murmuring, ‘For your sake alone,’ quaffed its contents. A flush of gratified vanity passed over the lady’s countenance, for she had laid a challenge with some of her friends, who had observed his previous abstinence, that she

would make him drink a glass of wine with her, before the evening was over. That night week I sat, a lonely watcher, by the corpse of Henry Leslie. He had died in the horrors of delirium tremens, and his last cry had been for brandy.

“Oh, it stings me almost to madness,” exclaimed Arthur, rising and pacing the apartment with hurried steps, “when I reflect that that woman, knowing well his fatal propensity, — knowing, too, how powerful was her influence over him, for, poor fellow, I believe he would have laid down his life for her sake, was the immediate instrument of leading to destruction one who might, — had she encouraged him in his resolution to abstain, instead of luring him to depart from it, — have been an honored ornament to society, not filling, as he does to-day, a drunkard’s grave, ‘unhonored and unsung.’”

There was silence for a few moments in the apartment, for even the volatile Ella seemed affected at the narration. At length she spoke in a subdued tone.

“That is certainly a melancholy story, Arthur, and I shall not be able to get it out of my mind soon. But now that I think of it, have you seen Agnes Wiltshire since your return?”

“No; but I have been about to inquire several times where she is, and why have I not seen her before?”

“Simply, because she has abjured society.”

“Abjured society!” and Arthur looked up, with a glance full of astonishment. “What do you mean, Ella? Has she become a nun?”

“Not exactly; but she certainly is a Sister of Charity, in the fullest sense of the term. It was only yesterday morning she passed our windows quite early, followed by a servant carrying a large basket, and I can easily imagine it was on some charitable mission. You must know, Arthur, for I see by your looks that you are impatient to hear all about her, — by the bye, it is singular that you should take any interest in her, considering she is a woman,” —

“Dear Ella, do go on with your story.”

“It is well for you, Mr. Arthur, that I am very good-natured, for I should have an excellent opportunity now of retaliation, for all the unkind things you have been saying about our sex. But I can be generous, and will forgive you this time, — so now to our story. You must know, then, that a great change has taken place in Agnes, ever since the sudden death of poor Lelia Amberton, the particulars of which I wrote to you at the time it occurred. Agnes grew very low-spirited, and in consequence lost her health, and was ordered by the physician to the country, to recruit her failing strength. On her return, her dejection had entirely vanished; but still she was very different to what she had formerly been. To the great astonishment, and even displeasure

of her relatives, she gently but firmly declined all invitations to balls, or gay parties, refused to attend the theatre, and, to her friends' earnest expostulations and inquiries as to the reasons for such a course, declared 'that she had, at length, become convinced of the vanity and sinfulness of such pursuits, and no longer dared to peril her immortal interests by engaging in them.'

"But, Edward Lincoln, how does he approve of this strange alteration?" inquired Arthur, in a tone which, in spite of himself, could not conceal his evident interest.

"Oh, poor Edward has been discarded long ago."

"Discarded! What do you mean, Ella, that she has broken her engagement with him?"

"Yes; or, rather, they mutually agreed in the matter, and thereby caused fresh disappointment to Agnes's friends, whose opposition has risen to such a height, that I believe they have almost threatened to expel her from home."

"Barbarous!" exclaimed Arthur, hastily, his eye flashing with indignation. "But I suspect they would hardly carry that threat into effect. And what reason was assigned for the breaking of the engagement?"

"Oh, nothing more than non-agreement of sentiment. When I was reasoning with Agnes about it, one day, she said to me, 'How can two walk together except they be agreed? I grant,

dear Ella, that Mr. Lincoln is all you have said, handsome, intelligent, and possesses many estimable qualities ; but these qualities, to be permanent, must be based on principles drawn from the Word of Truth. Do not think, my friend, that it was without a struggle I have resigned him. No, the conflict was long and bitter ; but I was enabled, at last, to yield to my convictions of duty. And, indeed, he himself has confessed, that whatever I might have done once, I should never have suited him now. Our views are diametrically opposed ; the gayeties of life, which I have gladly resigned, he still takes delight in, and when I have endeavored feebly, but earnestly, to lead him to seek for more enduring joys, his only reply is a merry laugh at my enthusiasm, which, he predicts, will soon evaporate. No, Ella, there is little in unison between us, and it is far better to break our engagement now, than to find, when too late, that we had entered into a union productive of misery to us both.' ”

“ Agnes is certainly a singular girl,” said Arthur, musingly.

“ Oh, but I have not told you all. She has been a Sabbath-school teacher, has established a day school for poor children, which she superintends, and there is no fear of her tempting a gentleman to take a glass of wine, for last, but not least, she has become a teetotaler. There, what think you of that ? and yet, I do not know how it

happens, but in spite of her singular ways, I seem to like her better than ever. There is nothing in her manner that indicates a consciousness of superior merit, but she is so truly kind, and her countenance wears so peaceful and heavenly an expression, that I can never weary of gazing at her, and in my sober moods, which occur once or twice in a twelvemonth, have some idea of following her example. And now, Arthur," Ella added playfully, "if Miss Wiltshire comes not up to your standard of female excellence, I should despair of ever finding one that did."

Arthur was about to reply, but was interrupted by the announcement of a visitor. Slightly annoyed, for he had become really interested in the conversation, and, resolving to slip away the first convenient opportunity, he turned to salute the lady, whose name he had not heard, when, Ella's exclamation of surprise and pleasure fell on his ear.

"Why, Agnes, have you come at last? I almost thought I was never to see you again. I called twice, but you were out."

"Yes, I was very sorry, but a particular engagement called me from home."

"Arthur, have you forgotten your old friend, Miss Wiltshire?" inquired Ella of her brother, who was waiting an opportunity to address her.

"It would be a difficult task to do that," was

the reply, while the cordial clasp of the hand and kindly tone, told how pleasant was that meeting to one of the party at least. "You should rather have inquired if Miss Wiltshire had forgotten me, which is far more probable."

"I never forget my friends," said Agnes, with a slight emphasis on the word friends.

"And to be numbered among Miss Wiltshire's friends, I consider no ordinary privilege," was Arthur's reply, as he insisted on her occupying an easy chair by the blazing fire, which the clear but chilly air of autumn rendered indispensable to comfort.

"I am afraid you have learned the art of flattery in your travels, Mr. Bernard."

"Flattery!" exclaimed Ella, drawing up a chair close to her friend, and smiling at her brother, who was seated opposite; "I only wish you had heard him, Agnes, a little while ago, in what terms he spoke of our sex, for if you had, you would agree with me, that the title of woman-hater would be far more appropriate than flatterer."

"Ella, Ella, that is hardly fair," said Arthur, while his cheek became slightly flushed.

"But what did he say about us, Ella?" Agnes inquired, smiling half mischievously at his evident embarrassment.

"Say, all sorts of things; he declared that the great majority of us care for little else but plea-

sure ; that the idea of exerting our influence for good is one that we seldom ever entertain, and he wound up his exceedingly edifying lecture by a dismal story of a lady, whose persuasions induced a friend of his to break a promise which he had made to abstain from intoxicating liquors, and was, thereby, led to an untimely death."

"You have been bringing very grave charges against our sex, Mr. Bernard," said Agnes, with a sweet seriousness, that, however unusual, well became her fair youthful face ; "and I am afraid we should have to plead guilty in too many instances. Still, even those who appear the most thoughtless, have their hours of reflection, no doubt, when they feel the utter insipidity of a life of pleasure — false pleasure — and form many resolutions to abandon it ; but habit is strong, and example powerful, and once immersed in the gayeties of life, nothing short of strength from above can make them to 'come out from the world, and to become separate.'"

A deeper shade of seriousness passed over Agnes's expressive countenance as she uttered these words. It was evident they had evoked some painful recollections, and, as Arthur gazed on the down-cast face, on the long silken eyelashes that but half concealed the tear that unbidden rose to the lustrous eye, and observed her lip quivering with suppressed emotion, he easily

divined, from his previous conversation with his sister, the cause of her agitation.

“She has suffered, and in the cause of truth,” was his mental ejaculation. Oh, to have the privilege of cheering and sustaining one so lovely! but

“Man may not hope her heart to win,
Be his of common mould.”

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW select friends had assembled at Mrs. Bernard's, to celebrate Ella's birthday.

"It will not do to have a dancing-party, Mamma," said Ella, when they were making the necessary arrangements, "it will not do to have a dancing-party, or Agnes will refuse to come, and I have set my heart on having her, and I strongly suspect somebody else has done the same, glancing mischievously at her brother, who had just entered the room. I am sure, too, I shall enjoy myself a great deal better with a few select friends, than if we had a large, gay party."

"Have it your own way, my dear," said the mother, fondly kissing her daughter's fair up-turned brow; "if it pleases you, I am sure it will satisfy me."

"Thank you, dear Mamma, and now I have nothing to do but to write my invitations, and send them. But, Arthur, I declare you have not said a word; one would imagine, only I know better, that you do not feel at all interested in the matter."

“Interested, why should I, in your foolish parties? Do you not know I have something better to think of?”

“Doubtless, and you do not care in the least who accepts the invitations. Now, confess, for you may as well, that when I proposed, a few evenings ago, having a small select gathering of friends for Agnes’s sake, your very eyes shone with joy, for all you did wear that provoking grave look. Confess, too, that you have thought of little else ever since. I am sure you dreamed about it last night, for you looked very smiling as you entered the breakfast room this morning.”

“You are an incorrigible little rattle-brain, Ella, and, to punish you, I have a great mind to declare I will not enter your party. How would you like that?”

“I am not in the least alarmed, brother dear, that that threat will be carried into execution, for the very good and sufficient reason, that you would thus punish yourself worse than me. But if I stand talking any longer, my invitations will not be written in season, so I must defer our very edifying conversation till another opportunity,”—and, humming a favorite air, the lively girl danced gaily out of the room.

Arthur, left alone, stood for a moment musing, half amused and half vexed with his sister. He scarcely had ever mentioned Agnes’s name, and yet, he could not conceal from himself that he

felt an interest in her, beyond that he had ever experienced for any other woman.

"Absence is love's food," so poets say, and Arthur proved the truth of the observation. While spending his college vacations at home, he had often met with her before; and, even then, she charmed him as no other woman ever did, but when report told of her engagement to Edward Lincoln, honor forbade him any longer to cherish hopes which he had allowed to tint with their bright hues his dreams of the future.

He had shunned her society as far as possible from that time while at home, and striven, while at college and during his year's sojourn in foreign lands, to banish her image from his remembrance, and vainly imagined he had succeeded; but the flame, though it may be dimmed, was by no means quenched, and was ready, at the slightest encouragement, to burst forth with renewed vigor.

But we have digressed. Mrs. Bernard's drawing-room presented a picture of comfort and elegance as Agnes entered it on the evening of Ella's party. A few select friends were gathered there, all apparently perfectly at home, and amusing themselves without restraint, according to their diversified inclinations. Some were examining the choice engravings that lay scattered on the tables; others were standing in a group round the piano, admiring some new music which Ella had that day

received ; while the elder members of the party were gathered round the fireside, enjoying its cheerful blaze, and merrily discussing the events of the season. Innocent amusement seemed to be the rule of the evening, and Agnes, though she had left home unusually depressed in spirits, felt a glow of pleasure thrill through her heart as she contemplated the scene, and responded with her usual sweet, though, latterly, pensive smile, the kind greetings of her friends.

“How pale Miss Wiltshire looks to-night,” observed one young lady to another who was seated at the piano as Agnes entered the apartment.

“She does, indeed, pale and sad both,” was the response.

Arthur, who had overheard the remark, could not help admitting to himself its correctness, as he crossed the room to pay his respects to Agnes, and as, unobserved, he watched her closely, it was evident to him that, while with her usual unselfishness, she strove to promote the happiness of others by entering cheerfully into conversation, from the half suppressed sigh, and the shadow that at intervals stole over her face, some painful subject, very foreign from the scene around, occupied her thoughts.

“I am afraid you are not well to-night, Miss Wiltshire,” he at length said, in a tone low and gentle as a woman’s, for Agnes, seated on a

corner of the sofa, and imagining herself unobserved by the rest of the company, had for a moment closed her eyes, as though to shut out surrounding objects, while an expression of mental anguish flitted across her features.

How precious to the aching heart is human sympathy. The words were nothing in themselves, but the tenderness of tone in which they were spoken, told plainly that it was anything but a matter of indifference to the speaker, and Agnes, blushing deeply as she met Arthur's compassionate glance, felt the conviction, darting like a ray of sunbeam through her mind, that to at least one person in the world she was dearer than aught else beside.

"I have only a slight headache," was her reply to his kind inquiry, and one which was strictly correct, for the headache was the result of mental agitation during the day.

"I shall recommend you, then, to sit quite still, while I constitute myself, for the evening, your devoted knight; and shall, therefore, remain here, ready to obey your slightest behests, be they what they may."

"I shall certainly then insist, in the first place, that others be not deprived of the pleasure of your company for my gratification. I should be selfish, indeed, if I allowed you to do so."

"Notwithstanding, here I am, and here I intend to remain until I am forced away," said

Arthur, smiling as, seating himself comfortably beside her on the sofa, he drew a portfolio from the centre table, which contained some sketches taken during his recent tour, and, in pointing out the different places and relating his adventures in each, Agnes became so much interested as to forget her headache, and even the anxiety which had weighed down her mind but a short time before.

There was one picture that seemed particularly to attract her attention. It was the sketch of a small church, whose white walls peeped out from the midst of thick foliage, and whose opened doors seemed to welcome the worshippers that in every direction were seen apparently wending their way towards it.

Agnes gazed at it long and earnestly. She laid it down and took it up again, while Arthur, who could not imagine why she seemed to admire this sketch in preference to others whose artistic merits were far superior, gazed on her with some surprise.

“I see you are wondering, Mr. Bernard,” she said, as she marked the inquiring expression of his countenance, “why this scene should particularly attract me. It is because it reminds me of the happiest hours of my life, for, in a church, whose situation and appearance exactly resembles this, I first learned where true bliss was to be found.”

“A valuable lesson truly, Miss Wiltshire, and one which I would feel thankful if you could impart to me, for I assure you I am sadly in need of it. Dissatisfied with the world, I still see so much hypocrisy in the church,—there are so many, even among those who minister in holy things, who seem by their actions wedded to the vanities which they profess to renounce, that I turn away with a feeling akin to disgust, and am almost ready to believe that the piety which characterized the first professors of Christianity has totally disappeared.”

“Perhaps you have not been looking for it in the right place, Mr. Bernard. There are many whose religion consists in outward observances, while the heart is given up to its idol; but, granting there was not one in the world who was really the possessor of true religion, ‘What is that to thee?’ The claims of Heaven are not less binding on you, because not recognized or responded to by the multitude, for each must render an account of himself, whether the offering of the heart, the only acceptable one, has been presented, or whether we have turned coldly away from the voice of the charmer, charm it ever so wisely.”

There was silence for a few moments, which was broken by an observation from Arthur.

“Do you know of whom you remind me, Miss Wiltshire? Of a distant relative of my mother’s, who resided with us for a time, when I was but a

boy. She was a young woman then ; I, a wild, heedless boy ; but her look, her smile, her very words, are indelibly impressed on my mind. What a lovely example of all Christian graces was she, for in her they seemed blended, like the exquisite tints of the rainbow, into a perfect whole. Her gentle reproof, — her winning manner ever alluring us to that which was right, — her unwearied endeavor to make all around her happy, — these, combined with every womanly charm, made her appear, in my eyes, more than human ; and when death came, much and deeply as I lamented the loss, I could scarcely wonder that Heaven had reclaimed its own.”

There was a pause, and then Arthur added, — “ That I have not gone to the same extent in folly as others, I believe I owe to her, for when tempted, by my gay companions at college, to join them in the pleasures of sin, her look of mild entreaty seemed ever before me, deterring me from ill ; and I often think, had she lived, I might to-day have been a better and more useful man.”

Agnes had been an attentive listener. “ I do not wonder,” she said, as he ceased speaking, “ that you so highly estimate woman’s influence, for you have largely benefited by it ; but though dead, she yet speaketh. Do you remember what Young says respecting dying friends ? That they are

‘ Angels sent on errands full of love,
For us they sicken, and for us they die.’

We sometimes wonder at the mysterious Providence which often suddenly removes the excellent from earth, while the wicked are allowed to remain; but may it not be graciously ordered thus, to excite in us an ardent desire for that preparation which shall enable us to greet our friends on the shores of the better land. Oh, without such a hope what would life be.

‘It lifts the fainting spirit up,
It brings to life the dead.’

How often should I be ready to sink in despair,” and Agnes’s lips quivered with emotion, “were it not that I am permitted to look forward to that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which shall prove an abundant recompense for those “light afflictions which are but for a moment.’”

“But you,” said Arthur, half inquiringly, “are, I trust, a stranger to those afflictions.

‘Rose-leaved from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life’s pure pleasures manifold.’”

“My childhood and youth has, indeed, passed amid flowers and sunshine,” was the reply; “and if the future appears now to point to a more gloomy and thornier path, I will not repine to tread it, for

‘Here little, and hereafter much,
Is true from age to age.’”

Arthur, as he was about making a reply, was interrupted by his sister, who came to request Agnes to play for her a favorite tune, and their conversation, with the exception of an occasional word now and then, was ended for that evening.

CHAPTER V.

“THE only son of his mother, and she was a widow, —” Arthur Bernard, as he attained to manhood, seemed to realize, in person and character, all a fond mother’s fondest anticipations. His stately form, as he mingled among his compeers, did not tower more above them, than did his lofty mind, stored with sound principles, and embellished with varied learning, seem to soar above their grovelling ideas, and to breathe a higher and purer atmosphere. A glance at his countenance would have sufficed for the most casual observer to have read, in every lineament, the impress of a noble and chivalrous nature. Yes, gentle reader, start not at the word *chivalrous*. It may be, from his previous conversation on woman’s foibles, that you have been ready to form a very different opinion, — but you are mistaken; and so will you often find yourself in the journey of life, should you thus estimate character in general. Deceit frequently lurks beneath the smile and honeyed words of the flatterers, and he who believes that the avenues to woman’s heart are only accessible

by such means, proves, beyond a doubt, that he has associated with none but the frivolous, the vain and weak-minded of the sex. Poor, indeed, is that compliment which man pays to woman, when he expatiates on her sparkling eyes, her flowing tresses, and ruby lips, as though she were only a beautifully fashioned creature of clay, while he virtually ignores the existence of those higher and holier powers which she shares in common with man, and which make her, in proportion to their wise and careful development, akin to the angels.

Arthur Bernard was no flatterer, it is true, but chivalrous in every sense of the word. A keen appreciator of all that is honorable and high-minded, he could not stoop to those petty meanesses, which too often characterize the conduct of those who flatter themselves with the name of *gentleman*, — a title which Tennyson forcibly describes as

“Usurped by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use.”

Courage to meet any emergency, firmness to resist temptation when presented in its most alluring form, was blended with that genuine kindness of manner, that deference towards the weak and defenceless, which renders its fortunate possessor not only esteemed, but beloved. Yet with so much that was admirable in mind and heart, of him it might be said, as it was of one of old,

“One thing thou lackest.” Strange, that the subject of the greatest importance should be, too often, the one most seldom dwelt on, too frequently thrust aside, until, in the season of affliction and the hour of death, its terrible magnitude is first realized — realized, perhaps, forever too late. Regular in his attendance on all the ordinances of worship, his heart had remained unaffected; but this indifference was owing, it may be, in a measure, to the discourses to which he was in the habit of listening from Sabbath to Sabbath, — discourses which, while they portrayed in fairest colors the beauty of a moral life, seemed to forget the natural depravity of the human heart, and the necessity of the mind being fully renewed, in order that it might carry those principles into effect.

Mrs. Bernard, though a devoted mother, and, in many respects, an excellent woman, had never realized, for herself, “the blessedness of things unseen.” She had been contented to sail smoothly along the stream of life, which for the most part had been ruffled by few storms, and she almost forgot, as day after day and week after week glided past, they were bearing her frail bark swiftly on to the ocean of eternity. There was a time, — it seemed to her now like a dream as she looked back, — that she had thought more of these things, for they were presented to her in a living form, embracing, as it were, in the daily

walk and conversation of a relative, who had been for some time an inmate of her dwelling. The lovely traits developed in the character of this lady, had won the matron's heart, and especially had she appreciated the unbounded care and tenderness which her friend exercised towards her children, Ella and Arthur. But this messenger of peace passed away to a brighter clime, and the impression made by her brief sojourn seemed to have become erased from the memory ; like the morning cloud and the early dew, it soon passed away. Yet was she not altogether forgotten, nor had her labors of love been entirely in vain. To her it was that Arthur had alluded in his conversation with Miss Wiltshire, for childhood's heart is tender and impressible, and from her instructions he had imbibed many of those lofty and noble sentiments which now characterized him ; and often, when the tide of worldliness rushed in to bear him away on its fierce current, that gentle form would seem to stand before him, and he would hear again, in fancy, the soft tones of that voice, beseeching him to pause, and consider his doings.

Oh, woman, woman, how potent is thy influence, which thou exercisest, in thy apparently limited sphere, over the human race. Thy tender hand moulds the plastic mind of childhood ; thy gentle rebuke checks the wayward impulses of impetuous youth ; thy loving sympathy and voice counsel, cheer, and stimulate manhood ; and to

thee age and infirmity look up with confidence and delight, assured that thy unwearied care will not be wanting to smooth their passage to the tomb. Blessed office! High and holy ministration! Well, indeed, for mankind, if woman were but truly alive to the onerous duties and responsibilities that devolve upon her; well for her, and those by whom she is surrounded, if instead of being as, alas, she too often is, the encourager of man in evil, she would ever prove the supporter and upholder of that which is good, and by her example and persuasion,

“Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

Arthur Bernard on leaving college had spent some years in travelling through Europe, and had but just returned when our story commences. Left in affluent circumstances at the death of his father, which had taken place while he was yet a child, there was little necessity for exertion; but of an active and energetic disposition, he could not remain comparatively unemployed; and obtaining a situation in one of the principal banks in the city, he devoted the income, acquired by it, to aid in the diffusion of useful knowledge among his fellow-townsmen, and for the alleviation of the wants of the helpless and distressed, for never did the needy apply to him in vain. He looked not with a captious eye upon their faults and follies, — did not harshly repel them

because sin had, in many instances, led to their distress, but first relieving their bodily necessities, strove, by wise counsel, kindly administered, to raise the fallen, cheer the hopeless, and assist the outcast and degraded in retrieving their position, and again becoming useful members of society.

Ella, his sister, a light-hearted girl of eighteen, over whose fair head prosperity had hitherto scattered its richest blossoms, resembled her brother in kindness of disposition ; but her gay and volatile temper formed a charming contrast to his grave and subdued manner. Five years her elder, Arthur's brotherly affection was mingled with an air of almost fatherly protection ; and to him, next to her mother, she had been in the habit of appealing, and never in vain, for advice and assistance in any emergency ; and while his gravity checked, in some measure, the mirth which might have degenerated into frivolity, her light-heartedness, in its turn, exercised a wholesome influence over him, and, like the gentle breeze, scattered the clouds which sometimes brooded darkly over his spirit.

But the declaration of Sacred Writ is, " One event happeneth to all." None, as they beheld that united and happy family, the centre of a numerous circle of friends, admired and beloved in the community, imagined the change which was so soon to " come o'er the spirit of their dream."

A few weeks only had elapsed, after the festive scene we have portrayed in a former chapter, when one morning Ella, on entering her mother's chamber, which adjoined her own, was surprised to find, for the hour was unusually late, that she had not yet risen. With noiseless step she approached the couch, and with gentle hand drew back the curtain, thinking to wake her by a kiss, when, terrible spectacle to her affectionate heart, she beheld her idolized mother, not sleeping as she had expected, but every lineament transfixed and motionless in death! An apoplectic fit, — so the physician affirmed, — must have seized her during the watches of the night, and thus, suddenly and fearfully, had she been called to her final account. We draw a veil over that mournful scene, for "too sacred is it for a stranger's eye."

On her children its effect was deep and lasting. Ella especially seemed sinking beneath the blow, and her brother, fearing for her reason, if not her life, with gentle violence almost compelled her to bid adieu to her native city, and, accompanied by him, seek, in change of scene, some alleviation for the grief that preyed so deeply on her spirit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE steamboat wharf of the town of Elton was truly a scene of busy life. The steamer was making full preparations for the embarkation of passengers to a distant city ; and the wharf was crowded with bales of goods, casks of water, cabs, trucks, &c. Business men were hurrying to and fro, sailors were shouting to each other, and friends were hastily clambering up the plank and springing on deck to remain a few minutes longer, if possible, with those from whom they were so soon to be severed, "it might be for years, and it might be forever."

But the bell has rung once, twice, its warning note, and now, for the third time, it peals out on the clear air. The last clasp of the hand, the hurried embrace, the fervent "God bless you," is given, and those who are to remain have trodden the plank, regained the wharf, and now turn, before departing to their respective homes, to take a farewell glance at the steamer, as she moves slowly and gracefully away, bearing, it may be, from many their

heart's most cherished idols. The passengers are assembled on deck, watching the receding shores, and many handkerchiefs are waving a last response to those eager glances, an adieu which, alas, few there dream shall prove final to so many.

At the farther end of the deck, close by the railing, is seated a lady in travelling costume. She is alone, for her companion, an elderly gentleman, has left her to salute a friend whose face he had just recognized among the crowd of passengers.

"A lady accompanies you, I see," was the remark made to Mr. Cameron by his friend, the Rev. Mr. Dunseer, after the first salutations were over.

"Yes, Miss Wiltshire, from B——.

"Miss Wiltshire? I thought I recognized the countenance as one I had seen before."

"Ah, so you have had a previous acquaintance with her."

"Yes; for I am sure it is the same person. She is the niece, is she not, of Mr. Denham, of B——; but I first met her when she was visiting the part of the country in which I was stationed for a year or two."

"I remember perfectly the time," was the reply. "Her relatives had become alarmed at her failing health, and change of air had been ordered by the physician."

“ And so she is going to H——.”

“ Yes, on a visit to her mother’s brother, Mr. Edwards. His only daughter is about to be married, and they have sent for her to be bride’s maid. Miss Wiltshire has never seen any of the family as yet, with the exception of Mr. Edwards, who came to B——, on business, and then, for the first time, had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with his niece.”

“ It is rather singular,” was the reply, while a smile lighted up the fine countenance of the speaker, “ that I am on a somewhat similar errand. The groom, who for many years has been an intimate friend of mine, insisted on my performing the marriage ceremony. I maintained that it was the lady’s privilege to select a clergyman, but, as he said that their wishes were one in that respect, I was compelled to concede, and am on my way thither for that purpose.”

“ I am heartily glad of it,” said Mr. Cameron. “ Miss Wiltshire will, I am sure, be pleased to see you again, and she will now have more agreeable company than an old man like me can possibly be ; so if you have no objection we will join her, for she appears to be engaged in a converse with solitude.”

“ I was about proposing to do so, for to renew my acquaintance with one whom I had learned, during her brief sojourn, so highly to

esteem, will indeed be an agreeable episode in my journey."

While this conversation was carried on between the two friends, Agnes had risen from her seat, and with one hand on the railing was leaning slightly over the side of the steamer, watching the ebb and flow of the transparent waves, or gazing fondly on the shores fast fading in the distance. She was not apt to be melancholy; indeed, she seldom allowed herself to indulge in a mood so opposed to that cheerfulness which should characterize a Christian; but as she stood there gazing on the mingled beauties of sea and land, more beautiful than ever at this hour, when the golden hues of sunset were reflected in the placid waters, and touched with fresh glory the distant hills, dark and gloomy shadows stole over her spirit.

And, indeed, distressing to youth, so dependent on the kindness and sympathy of others, were the circumstances under which she was now placed. She had bade adieu to the friends who had watched over her from childhood, not as hitherto, during her brief visits, with the loving farewell and the earnest injunction to speedily return; but cold looks and colder words had marked that parting, with the very distant intimation, on the part of her uncle, that if, on the expiration of her sojourn among strangers, her fanatical views, as he termed

them, remained unchanged, she must expect to find herself banished from the home of her childhood. Poor Agnes ! a painful decision awaited her. With all the affection of her warm and unsophisticated spirit, had she repaid the tenderness that had been lavished upon her, and now to find herself charged with having acted a foolish and ungrateful part, — to be thrust forth from a home of luxury, — from the attention and sympathy of friends, — to battle with a world that has but little kindness, in general, to spare for those who need it most ; these were painful and harassing thoughts, and what wonder they weighed down that gentle and timid spirit, and suffused those lustrous eyes which, until lately, had seldom shed the tear of sorrow, except for other's woes.

But as, lost in these troubled reflections, she glanced at the giant waves beneath her, suddenly a sweet promise of Holy Writ was applied to her agitated mind, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods, they shall not overflow thee," — and immediately her spirit grew calmer, while a sense of peace, comfort and security, quelled each rising doubt.

"I have nothing to fear," she murmured.

"His voice commands the tempest forth,
And stills the stormy wave, —
And though his arm be strong to smite,
'Tis also strong to save."

Agnes was aroused from her reverie by Mr. Cameron's cheerful voice.

"My dear Miss Wiltshire, allow me to present to you an old friend."

She turned to salute the stranger, but what was her surprise and delight to find in him the clergyman under whose ministrations she had so largely profited. The pleasure, indeed, seemed mutual, for though Mr. Dunseer, having shortly after Agnes's departure for the city left that part of the country, had consequently heard nothing more of her, he still remembered his young and attentive hearer, and had often since then desired to see her again, and ascertain if indeed the impressions made were lasting, or had been obliterated amid the whirl and gayety of fashionable life.

Still more delighted was Agnes when she learned of his destination; it seemed a link binding her to those with whom, with the exception of Mr. Edwards, she was totally unacquainted; and from the depth of her heart she silently thanked the kind Providence who had thus directed her steps, and permitted a meeting so fraught with comfort and encouragement at the very time most needed.

Long and pleasant was the converse of friends that evening, and it was not until some time after the sun had set, and dark and heavy clouds, sweeping across the sky like armies gathering

to battle, had obscured the light of the rising moon, that Agnes, with a heart peaceful and trusting, retired to her state-room, and in spite of the dash of waves, and the wail of the rising wind, resigned herself to slumbers calm and blest.

But from pleasant dreams of home and friends, she was suddenly aroused by the confusion and hurried tramping of feet above her head, mingled with the shrieks of women and children, and the fearful ejaculations of terrified men. Agnes started up, scarcely realizing that she was indeed "on the wide billows of the raging sea." Drawing aside the curtains from her berth, she glanced out into the cabin. It was not day, for the lights were burning brightly, but the place was a scene of wild dismay; women wringing their hands; children clinging to their mothers; all bespoke such terror and despair, that for a moment Agnes felt bewildered; but quickly recovering herself, and hastily rising, she was soon in the midst of the terrified group, where she was immediately joined by Mr. Cameron and his friend.

"What is the matter?" was her first ejaculation.

"The steamer is on fire," was the fearful reply. "Quick, my dear girl, secure whatever you find to be most necessary, while they are getting the boats ready."

With that self-possession so invaluable in the time of danger, Agnes hastily, but calmly, equipped herself comfortably, secured about her person a small purse of money, and then aided the other lady passengers in their frantic efforts to prepare for this trying emergency. Very soon the Captain's stentorian voice was heard, — "The boats are ready, ladies, there is no time to be lost."

With a face pallid as death, yet serene in its very paleness, Agnes, accompanied by her two friends, and followed by a number of the other passengers, ascended the staircase, and, having gained the deck, glanced for an instant at the fearful scene.

There was, indeed, as the Captain had affirmed, no time to be lost. The fire, which had originated in the engine-room, from the carelessness of one of the hands, was now making fearful headway, in spite of the continued efforts of the sailors by deluging it with buckets of water, to mitigate in a measure, its ravages. All the fore-part of the vessel was burning, and awfully sublime was the spectacle as the flames mounted higher and higher, casting their lurid glare over the intensely dark waste of waters, whose turbid and sullen waves, lashed into fury by a fierce north-eastern blast, seemed warning the unhappy sufferers of the fearful fate that awaited them, should they commit themselves more immediately to its mercy.

But the danger of embarkation in those frail boats, on an ocean that every moment grew more tempestuous, was almost lost sight of in contemplation of the nearer and more fearful fate that awaited them should they linger ; and quickly, and with scarce a murmur of apprehension, the boat was filled.

While Mr. Cameron was assisting Agnes into the frail boat, Mr. Dunseer, who had secured a life-preserver, as soon as she was safely seated handed it to her, observing that if the boat should be upset, by clinging to it she might be preserved from a watery grave.

Thanking him for his kind consideration at such a time, Agnes inquired anxiously of the two gentlemen whether they were not to accompany her.

“No;” was the reply of Mr. Cameron. “I fear we must be separated, but only I trust for a time. This boat is not sufficiently large to hold more than the lady passengers and the sailors who are to manage it. We are to embark, as soon as you are safely off, in another, but as both will steer for the same shore, and keep near each other as much as possible, I trust, by the mercy of Providence, we shall meet again on *terra firma*.”

“Yes,” responded the minister, who had been for a moment silent, and his clear voice sounded like the spirit of peace above the roaring flames

and raging billows, "we are steering, I trust, for the same shore, and should we never meet again on earth, may it be our happy lot to greet each other in the haven of eternal rest, "haven to take the shipwrecked in."

Agnes's heart was for a moment too full to speak, but controlling herself, she said to Mr. Cameron in a hurried whisper, "If anything should happen to me, and you again behold my friends, tell them, oh, tell them, that my last thoughts were for them; tell them not to lament for me, for I shall be at rest, but, oh, I charge, I implore them to meet me in heaven!"

A burst of tears closed the sentence; she could no longer restrain her feelings.

"We must leave you now, my dear child," said Mr. Cameron, after promising compliance with her request. "May heaven bless and help you."

"And may He who holds the winds and the waves in the hollow of his hand, preserve you, and all, through the hours of this terrible night," was the solemn ejaculation of Mr. Dunseer, as pressing for the last time her hand, the final order was given, the boat pushed out from the side of the burning vessel, and she was left in the midst of strangers; strangers personally, yet linked together by the sympathy arising from mutual danger.

CHAPTER VII.

"LETTERS from home at last," said Arthur Bernard, as he entered the private salon of an hotel, located in a pretty town in the south of France.

"I had begun to think our friends had quite forgotten us," he continued, addressing his sister, who, seated in a recess formed by a large bow-window, had been anxiously watching for his return.

"You have not opened any of them yet," she said, as she came eagerly forward to receive her share.

"No;" was the reply. "I knew how anxiously you were waiting, and hastened that we might read them together."

"Always thoughtful, dear brother, of my comfort, you quite spoil me," said Ella, with an affectionate smile, but in a tone, whose subdued sound, proved a striking contrast to her former vivacity.

For the next few moments silence reigned in the apartment, for each were busily engaged in perusing their respective epistles.

It was broken at length by an exclamation from Ella, which arrested her brother's attention, and looking up from the opened sheet he held in his hand, he ejaculated with alarm, —

“For pity's sake, Ella, what is the matter?” for his sister's cheek had become colorless as marble, and sinking into a seat, she burst into a passion of tears.

Still more alarmed, he laid down the letter, and advancing to her, implored her to tell him the cause of her agitation.

“Read for yourself,” she said, “for I cannot bear to speak of it. Oh, Agnes, Agnes!”

A fresh mist of tears followed these words.

“Agnes, what of her?” and Arthur's cheek became almost as blanched as his sister's, and his hand trembled as he grasped the fatal manuscript. He seemed to forget that the name might belong to some other than Miss Wiltshire, for among the circle of their acquaintance there were two or three with a similar designation, but in his inmost thoughts, though he had never thus addressed her, he had been so accustomed to associate it with the remembrance of herself, that it had become dear and sacred as a household word, and when his sister's ejaculation of “Agnes, Agnes,” met his ear, he never dreamed of other, for

“There was but one such name for him
So soft, so kind, so eloquent.”

The letter was from a lady acquaintance of Ella's, written in a fine Italian hand, not very intelligible, and crossed and re-crossed in a most elaborate manner.

"Commend me to a lady's epistle," he said, in a tone more nearly approaching to bitterness than his sister had ever heard from him before. And, indeed, trying to the patience at any time, its perusal, just now, seemed a hopeless task ; but at length, at the foot of the closing page, the writer having largely expatiated on the loss she had sustained in the departure of her dear friend Ella, and how eagerly she had looked forward to her return, and having exhausted all other items of information which "she hoped," she added, "might not prove uninteresting to her friend and Mr. Bernard," very coolly wound up by remarking, "By the bye, I suppose you have not heard of Miss Wiltshire's unhappy fate. I think it was a week or two after you left B——, that she embarked in one of the steamers, ostensibly on a visit to a relative who resided in H——, to act as bridesmaid for his daughter, but with an intimation from her uncle, so I understand, that unless she relinquished her fanatic notions, she must no longer expect a home beneath his roof. The vessel in which she embarked sailed at the appointed time, but never reached its destination. It took fire the night after leaving the harbor, and all efforts to quench the flames were unavailing. The passengers, of

whom there were a large number on board, attempted to escape in boats; some were fortunate enough to succeed, but the ladies, among whom was Miss Wiltshire, without exception, found a watery grave. It appears that the females had been first placed in one of the boats manned by two or three sailors, and then another boat received the male passengers and crew. They had hoped to keep near each other, but were separated by the dark and tempestuous night. The gentlemen were fortunate enough to gain land, after a good deal of sailing, and from thence, having endured much fatigue, at length arrived here in safety; but of the missing ones no intelligence was gained, until yesterday, when a boat, identified by the passengers, from the name printed on its stern, was picked up by some vessel, and brought into our harbor. It had drifted nearly as far as the coast of Newfoundland, and, strange to say, a woman's bonnet was found floating near it, which being also conveyed here, was immediately recognized by Mrs. Denham, as the very one Miss Wiltshire wore on leaving home, thus proving, beyond the slightest doubt, the terrible fate which befell her and her unfortunate companions. Mr. and Mrs. Denham seem almost bereft of their senses, — they refuse to be comforted, — and blame themselves as the sole cause of their niece's death; but, for my part, and I am sure you will agree with me, I think Miss Wiltshire's singular conduct

was quite sufficient to warrant the anger of her relatives, who had always treated her with such indulgence ; for it seems to me a great presumption, for a young person to set up her own ideas, in opposition to those who certainly are far more capable of judging of what is right and wrong.

“ Poor thing, she has gone now, so it would not be right to speak too harshly ; but I cannot help telling you, that she was never a favorite of mine, for I do dislike that pretending to be so much better than others, and she had such a soft, winning way with her, that I believe some almost thought her an angel, but she couldn't thus have imposed on me.”

Arthur read no further. He forgot his sister's presence ; forgot that the epistle belonged to her, and with an impulse of indignation he could not control, he tore it in pieces, scattering its contents to the winds ; while with open, wondering eyes, the tears suddenly checked, Ella looked on without speaking, almost ready to conclude that her brother had taken leave of his senses. He turned from the open casement, and as he met her inquiring and troubled gaze, instantly became himself again.

“ Forgive me, dear sister,” he said, in a tone of mingled anger and grief, “ that I have destroyed that *precious* manuscript,” laying an emphasis on the word *precious* ; “ but oh, Ella, Ella, is it possible that such fearful intelligence can be true ? It almost seems,” he added, in a tone of anguish

and despair, "that heaven could not permit one so young, so lovely, to perish in such a heart-rending manner," — he stopped abruptly, — and Ella was spared replying by a gentle tap at the door.

"Come in," she said in a low, faint voice, and, in compliance with the invitation, an elderly American lady, who was on a visit to some friends that resided opposite, and with whom Ella had become quite intimate during her sojourn in the place, entered the apartment.

"I have been wanting so much to see you, my dear child," she said, affectionately, "and have been looking for you all the morning, and finding you did not make your appearance, concluded to come in search of you. But what is the matter," said she, pausing, and glancing first at Ella, and then at her brother, "I trust you have not heard any bad news?"

"We have, indeed, dear Madam," replied Arthur, with an effort to control his voice, "the loss of a very dear friend," — here the tones visibly faltered, — "by the burning of a vessel at sea, and the subsequent upsetting of a boat, in which some of the passengers were endeavoring to make their escape."

"That is indeed very, very sad news," said the old lady, affectionately clasping Ella's hand, "and I, my friends, can sympathize with you, for five years ago to-day, my son, my darling son, the

pride of my heart, the charm and ornament of our dwelling, set sail from his native shores, for a distant land, and from that moment unto this, no tidings ever reached me of his fate, for the vessel was heard of never after."

"Do you know," she said to Ella, a few moments after, as Arthur, with some murmured apology left the room, for he felt that human sympathy, however precious at other times, seemed but to madden him now, and he longed to be alone — "Do you know," she repeated, as the young girl's eyes, swollen with weeping, were upraised to her benevolent countenance, "that I was standing at the window right opposite, when you drove up to the door, and as your brother quickly alighted from the carriage, and tenderly assisted you out, my heart beat quick; the blood forsook my cheeks, and my whole frame was convulsed with emotion, for so strikingly did he resemble my lost one in look and manner, that, for the moment, I wildly dreamed that he had come back to bless me."

The old lady's tears flowed freely.

"I miss him so much, so very much," she said, "and especially on the anniversary of that fatal day which tore him from my fond embrace, and I can well appreciate the emotion which lent intensity to David's pathetic exclamation, "Oh my son, my son, would to heaven I had died for thee, oh, my son, my son."

While Mrs. Cartwright was thus, by a relation of her own trials, endeavoring to divert, in some measure, Ella's mind, and prevent her from dwelling too exclusively on this painful event, Arthur, having gained his chamber, was now pacing the floor with restless steps, his whole soul a prey to the most intense emotions of grief, such as he had never before experienced. At one moment he felt stupefied, at the suddenness of the blow ; the next, aroused again to the consciousness of its terrible reality. At length a hope, that seemed to upspring from the depth of his despair, shed a faint light over the chaotic darkness that reigned within.

"The information may be exaggerated," was his mental solving, "for it is plain that the writer, in penning it, was actuated by no feelings of goodwill, and there may yet exist a hope of Anges's escape." With this idea, he opened another epistle, which he had received, but not yet read. It was from an elderly gentleman, who had always held Agnes in the deepest esteem, and with a trembling hand he broke the seal. Alas for his futile hopes ! Not at the close of the page, as in the one received by Ella, but at the very commencement of the letter, was the mournful intelligence communicated, and while the narrator deeply deplored the event, he intimated, at the same time, that not a doubt existed in his own mind, or in the minds of her friends, as to the certainty of her untimely fate.

Arthur laid the letter aside, and again commenced his restless pacing. Alas, he had once almost imagined himself a Christian, for had he not been sedulous in the discharge of every duty, and, like the young man referred to in Scripture, could have said, with reference to the moral law as far as outward observances are concerned, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But now, mitigating, soothing, extracting from grief, however mighty, some portion of its bitterness, where was the resignation of the Christian? Not, certainly, in that heart so full of bitterness, that was ready to contend with heaven for having reclaimed its own; its power, its goodness, its wisdom, were almost, unconsciously, arraigned, and finite man presumed to pass judgment on the acts of infinite benevolence, until, at length, shocked at his own rebellious feelings, — and startled, nay, terrified, at this the deepest insight he had ever obtained of the natural depravity of his heart, he sank into a chair, and in utter recklessness abandoned himself to the tide of grief which seemed waiting to overwhelm him.

Oh there are terrible moments in human experience, moments when even the Christian is so haunted by the demon of unbelief, when the dire enemy of God and man takes advantage of some unpropitious circumstance, some painful affliction, to taunt the soul, already almost crushed, and to inquire, with fiendish malignity, "Where is now

thy God?" that if not wholly overcome, he, at least, escapes alone with fearful wounds from the trying conflict; how then can that one sustain the assault who is totally unprepared, and who knows but little of the source from whence alone help can come? Well, indeed, for frail humanity, that there is a tender, pitying Father, who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are dust," and oftentimes, when our need is sorest, sends, in his own good way, unexpected relief.

With his face buried in his hands, heedless of the lapse of time, and of anything save his own absorbing emotion, Arthur still sat in the arm-chair, into which he had thrown himself, his thoughts dwelling, with strange pertinacity, upon the past, — the past that seemed to mock him now.

They expected very shortly to have returned home, and he had anticipated so much pleasure in that return. He had never analyzed the source of that pleasure, but now that it was removed, he saw it too clearly; it was the hope, the expectation, of meeting with her. He recalled to mind the hours he had passed with her, — happy hours, all too quickly flown; her winning smile, the sweetly persuasive tones of her voice, her earnest and thoughtful manner, all came back to haunt him with their memory. Oh, how distinctly he remembered one of the last conversations he had with her, when, in her own

mellifluous tones, she had repeated Young's exquisite lines, —

“ Stricken friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love, —
For us they languish, and for us they die.”

Never had he felt their beauty as now, for the storm of passion had in a measure subsided, and the still small voice of conscience once more asserted its power.

“ Oh, Agnes, Agnes,” he murmured, “ you tarried on our earth as an angel of light, and now you have but returned to your native sphere, and rejoined your sister spirits, but could you see my rebellious heart, how infinitely removed from the resignation and purity that can alone find admission into the haven of bliss, how should I sink in your esteem, if, indeed, surrounded by the spirits of the blessed, your thoughts ever turn to so miserable an inhabitant of earth.”

A book lay on the table beside him. He took it up mechanically, scarcely knowing what he did. It was an elegant edition of Mrs. Hemans' poems, and had been the gift of Agnes to his sister a few weeks previous to her leaving home.

On the fly-leaf she had inscribed Ella's name, and the sight of her hand-writing sent a fresh thrill of agony to his heart. But last evening, on borrowing the book from his sister, he had

contemplated it with such delight; now, it was but the fatal reminder of "what had been, but never more could be." With the restlessness of a weary heart, he turned over page after page, until his glance was arrested by some lines she had evidently marked. How bitterly appropriate they seemed now as he read,—

"Go, to a voice such magic influence give
 Thou canst not lose its melody and live;
 And make an eye the load-star of thy soul;
 And let a glance the springs of thought control.
 Gaze on a mortal form with fond delight,
 Till the fair vision mingles with thy sight;
 There seek thy blessings; there repose thy trust
 Lean on the willow, idolize the dust!
 Then, when thy treasure best repays thy care,
 Think on that dread 'forever,' and despair."

It is true these lines, evidently addressed to an unbeliever in our holy Christianity, were not, in that respect, applicable to him, yet he felt that the reproof came home to his own conscience; for earth had too much engrossed his vision, and while from childhood he had been taught that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, in his despairing grief he had almost lost sight of the blessed possibility of being re-united to her, whom he now contemplated as a sinless spirit in the regions of eternal bliss.

Far reaching as Eternity were the results of these hours of affliction, and with higher and

holier aims, and the determination to consecrate life's remaining days, weeks, or years, to that service which is alone worthy of being engaged in by immortal beings, Arthur Bernard returned once more to the battle of life, with a heart crushed and bleeding, it is true, but not destitute of Peace, that celestial visitant, or of heavenly hope, pointing to a brighter and more enduring inheritance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE winter had set in unusually early. Along the bleak coast of Newfoundland, and through its dreary and sparsely inhabited islands, November blasts raged fiercely, lashing to fury the crested waves that beat against the giant rocks, which, standing sentinel-like on the shore, seemed to frown defiantly on them; or laving, far and wide, the long, flat sand beach, that afforded less obstruction to their impetuous progress. To a remote part of this dreary coast we would now direct the attention of our reader. Scarcely fair, even when Summer lavished upon it her fairest smiles, there, no traces of beauty invited the weary pilgrim to tarry and rest within their refreshing shade; no garden, gay with flowers, rang with childish laughter, as the little ones plucked their fragrant blossoms; but rugged hills, frowning rocks, and desolate sand beaches, assumed the place of waving woods, smiling corn-fields, and blooming orchards; while for the melodious notes of woodland songsters, was heard the wild cry of the stormy petrel, or the shrill scream of the large sea-gull.

But "Nature never fails the heart that loves her," and while destitute of the exuberant charms of more genial climes, the spot to which we allude was not without attraction to an admirer of the sublime and picturesque.

Nor was there wanting wild beauty in the scene which greeted the spectator, who might perchance on some lovely summer's morning ascend the steep hills, or pause for rest on one of the rocky eminences jutting out into the sea. Before him lay the wide expanse of ocean, reaching far beyond the keenest vision, calm at that moment as though it had never been lashed to fury by wailing tempests, and reflecting in its mirror-like surface the azure heavens that smiled brightly above. Beneath his feet the stunted herbage assumed its liveliest hue of emerald green, diversified here and there by some tiny, hardy wild flowers, while the distant sail, gleaming in the sunlight, and then passing beyond the eager vision, — the fishermen's huts, scattered here and there on the rugged and uneven land, — the fishing shallops, and boats of every variety, that dotted the waters, with their owners, some standing on the beach, and some in their vessels, but all engaged in the one occupation of securing and preserving the finny tribe, their only source of wealth, gave an air of animation to the scene, while the merry laugh of children, and the cheerful tones of women, as they hurried to

the beach to assist the parent or husband, spoke of social ties, and seemed to say, that peace and contentment were not alone the associates of refinement, education, and luxury.

But quite a different aspect did that barren coast present when chilly Autumn and relentless Winter resumed their dreaded reign. Then, indeed, to the inhabitant of the city, dreary beyond description would a residence within one of its small yet hospitable huts appear, and he must possess resources in himself of no common order, or be sustained by a lofty sense of duty, who could cheerfully and contentedly remain through those cheerless seasons.

Standing somewhat isolated, and at a distance from the shore, yet commanding a fine view of the sea, was a cottage of larger dimensions, and of neater appearance than the generality of the fishermen's dwellings. It was built on an irregular tract of land, that sloped down to the shore, and behind it rose a rugged hill, in summer partially covered with coarse grass, that concealed its jagged rocks, and lent it an air of cheerfulness; but now its rude outline, no longer softened by the verdure and sunshine, presented a weird and desolate appearance. In front of the cottage, which contained four or five rooms, with a small attic above, used for storing away provisions, &c., was a piece of ground, enclosed by a wooden railing, where a few vegetables were planted each

spring ; but these had long ago been gathered in, and the land was now enjoying its Sabbath, to be continued for six long months, before it would again yield of its productions, for the benefit of its hardy and thrifty owners.

The interior of the dwelling, though roughly fashioned, and furnished in the most simple manner, was not uninviting, for there was that atmosphere of cleanliness and neatness about it, which renders the rudest spot more attractive than luxurious habitations, where it is found wanting. Through the centre ran a narrow hall, out of which opened the different rooms. On the right hand, just as you entered, was a door leading into a good-sized apartment, fulfilling the united duties of kitchen, parlor, and sitting-room, while at the opposite side were several chambers, small, but clean and airy.

In the sitting-room, — for by that term we shall designate the principal apartment, — a bright coal fire was blazing cheerily in the large open fireplace, casting its pleasant light over the spotless and carefully sanded floor, gleaming on the plastered walls, and lingering to see itself gaily reflected on the shining pewter, and brightly colored delf, that, neatly arranged on the bowed shelves of the snowy dresser, were evidently the pride of the housekeeper.

A white cloth covered the rude wooden table that stood in the centre of the room, and the mis-

tress of the dwelling was hurrying to and fro, evidently intent on preparing the evening repast, while from the bake-kettle, that had just been taken from the fire, the fragrance of newly-baked bread ascended, filling the place with its odor; an odor by no means ungrateful to appetites, sharpened by manly labor and healthy sea-breezes.

While the busy matron was thus happily employed in her labors of love,—for such they emphatically were to her,—the daughter, a girl of eighteen years of age, and two younger sons, were with their father on the beach, assisting him in sorting, and putting in barrels, a quantity of fish, designed for the family's use during the winter.

“It will be a fearful night, father,” said the girl, pausing from her labors, and looking out on the black, swollen waves, while the wind, as it swept furiously by, more than once obliged her to cling to the rock for support.

“It will be a fearful night, father,” she repeated,—and, hesitating for a moment, she added, “and brother William is at sea.”

“Ay,” responded the brawny, stalwart, and good-humored looking man, “it will be, as you say, lass, a stormy night, and a terrible one, I reckon, to poor seamen,—for there is more than William on the ocean.”

A faint flush tinged with a deeper hue the girl's countenance, already bronzed by exposure to sun

and wind, while her dark grey eye grew moist with unshed tears. It was evident that there was something deeper in the old man's speech, than the mere words would seem to imply,—some covert allusion which thus called forth her emotion.

“The vessel was to have left more than a week ago ; it ought to be near the coast by this time,” said the fisherman, in a tone of uneasiness.

He turned to address his daughter, but she was no longer at his side ; and, looking in the distance, he perceived her climbing a high and jutting rock, from which the ocean, for miles around, was distinctly visible. Ellen, for that was her name, having at length ascended, stood with agile yet firm feet on the eminence, shading, with one hand, the sun, which now, peering from behind a mass of dark purple clouds, lit up for a moment the turbid waves, and gleamed on rock and beach and fishermen's huts, — and with the other holding on to the sharp edge of a projecting rock, that still towered above her. Nor as she thus stood, was she, by any means, an unpicturesque object ; the sunshine glancing on her neatly arranged brown hair, her tall figure, slight for that of a hardy fisherman's child, clad in a black skirt and crimson jacket, and every feature of her speaking countenance wearing a commingled expression of anxiety, hope, and tenderness.

How her eager vision seemed to catch, in a

moment, each feature of the scene; the sandy beach — the rugged hill — her father's shallop — and he, standing in the position she had left him, gazing out into the sea; and with what a lingering, straining glance, did her eyes wander over that pathless ocean, while her heart sank within her, as she contemplated its angry and menacing appearance.

“Not a sail in sight,” she murmured, “and the night coming on so fearfully black. Oh, Edward, shall I ever see you again!” was her exclamation, uttered in a tone full of wild pathos, while the hand, that had been upraised to shade the sun's rays, fell listless at her side.

“Oh, if you only come back safe again, I shall quarrel with you and tease you no more, — and you so patient and so good,” — and her quivering lip, and the expression of anguish that passed over her features, told how deep and true her emotion.

“It is no use lingering here,” she mentally ejaculated, as a fresh blast of wind nearly swept her from the summit. “I may as well go down at once.” Turning to descend, she paused to take a parting glance at the distant ocean, whose mercy she would fain have invoked for the loved ones it bore on its bosom, when something at a distance caught her eager eye. As one transfixed, she stood there, fearing almost to breathe, lest a breath might dissolve the vision.

“Yes, a sail is in sight ; but, ah, is it the one I look for ? Oh ! this cruel suspense, how much longer must I bear it ! Father, father,” she cried, and the breeze bore the clear tones of her voice distinctly to his ear ; “father, do come here, for I see a sail yonder, and I think it is the ‘Darling,’” for so, by the lover captain, — doubtless to remind him of another *darling*, tarrying at home, — the little trim schooner was designated.

The man quickly obeyed her summons, and soon stood by her side, scanning, too, with eager eyes, the appearance of the vessel, that was now, favored by a strong breeze, veering rapidly towards them.

“It looks like her cut, Ellen,” said the fisherman ; “but we shall see shortly.”

“Yes,” said the girl, clapping her hands with delight, while her whole face was lighted up with joy ; “it is her, sure enough, for I see her blue flag bordered with red, and the white square in the centre.”

“Well,” said the man, with a good-humored smile, “thine eyes must be a good deal sharper than mine, lass, for I can barely see a flag at all, much less its color ; but certainly thou ought to know best, when it happens to be the work of thine own hands.”

A merry laugh was the response. “I shall hurry down to tell mother,” — and with an agile step she bounded down the steep eminence, and in

a few moments reached the door of the dwelling, while the fisherman hastened to the beach, to be first ready to greet the crew of the schooner with a hearty welcome home.

CHAPTER IX.

"BEN," said the Captain of a smart-looking schooner, that under a heavy weight of canvas was manfully breasting the breeze, almost conscious, one might fancy, that it was steering for home.

"Ben," he inquired, addressing the mate, who had just come on deck, "what is that strange looking thing yonder?" indicating by his finger the direction of the object. The mate, a weather-beaten and experienced looking son of the ocean, glanced for a moment in the direction specified, without speaking.

"It looks to me," he said at length, "like a human being clinging to some box or chair, but it is floating fast this way, and we shall soon be able to tell."

Sure enough, in a moment or two, they were enabled to gain a full, clear view of it, and saw it to be a woman holding fast to a ring of some kind, — a life-preserver they judged it to be, — which kept her head above the waters.

"Let us bear down quick," said the Master, in

an excited tone, for he was young and kind-hearted, and the sight of anything in distress, how much more a woman, was sufficient to arouse his warmest sympathies; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the life-preserver, with its clinging burden, was safely landed on deck.

Agnes, for she it was, whom this worthy man had so promptly and providentially rescued, was partially insensible; but some restoratives, which fortunately they happened to have on hand, being applied, she soon recovered, at least sufficiently to explain from whence she came, and through what means she had been placed in such a perilous situation.

It appeared, from her statement, that after having embarked on board the boat during that tempestuous night, which witnessed the conflagration of their noble steamer, whose fate was recorded in a previous chapter, the sailors, who had, unknown to the captain, smuggled a large cask of spirits on board, began freely to imbibe them, to keep out, as they said, the cold. It was in vain that the ladies remonstrated with them, and pointed out the dangers which would ensue, should they become helpless through its means. Unfortunately they had lost sight, in consequence of the darkness and tempest, of the other boat, containing the remainder of the passengers, who had just time to push away from the burning wreck before its final submersion beneath the briny waves; and,

having none to check them, the sailors, in spite of the entreaties of the women, continued to partake, from time to time, of the death-destroying liquid.

Morning dawned, but brought little alleviation. It is true, the storm had abated, and the sky was becoming clear, but the wind was still high, and the boat rocked fearfully, while the billows, that had not yet been hushed into quiet, threatened, every now and then, to submerge the frail and tempest-tossed bark. They had drifted, — so the sailors said, — a long way through the night, and must be somewhere near the coast of Newfoundland; but no indication of land was visible, nor was there to be seen the slightest trace of their companions in misfortune. All that day the sailors behaved pretty well; a bag of biscuits had been placed on board, and a jar of water, of which each partook, and all felt a little comforted and strengthened; but, as night came on, the men commenced afresh to drink. Most fortunately, the sea had become calm, so the boat drifted on, pretty much left to its own will. The next morning found the sailors in a state of almost helpless intoxication; but now land was in sight, though at a great distance, and the women, seizing the oars, strove to impel the boat in that direction, but soon, worn out with the struggle, and finding they made but little headway, most of them gave up to despair, and resigned themselves, as they said, to their fate. It was now high noon, at least

so they judged from the look of the sun, and Agnes strove by every means to re-assure her fainting companions. She spoke of the power and goodness of their heavenly Father, and besought them to unite with her in earnest petitions to the throne of grace for timely succor, or for a preparation for a speedy exit from life. Some heard with attention, and united with agonizing earnestness in the petition, which, as it ascended from her lips, sounded like a seraph's pleading, and surely reached the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Others listened with stolid indifference, or sullen despair. Throughout the precious years of prosperity, that had been vouchsafed to them, they had been neglecters of the "great salvation;" and now, in the article and hour of death, they knew not how to implore his mercy, of whom they had been hitherto utterly unmindful, much less adored and loved.

At length one of the women lifted her face, haggard with care and grief, and threw a glance, preternaturally sharpened, over the wild waste of waters:—

"I see a sail yonder," she cried wildly. "Look," she cried to Agnes, "can you not see it, too?"—but just at this moment one of the sailors, not quite so much stupefied as the others, hearing the exclamation, roused himself, and bent over the side of the boat, and instantly the frail bark was submerged beneath the waves.

Oh, what shrieks of agony filled the air.

"Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave."

Agnes had carefully retained the life-preserver, which had been given to her by her friend the minister, and with the instinct of self-preservation, almost unconsciously clung to it, while her companions, less fortunate, and worn out with previous grief, one by one sank to rise no more "till the sea shall give up its dead."

"I think," she said, as she concluded her narrative, "I must have been in the water more than half an hour, when I espied the sail, to which my unfortunate companion had alluded, and seeing it, seemed to inspire me with new life, for I had become so exhausted and enfeebled by the waves that surrounded me, that I felt nature could not much longer survive the icy chills which thrilled through my very frame; and when I found that you had seen me, and were sailing towards me, evidently with the intention of effecting my rescue, no language can describe the varied emotions of my heart,—joy, gratitude and hope preponderating."

Exhausted by the effort of speaking, Agnes sank back on the rude couch, that the sailors had with kind haste prepared for her.

"Land, yonder," sang one from the mast-head.

"I am heartily glad of it," said the Captain, "for all our sakes, for we shall soon have a terrible storm, but especially for this poor lady's, whose strength seems almost gone."

Prospered by a favoring breeze, a few hours sufficed to bear the vessel to its destined harbor; and that night, sheltered, in comparative comfort, beneath the hospitable roof of Mr. Williamson, Ellen's father, Agnes sank into deep and quiet repose.

CHAPTER X.

APRIL, sunny April, capricious, yet beautiful child of Spring, once more smiled upon the bleak shores and sterile plains which, when we last beheld them, were encompassed by the chilling atmosphere, and loomed bleak and desolate beneath the sombre sky of, to that land at least, unpropitious winter.

Welcome to all the inhabitants of that rude coast, the return of the season was hailed with pleasure the deepest, the liveliest, with gratitude as warm as ever expanded the human heart, by her whom, an exile from her native shores, had been compelled to sojourn for a season on its rocky and cheerless wastes. Five months had now elapsed since, rescued by the kind-hearted sailors, Agnes had become an inmate of the fisherman's cottage, and these months had seemed to her like a separate existence, so widely had their experience differed from that of her accustomed every-day life.

But deem not, gentle reader, that they had been spent by her in sinful repining at the

hardships of her lot. During the first part of her sojourn among them, severe sickness, caused no doubt by previous exposure and anxiety, had prostrated her system, and brought her to the very borders of the grave, but through the unremitting care of Mrs. Williamson and her daughter, she was restored to health; and full of gratitude to heaven for this double preservation of her life, which had been thus vouchsafed, her first inquiry was, how she could best return the debt of gratitude due to her Father in Heaven, and those through whose kindly instrumentality she was thus raised up again. Nor was she long in ascertaining the path of duty, nor hesitating in commencing and pursuing it with eagerness.

One day, soon after her recovery, she was sitting by the fire, when Ellen, the fisherman's daughter, to whom we have before alluded, entered the room, and observing that Agnes looked somewhat downcast, kindly inquired the cause, for the gratitude she had manifested for every little act of kindness, had deeply endeared her to those with whom she was now associated.

"I hope you do not feel any worse, dear lady," she said.

"Oh, no, Ellen," was the reply, while a smile instantly dissipated the shadow that had obscured for a moment her countenance. "And how deeply grateful should I feel," she added after a

short pause, "first to my Heavenly Father, and then to you and your kind family, whose unwearied care and attention have been so instrumental in my recovery ; and I trust yet to have it in my power to show my sense of your kindness."

"Don't, Miss Wiltshire, please don't say anything more. Why, we only did what any persons, with common feelings, would have done."

"Nevertheless," persisted Agnes, "I feel under very great obligations to you all. But I will tell you what made me look a little melancholy when you came in. Your father informed me, this morning, that there would be no possibility of my communicating with my home until spring, and thus my relatives and friends, not having any intelligence of me, for so long a time, will certainly believe that I have found a watery grave."

"But when you return home, what a delightful surprise they will get ; why, it would be worth enduring months of pain for," said Ellen, who seemed to have the happy faculty of always looking at the bright side.

"Very true, Ellen, but" — and an involuntary sigh followed the sentence — "you know not, and I trust will never know, from experience, that 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.'"

"I know something about that, too, Miss Agnes, though maybe you think me too young ; but, indeed, there was once a weary while, when I watched the sea day after day, that is, when the scalding

tears would let me see it, and shuddered to hear the fierce winds moaning round our dwelling, as though they had a human heart, and sighed and raved for some lost love. Oh, how I remember the day, when that long-looked for vessel came back again, for I had got up more down-hearted than ever, and I thought it no use hoping and waiting, for I shall never see it again, — and then the salt sea was not saltier than the tears I shed, as I sat down on a rock by the shore, and thought of the stalwart form that would never meet my eye again, and of the kind voice that should never sound in my ears, — and as I looked on the sea, its bright waves rippling and smiling beneath my feet, it seemed to laugh and mock me cruelly, and I almost wished myself, — I know it was very wicked, Miss Agnes, — far, far beneath it, where I should forget my troubles, and my heart cease its aching. And then I laid my head on the rock, and covered my face with my hands, and cried as though I should never cease, until I felt something touch my face, and a voice that I knew too well said, ‘Ellen, Ellen, what art thou breaking thy heart for in this manner?’ — and I looked up, and saw two eyes, that, a moment before, I thought death had closed, shining brightly on me, and — but you have seen him yourself, Miss Agnes, and can easily guess how happy I was. Oh, it made up for all my weary days, and wretched, sleepless nights.”

Agnes had listened with much interest to the simple narrative, and while her eyes filled with tears, she murmured, almost unconsciously,

“ One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

We would not like to vouch for it, but, perhaps, while Ellen had been speaking, with the remembrance of her relatives, another image had arisen in her mind, and she thought, “ And he, too, he will hear of what they will deem my terrible fate.”

There was pleasure, mingled with pain, as her heart suggested, that eyes, albeit unused to weep, might even now be shedding a tear over her untimely doom ; for Arthur did not, could not, conceal the deep interest he felt in her welfare ; and as she called to mind his kindness, his sympathy, when all the world seemed dark to her, she felt her heart thrill with strange emotion, and she asked herself, again and again, “ Shall I ever be so happy as to see him once more ? ”

“ Mr. Elliot is, indeed,” said she, in reply to Ellen, after a short pause, “ worthy of you, as far as I have had an opportunity of judging, and that is saying a good deal, Ellen. But I must tell you what I was thinking of, this morning, while I sat here alone. You told me, the other day, that the children of the neighborhood were growing up in fearful ignorance, destitute, as they are, of a teacher, and I thought, if it met with

the approbation of their parents, that I could not be more usefully or happily employed, during the time that must intervene before I have an opportunity of returning to my friends, than instructing those little ones, a few hours each day. Our evenings, too, might be pleasantly occupied, for I overheard you, when I was lying ill, expressing a wish to know how to write, and these long winter evenings will afford abundant opportunity for your taking lessons, and any of your young companions, that may wish to join you."

Ellen was delighted with the proposition, and warmly expressed her thanks, and Agnes's wishes were speedily carried into effect. A small unoccupied cottage was fitted up as a school-house, to which all the children of the neighborhood, far and near, daily repaired, while at night the young people of both sex filled the good-sized room of Mr. Williamson's dwelling, thirsting for that instruction which Agnes was so willing to impart. Nor did her efforts end here. Of pastoral guidance these poor people were equally destitute; as sheep without a shepherd, they had long "stumbled on the dark mountains of sin and error," but now each Sabbath morning found them congregated in the school-house, singing the hymns that some of them had learned in childhood, in their distant native lands, or listening to the sweet tones of their teacher and guide, as she explained, by many simple and touching illustrations, the sacred

Word, or offered up the fervent prayer, which from her lips seemed to come with double power, and caused even the sturdy fishermen's hearts to melt within them. The afternoon of the sacred day was especially devoted to the children; classes were formed, over which the most intelligent members of the community presided, conspicuous among whom was Ellen, whose naturally quick and clever mind, brought into contact with one so superior as Agnes, rapidly developed, while her whole appearance gave indications of how much she had profited by constant intercourse with her youthful companion.

Ellen's parents were not natives of the land in which she now resided. They had come from one of the counties of England, when Ellen was little more than an infant; their original destination being Canada, but having been wrecked on the Newfoundland coast, and lost nearly all they possessed, they had not means to travel farther; and while Williamson gladly joined the fishermen in their occupation for the purpose of temporarily supplying the necessities of his family, his wife, — who was a skilful needle woman, and clever at almost everything, — made herself generally useful among their families, and thus acquired much influence over them.

Gradually they came to look upon the sterile coast, unlike, strangely unlike though it was, to the cultivated lands they had left, as their home, at

least for some years to come. Both frugal and industrious, a little cottage was speedily erected, which very soon, from the superior thrift and neatness of its owners, became the best in the place, and as time passed on, they not only continued to gain a subsistence, but succeeded in gathering round them many little comforts, which were the admiration and, sometimes, the envy of their less fortunate neighbors. From time to time, Mr. Williamson was in the habit of taking a quantity of their chief export, fish, to H—, and obtaining, in lieu of it, plentiful supplies of food and clothing; and, what his wife and daughter had prized more than all, in returning from his last voyage, he had brought with him a few school-books, with some entertaining works, and several volumes of interesting and evangelical sermons.

Mrs. Williamson, who was the daughter of a small farmer, had, in her youth, received the elements of a good English education. She could read with tolerable fluency, and had taught her children this important branch; but though, when a child, she had learned to write, want of practice and varied duties connected with her toilsome condition, had almost erased the power from memory; and it was with deep regret at her own neglect, that she found her children growing up as ignorant, as herself, of the power of communicating their thoughts through the medium of the pen. It was, therefore, with no small delight, that she

had hailed Agnes's welcome offer ; and as she sat, evening after evening, in her corner by the fire-side, apparently busily engaged in knitting, but, in reality, an attentive listener to the instruction Agnes was imparting to the young people, — or as she mingled her tones with theirs who, on the Sabbath, warbled, from hearts attuned to devotion, those melodies that had been familiar to her from childhood, — again and again, would memory revert to the happy days of her infancy and youth, when with beloved parents and friends she had gone up to the house of God, and while a tear of sorrow and penitence would steal down her cheeks, to think how much of the instructions, then received, had been forgotten, she blessed the Parental Hand that had placed beneath her roof, one so fitted to counsel and comfort, to prove to her, as well as to many others, a ministering angel indeed.

Thus, happily and usefully employed, the winter months glided by comparatively swiftly to Agnes. Not that the past was forgotten, — not that she never sighed for more congenial society, for the friends of her early youth, or even for the refinement and luxuries by which she had been surrounded, — that would be affirming too much, for she had a genuine woman's heart, and that innate perception and love of the beautiful, which delights in the elegancies and embellishments of life, and could not as easily accommodate itself, as

some could, to a situation where those are wholly wanting.

There were hours when she felt herself an exile, indeed; hours when Ellen's young companions would flock to the cottage, and talk and laugh over subjects in which it was impossible for Agnes to feel any interest; it was then, more especially perhaps, she thought of home, and of the educated and refined society in which she had been accustomed to mingle, and realized more fully the wide gulf dividing her from those among whom Providence had so mysteriously, as it seemed, placed her. But think not, fair reader, such considerations were allowed to influence her conduct, or render her manner haughty and disagreeable. It is true she was treated with consideration and respect by the female part of the community; they could not help looking upon her as a being of another and higher sphere, and her presence had often the effect of checking the tide of rude mirth, and of rendering their demeanor more quiet and retired. But while she thus claimed their admiration and reverence, she at the same time almost unconsciously won their affection, for on her lip was ever the law of kindness, and the interest she took in their humble pursuits, the ready counsel and sympathy in every case of emergency and sorrow, endeared her deeply to them, and her efforts to impart instruction were received with all the genuine grat-

itude of unsophisticated Nature, so that these portions of her time, devoted to the training of those uncultivated minds, were the ones which afforded to Agnes the purest pleasure ; seasons which she often recurred to in other years, as being among the most agreeable in her experience.

But the dreary Winter at length gave place to smiling Spring, and Agnes began to look forward anxiously for an opportunity of returning home. She scarce allowed herself to dwell on the matter, so intense became her anxiety as the time drew near for leaving the hospitable home which had so long afforded her rude but safe protection.

The young sailor, Agnes's preserver, who had been long affianced to Ellen, had just returned from a very successful sea-voyage.

In a few days they were to be united ; a minister, who resided at some distance in the interior of the country, being expected to visit them, and perform the ceremony ; and Agnes, much to the delight of Ellen, had promised to officiate as bridesmaid. In a few weeks subsequent the groomsmen intended sailing to B——, and Agnes would then have an opportunity of returning once more to her home.

CHAPTER XI.

“CAPTAIN,” — exclaimed a tall, slight young man, as he ascended the cabin steps of a noble vessel, and, having gained the deck, stood gazing on the expansive Atlantic stretched out before him, — “Captain,” he eagerly inquired, “this surely is not our destination,” pointing at the same time with his finger to a rude outline of land, now distinctly visible.

“No, indeed,” said the Captain, good humoredly; “it would be but a poor compliment to the stately city of B——, to take this rude coast, with its sandy beaches, its rocky eminences, and fishermen’s huts, for its handsome dimensions. Nevertheless, poor as this little fishing settlement looks, it is a very welcome sight just now, I assure you, as our provisions are getting scarce, and as to the water, my cook tells me he should have hardly enough to fill a tea-kettle for to-morrow’s breakfast.”

“And so you intend putting in here for supplies?”

“Precisely so, though I see by your look you

deem it not a very probable place to obtain them. But this is not the first time I have been obliged to put in here, and have always found a hearty welcome, and obtained necessary supplies ; not, perhaps, the very best of provisions, but such as the place can afford ; and I am well acquainted with one of the fishermen, an emigrant from my native place, whose hospitality, and that of his family, is unbounded ; and whenever I happen to tarry here, they do all in their power to make us comfortable."

"And how long do you expect to remain?" inquired Mr. Clifford.

"For a few days only, but long enough I trust to recover these two sailors of mine, who have been complaining so much of late ; and my wife's health also is not as good as usual, accustomed though she has been to long sea-voyages. You, too, Sir, I think," said the Captain, "will be all the better for a taste of the land breeze, even though it should not be laden with the balmy breath of flowers."

"You are quite right, Captain," was the reply ; "and anxious as I am to see my home again, after five long years' absence, I shall be none the worse for a ramble on *terra firma* once more."

In a few hours subsequent to the conversation recorded above, a fine boat might be seen rapidly cutting the sparkling waves, and the little party, consisting of the Captain and his wife, with their

only passenger, Mr. Clifford, soon landed on the sandy beach, and gladly directed their steps towards Mr. Williamson's cottage.

Captain Pierce pointed out the residence to Mr. Clifford, for though it was at some distance from their landing place, it could be distinctly seen, owing to the elevation of the ground on which it was built.

"You had better go on, Sir," said the Captain, "and, if you have no objection, inform them you are a passenger of the barge '*Pearl*.' That will be sufficient, I know, to insure you a hearty welcome, and you can add, if you choose, that we are behind; for my wife and myself are but indifferent walkers, being more accustomed to patrolling the deck of a vessel than climbing these steep hills, so that if you try to conform your pace to ours, you will be quite weary when you reach the dwelling."

Mr. Clifford laughingly replied, and hastening his steps, soon came in sight of the cottage.

It was near the end of April, and the day a balmy one, even for smiling June.

At the open window of the sitting-room, which commanded a view of the road and harbor, Agnes was seated busily engaged in embroidering the muslin dress intended for Ellen's wedding attire. The sound of steps near at hand arrested her attention, and looking up, she beheld a stranger, with wonder and admiration depicted on his coun-

tenance, standing and gazing fixedly at her. For a moment her heart seemed to cease its pulsations, and a death-like pallor overspread her checks, for so strikingly did the form and face resemble Arthur Bernard, that, in spite of the improbability of the case, Agnes almost believed it to be him.

Ernest, on his part, was equally surprised at seeing, in a fisherman's dwelling, one whose elegant appearance formed such a striking contrast to the unpretending and rudely fashioned abode in which she dwelt.

The small purse of gold, which Agnes had thoughtfully secured about her person on the night that witnessed the conflagration of the ill-fated steamer, had enabled her to purchase from Mrs. Williamson some plain materials, which had been fashioned, by her own skilful fingers, into neat and becoming attire. Her nicely-fitting brown stuff dress, relieved by a linen collar of snowy whiteness, displayed to advantage her graceful figure ; her soft brown tresses were smoothly parted from her fair forehead ; and her fine intelligent countenance, on whose every lineament refinement and sensibility were stamped, wore an expression of sweet and touching resignation, and hope "subdued but cherished still ;" what marvel, then, that Ernest Clifford's steps were arrested, when he beheld so lovely an apparition, and that he gazed upon her as though he expected that the fair vision would soon vanish from

his view. He had watched her for a few moments unobserved, but when their glances met, he marked, with increasing astonishment, her evident emotion, and pleased, yet strangely puzzled, he could not find courage to seek admittance at the cottage, but, retracing his steps, resolved to wait for an introduction from the Captain.

It was with a good deal of surprise that the Captain and his wife beheld Ernest advancing towards them.

“Was no one within,” he inquired, “that you have come back so soon?”

“Really, Captain,” was the reply, “I could not summon courage to knock at the door and ascertain.”

“Courage!” echoed the Captain, wondering as he marked the young man’s heightened color and evident embarrassment, — “courage, to knock at a poor fisherman’s dwelling! Really, Mr. Clifford, your sojourn among these barbarians must have been productive of no little injury to you, if it has robbed you of that courage with which I am sure, from your appearance, Nature plentifully endowed you.”

“You misunderstand me, my dear Sir, I assure you,” was the reply. “I feared intruding, and thought I would prefer waiting for an introduction from you.”

The Captain could contain himself no longer,

but burst into a hearty fit of laughter, in which he was joined by his wife.

“You must excuse me, Mr. Clifford,” he said, apologizing; “but, really, the idea of your formality amused me no little; for, however acceptable such would prove to the society with which you have been accustomed to mingle, I am afraid such ceremonious politeness would be hardly popular here.”

“But, really, Captain,” — and Mr. Clifford looked, it must be confessed, a little vexed, — “you should have informed me who I was going to meet, before sending me on as herald. I was not aware that I should be thrown into the society of ladies, or I should have endeavored to appear to a little better advantage. As it is, I am hardly fit to be seen; and while I am aware that your good lady excuses me, knowing the circumstances under which I took shelter with you, yet, to strangers I would appear rather ludicrous, clad in those ill-fitting garments.”

“They are not the most elegant in the world, I acknowledge,” was the response; “but much better than the fishermen’s wives and daughters are accustomed to see, for those are the only *ladies* that inhabit these sterile regions.”

“It surely could not have been a fisherman’s daughter that I beheld just now, as I neared the dwelling to which you directed me; for, seated at the window, sewing, was a young lady, neatly

though plainly dressed ; but her look and manner bespoke her to be far above such a condition of life."

The Captain looked puzzled, and turning to his wife, said, "It must be Ellen Williamson, to whom Mr. Clifford alludes. She is not ill-favored, by any means, and indeed quite the belle of the place, being by far the best looking girl in it ; nevertheless, I should hardly mistake her for one of higher rank ; but Mr. Clifford has been so long without beholding woman's face divine, with the exception of yours, my dear, that he is ready to magnify good looks into positive beauty and grace."

The young man seemed disconcerted.

"I could almost stake my existence, that the person to whom I refer is not, cannot be the daughter of a fisherman. However, if it should be so, Captain, and such a region as this can produce so lovely a being, in spite of its barren wastes and rocky steppes, I should be ready to surname it Paradise, or The Enchanted Isle, if you will ; for certainly it was a vision of enchantment I just now beheld."

Captain Pierce, though almost imagining that his young friend's intellect had been deranged, gaily responded : —

"I must warn you in time, I see, for you are in danger of losing your heart, if it is not gone already. Ellen Williamson is engaged to a worthy

young man, a captain of a fishing schooner, and their marriage is to be celebrated this spring, so her father informed me when I was here last year, and I think it only my duty to give you fair warning, that another claims your enchantress as his own. But here we are at the cottage, and your doubts will speedily be put to flight, by an introduction to the girl herself."

The loud knock of the Captain, at the cottage door, was quickly answered by Mrs. Williamson, who, in terms of genuine pleasure, welcomed his safe return, and the little party were ushered into the sitting-room, whose neat and even tasteful appearance, formed a striking contrast to the generality of the fishermen's huts.

Mr. Clifford's quick eye, as they entered, sought the window, but the seat was vacant now; evidences of its having been lately occupied were discernible in a work-basket that stood on a table near, and on which some embroidered muslin had been lightly thrown.

The Captain smiled as he observed Mr. Clifford's disappointed look, and turning to Mrs. Williamson, who was assisting his wife in divesting herself of her shawl and bonnet, inquired after her daughter.

"She is quite well, thank you," was her reply, "and was here a moment ago, but observing you in the distance, ran to inform her father, who is

working beyond the hill at the back of the dwelling. She will be back shortly."

A slight sigh escaped from Mr. Clifford, unheard by all save his friend, who turned to him with a mischievous smile, which the former easily interpreted as, "I wonder which was right, you or I?"

In the meanwhile, Mrs. Williamson was entreating Mrs. Pierce to take some rest, "for indeed you look much in need of it," she added, "and I will have a cup of strong tea ready for you in a few moments, for you need something to refresh you, I am sure, after being so long on the salt water."

Her husband seconded Mrs. Williamson's advice.

"You had better go, my dear, and lay down for a little while, and you will feel vastly better, I assure you. As for me, I must now go back to the ship, but will return in time to join you in a good cup of tea, which, from past experience, I know will be excellent,—and I suppose I shall then see Mr. Williamson and daughter."

"Oh, yes, Sir," was the reply. "They should have been back before this; but I expect husband was farther off than Ellen imagined, and seeking for him has detained her."

Gaily waving an adieu, the Captain hurried away, and Mrs. Pierce following the fisherman's wife into her chamber, Ernest Clifford was left

alone. He seated himself at the open casement in a listless attitude ; for though he would hardly acknowledge it to himself, he could not help a feeling of disappointment in finding his air castle so quickly shattered.

The only object of attraction to be seen from the casement was a fine view of the sea ; but Ernest had been too long a sojourner on the wild waste of waters, not to have become weary of their monotony, and tired of gazing at what had been so long a familiar object, he turned his attention to the interior of the room. As he glanced round the apartment, he could not help admiring the spotless neatness which marked it, for everything was in the most perfect order, while the few ornaments and some pretty shells, that the fisherman and Ellen's betrothed had brought on their return from different voyages, were tastefully arranged on the mantel-piece and tables, with several books, which, from the pencilled passages he observed as he opened them, had evidently been well conned. In one, a small volume of miscellaneous poems, Ellen's name was inscribed on the fly-leaf, in a graceful Italian hand, evidently a lady's writing.

"This fisherman's daughter must certainly be a very superior person," he said to himself, as he turned over page after page, observing with the eye of a critic, — for literature to him had been a familiar study from early youth, — that the finest

passages were the only ones marked, proving, conclusively, that they had been the reader's favorites.

"Strange to find one like her in so remote and desolate a spot," and, half-aloud, he read the stanzas, in which he had just opened, smiling as he thought how true they were in this instance.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

He was interrupted by the clear, sweet tones of a woman's voice in an adjoining room.

"You will find my chamber quite comfortable, Mrs. Pierce, and I must insist on your sharing it, for there is abundance of room for us both."

"But I am afraid of discommoding you, my dear young lady, and can easily sleep on board, though I will take advantage of your kindness now, to rest on your bed for a short time."

"Indeed, my dear Madam, I assure you, that you will be conferring a favor instead of receiving one, in sharing my apartment, while you remain, for it is such a delight to me to see the face of a countrywoman in this, the land of my exile."

"How long did Mrs. Williamson say it was since you were conveyed here?" inquired Mrs. Pierce.

"Nearly six months."

“And what a dreary time you must have found it, my dear.”

“No,” said the sweet voice again, that sounded like music to the ear of the unintentional listener ; “No,” she repeated, “I have felt tolerably contented with my lot, and but for the remembrance of my friends and the sorrow they must have endured on my account, thinking, as they certainly must, that a watery grave has been my portion,—but for such remembrances I should have been comparatively happy. But you will never sleep,” she added playfully, “if I go on chattering in this manner, so I will leave you to your much needed repose.”

At this moment, the outer door of the cottage opened, and the Captain, accompanied by Mr. Williamson and his daughter, whom he had met as he was returning from the ship, entered the room, and a mutual introduction to Mr. Clifford took place.

The Captain, as he named “Ellen Williamson,” looked roguishly at Mr. Clifford, who returned his glance with an equally amused smile, but one that the Captain could not comprehend. Not sorry to find he was in the right, and with a little mischievous pleasure, as he imagined his friend’s discomfiture, when the fair stranger,—for such from her conversation she evidently was,—should make her appearance, Ernest’s eyes were riveted at the door, which communicated with an inner

apartment, and at length his patient watching was rewarded.

The fisherman's wife, overhearing the Captain's somewhat loud though cheerful voice, hastened to meet him again, accompanied by Agnes, who was anxious to resume the employment which astonishment and emotion had caused her to throw aside. Besides, it must be confessed, she felt in no way averse to see again the stranger, whose striking similarity to her friend, had so deeply overcome her. From Mrs. Pierce she had already learned his name, and also a sketch of his history, from the period of her first acquaintance with him, and thrillingly interesting as it was, Agnes could not help feeling attracted towards one who had suffered so much, and who, like herself, had been an unwilling exile from his native land.

Captain Pierce, who was sitting with his face turned from the door, and who, moreover, was engaged in relating to Mr. Williamson the particulars of his voyage, did not, at first, observe the new comer; but as she advanced nearer, he abruptly paused in the conversation, and with a glance — as full of astonishment and perplexity as Ernest, who was now an amused spectator, could desire — intently regarded her.

"I see you wonder, Captain, how this young lady, whose name is Miss Wiltshire," said Mrs. Williamson, "took up her residence in this ~~out~~

of the way place ; but Elliot, on his return voyage from H—— in November, happened, fortunately, to rescue her from the waves, into which she was thrown by the upsetting of a boat, and having brought her here, she has remained ever since in this dreary place, at least it must be such to her, for she has had no opportunity of returning to her friends.”

With her customary grace, Agnes returned the Captain's and Mr. Clifford's respectful greeting, and resumed again her embroidery, disclaiming, however, as she did so, the epithet of dreary, as being quite inappropriate, in her estimation, to the place which had afforded her so hospitable a shelter.

“It would be impossible for me to find any spot dreary,” she said, “inhabited by so many kind friends, and from whom I have received such true tokens of hospitality ; and while I confess to an eager desire to behold again my relatives, it will not be without very great pain that I shall part from those whose warmest sympathies and tenderest care were exercised towards a helpless stranger.”

“I have heard,” said Mr. Pierce, turning to Mrs. Williamson, whose countenance told the emotion she felt at the intimation of Agnes's speedy departure, “I have heard of *some* entertaining ‘angels unawares,’ and I should judge you have been thus fortunate, Mrs. W.”

“You may, indeed, say so, Sir,” said the good woman, wiping away a tear with the corner of her apron; “I cannot tell you what a blessing this young lady has been, not only to my family, but to the whole neighborhood. Indeed, Sir, you would be surprised to see what a change has been effected by her in this place. Miss Wiltshire has established a day school for the children, and a night class for the young people; and our Sabbaths, that some spent in sleep, others in doing nothing, or worse than nothing, now pass in a very different manner, for we have both Church and Sabbath school, and ‘come up with those that keep holy day.’ What we shall do without her, I cannot imagine, though, to be sure, it would be dreadfully selfish in me to wish her to stay longer, for those to whom she belongs must be breaking their hearts after so lovely a creature.”

The above conversation, which was addressed particularly to the Captain, was delivered in an under-tone, and was therefore unheard by Agnes, who was an attentive listener to Mr. Clifford, as he called up all the varied powers of his fine intellect for the purpose of describing the scenes through which he had passed; and he was well rewarded for his efforts by the sweet smile, and breathless interest, with which Agnes heard the narration.

CHAPTER XII.

“WHAT a lovely evening,” exclaimed Arthur Bernard, as rising from his seat, by the invalid’s couch, he drew aside the thick folds of the crimson damask curtains, allowing the glorious rays of the full-orbed moon to illuminate the apartment.

“My dear Sir,” he said kindly, turning to Mr. Denham, the uncle of Agnes, for he it was who reclined on the velvet lounge, propped up by pillows, “I am sure it would do you good, on a fine spring day such as this has been, to take a short drive through the suburbs of the city. The fresh, balmy air of delightful May would prove, as your physician told you, yesterday, the best restorative ; better, far better, than all his drugs ; and, besides, it will divert your mind to mark the dawn of summer, to witness how quickly, almost instantaneously, the trees have put forth their leaves, and in the parks and fields, how thick and verdant Nature’s flowery carpet. Can I not prevail upon you to accompany me to-morrow in a short drive ? I know, on your return, you will

not regret having been persuaded to try the efficacy of my prescription."

The invalid shook his head, sadly.

"You are very kind, Arthur," he said, "in taking such interest in a querulous old man, like me, and I would gratify you; but, indeed, it is not the illness of the body of which I complain, for that only suffers in sympathy with the mind. Fresh breezes may fan the brow, and verdant scenes charm the eye, but tell me,

'Can they minister to a mind diseased,
Or pluck from mem'ry's roots a barbed arrow?'

If you promise that they can accomplish such wonders as these, then shall I gladly try your prescription."

"No, Sir," was the reply; "admirer as I am of Nature, and powerful as I deem her ministrations, I dare not undertake in her name, to promise that she shall perform such a miracle as this. From bitter, yet salutary experience, I know that the sick heart may turn even with loathing from her loveliest scenes, as being but reminders of by-gone happiness, awakening associations too painful for the spirit calmly to contemplate." He paused abruptly, and then in a lower tone repeated to himself, as he gazed on the beautiful, park-like grounds, that surrounded Mr. Denham's residence, fair to view at all times, but never lovelier

than when illumined, as now, by the soft rays of the full-orbed moon, —

“ Since my Alexis withers in the tomb,
 Untimely fades, nor sees a second bloom ;
 Ye hills and groves no more your landscapes please,
 Nor give my soul one interval of ease ;
 Delight and joy forever flee your shades, —
 And mournful care your solitude invades.”

“ But, my dear Mr. Denham,” he said, as he turned from contemplating the scene without, and resumed his seat near the invalid’s couch, “ though I cannot promise that Nature will afford you the elixir you require, your case is not, cannot be hopeless, while there is balm in Gilead, while there is a Physician there.”

“ I know well what you would say, Arthur Bernard, and it is easy for you to speak thus, who have never known the horrors of remorse ; who have never been haunted by the vision of a sweet face, drowned in tears, whose look of affection was repelled by coldness and harshness. Ah, had you known my dearly loved Agnes as I have ; had you watched from infancy each expanding grace, until she grew to be your heart’s idol ; had you loved her with a love like mine” —

Arthur Bernard groaned involuntarily, but the old man unheeding went on.

“ And then, because her pure mind could not be content to feed on the husks of worldly vanity,

and sought for more congenial nourishment, banish her from your presence, for the very cause that should have rendered her dear beyond all price, and that banishment to have such a termination ; to think that the wild salt waves should cover my darling, that the winds should be her requiem, that I shall never hear that sweet voice pronounce my forgiveness, — oh, it is too much, too much for human nature to bear, though I deserve it all.

“Talk not to me, Arthur Bernard,” and the invalid, in the energy of passion, half-raised himself from the couch, “talk not to me, I beseech you, of balm in Gilead, or of a Physician there ; others, who have not sinned as I have done, may find forgiveness, but as for me, unless the treacherous sea restore my darling to my arms, there is never more peace or comfort for me, but my gray hairs shall go down with sorrow to the tomb.”

He sank back exhausted by the violence of his emotions, and silence reigned through the apartment for a few moments, its two occupants seemingly absorbed in painful thought.

To Arthur the reflection of the almost certain destiny that had befallen her who had, unconsciously to himself, shared so large a portion of his affections, was indeed fraught with anguish ; the void she had left he felt, day by day, could never be replaced, and in reference to a passion at once so absorbing and constant, he might well

have adopted, as embodying his own experience, the language of the poet : —

“ It was life’s whole emotion, a storm in its might,
’Twas deep as the ocean, and silent as night ;
It swept down life’s flowers, the fragile and fair,
The heart had no powers from passion to spare.”

It is time, from her loss, he had learned lessons of purest wisdom ; he had sought and found the grace which he so truly exemplified in life and conduct ; nor had the oil and joy of heavenly consolation been denied him, in the period of his sorest need ; and though he could not, he dared not, dwell on the billows that swept above that once beautiful form, yet he delighted, in fancy, to visit those regions of bliss, now, as he deemed, her habitation, and to conjecture what the occupation, and what the enjoyment of its thrice-blessed inhabitants : —

But, “ Earth’s children cling to earth ; the frail companion, the body, weighs down the soul, and draws it back from the contemplation of high and holy realities ;” and thus there were seasons in Arthur Bernard’s experience, when his very heart seemed to die within him, exhausted by its vain yearnings for her who, like an angel of light, had shone upon his path, and then suddenly disappeared ; and as he looked forward into the probable future, and beheld life stretching out before him, monotonous and solitary, what wonder that Courage sometimes faltered, and Faith

drooped, and Hope almost ceased to cheer the stricken pilgrim.

And such a moment of anguish he experienced now, as he sat in silence, with bowed-down head, while "thought went back to the shadowy past." Mr. Denham's words had thrilled his soul; had presented Agnes's image to him so vividly, that he could scarcely refrain from giving expression to his anguish in bitter groans; and this was the most trying remembrance, "it might have been" otherwise, had he, to whose care she had been solemnly committed by dying parents, faithfully fulfilled his trust, and instead of frowning on her, had cheered and encouraged her in the path of duty.

But there was one who suffered more than Arthur, — he who now lay listless on his couch, burdened with a heavy weight of anguish and remorse. Ah, it was this that deepened the sting of sorrow, that heightened with its bitterness every remembrance that "he alone the deed had done," and that but for his obstinacy and worldliness, she might even now be standing beside him, bathing his burning brow with gentle hands, and in her own sweet tones be imparting all needful consolation.

But Mr. Denham could bear these thoughts no longer, and hastily rousing himself, he addressed Arthur.

“It is growing late. Will you be so kind as turn on the gas a little brighter, for it seems to burn but dimly. I am sure,” he added, in the querulous tones of an invalid, “it is time Mrs. Denham had returned. She took advantage of your coming to remain with me to visit a sick neighbor, but she must be very ill, indeed, to cause her to remain so long.”

“She will be here very shortly, I dare say,” was Arthur’s reply, as, in compliance with the old man’s request, he closed the curtains on the scene without, and caused the magnificent gaseliers to emit a more dazzling light, — “and in the meanwhile, if you have no objection, I shall be happy to read to you.”

The invalid signified his willingness, and Arthur, sitting down by him, opened the richly-gilt Bible that lay on the marble stand near at hand, but ere he could commence, there was the rattling of wheels up the carriage-road. The vehicle stopped at the hall-door, and the bell was loudly rung.

The old man listened for a moment, and then, turning to Arthur, said, “I cannot see any person to-night. Will you be kind enough to inform the servant, that Mrs. Denham is out, and that I feel too much indisposed to receive any visitors, — though it is a singular hour for visitors, I must confess.”

Arthur, as he opened the drawing-room door, heard a strange confusion in the hall below, and

quickly closing it on the invalid, stepped out to convey Mr. Denham's orders, and to ascertain the cause of this unusual disturbance.

As he descended the staircase, he was met by the servant, whose honest face was lit up with a strange expression of wonder, joy, and satisfaction.

"Anything amiss?" inquired Arthur, observing the perturbation of the man.

"Oh, no, Sir, but how glad I am that you are here, for I am afraid the news will be too much for Master, and the young lady told me to break it to him gently."

"What news, what young lady, what do you mean, John?" inquired Mr. Bernard, in a tone of bewilderment. "I do not understand to what you allude."

"Beg pardon, Sir, for not telling you before, but it has been so sudden, it quite overpowered me, to think our dear young lady, whom we thought long since buried in the sea" —

The man stopped abruptly, and turned his head, evidently too much affected to go on.

"For pity's sake, speak, John, and put an end to this suspense; what about her?"

"Oh, Sir, nothing, Sir; I mean nothing at all, to alarm you, Sir; she has come back again, Sir; she was not drowned, after all, and she is now waiting in the library. She would have come right up, but I told her how ill Master had been,

and then she stopped, for she was afraid the shock might be too much for him."

Arthur heard not the conclusion of the sentence.

"She is not drowned,—she has come back again,"—was all he could think of; and with eager steps, that yet seemed all too slow for his impatient spirit, he hastened to greet the long-mourned wanderer.

He paused a moment at the door of the library, to calm the tumult of his soul, and then slowly opening it, entered the room.

Agnes,—for it was indeed her own dear self,—had thrown off her cloak and hood, and sank back on a sofa, almost overcome with emotion, at finding herself once more at home,—and, perhaps, a little troubled to learn what reception she was likely to expect, from those who had parted with her so coldly.

She started up at the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Miss Wiltshire, this is, indeed, one of the happiest moments of my life," said Arthur, as clasping her hand, he raised it, involuntarily, to his lips, and with a voice, tremulous with emotion, continued :

"We have mourned you as one long since departed, but a gracious Providence has surely miraculously restored you again to your home, and your deeply sorrowing friends."

"Mine has, indeed, been a miraculous preservation, and one which demands the most grateful acknowledgment of my heart."

"I trust to have the pleasure of listening to its details, by and bye, and in joining with you in praising Him, who has so graciously given you back to us all. But I must not forget that you are, I am sure, very anxious to see your uncle."

"I am, indeed," was the reply. "Is he dangerously ill?" she earnestly inquired. "The man told me, he believed my aunt was out, but would go and ascertain."

"Mrs. Denham went out two hours ago, to visit a sick neighbor, and has not yet returned. Your uncle has, indeed, been very ill, and is still quite an invalid; but it has all originated in sorrow for your loss, and remorse at having been the chief instrument in sending you away. You will find him wonderfully changed," added Arthur, with kind consideration; for, fully aware of the circumstances under which she had left home, he knew she must feel anxiety respecting the terms on which, it was probable, she would be permitted to remain with her relatives.

"It was only this evening, he was lamenting his loss, and declaiming, in bitterest terms, against his former conduct, declaring, that, unless the sea restored his darling to him, his gray hairs would go down with sorrow to the grave."

Agnes wept tears of joy at this intelligence, but recovering herself, and recollecting Mr. Clifford, who had accompanied her from the vessel, and who, seated at the farthest end of the apartment, and partly in the shade, had, on that account, escaped Arthur's glance, she said,

"I have been very remiss, indeed, Mr. Clifford."

Arthur started, as she pronounced the name, and turning round, for the first time beheld the stranger.

"But you will excuse me, I am sure ; for this return home, and the meeting with an old friend, has quite bewildered me. Allow me, Mr. Bernard, to introduce to you my companion on the voyage, and one who, like myself, has known the privations of exile, though for a much longer period than I."

Mr. Clifford advanced to Arthur, and the young men shook hands heartily.

"There needed no apology, Miss Wiltshire," said Ernest ; "for your emotion, at returning home again, is only natural. It has afforded me, I assure you, the purest pleasure to witness it ; a foretaste of what I trust myself to experience, when I embrace my mother again ; if, indeed, she be yet in the land of the living."

"And now," said Arthur, "you will excuse me, while I go and prepare Mr. Denham for this in-

terview with his long-lost niece, for it would not be prudent," he said, turning to Agnes, "for you suddenly to surprise him. I am afraid it would be too much for him in his present weak state."

Agnes thankfully acquiesced, and awaited with as much patience as she could command, the return of Arthur.

He was back again in a few moments.

"Your uncle is waiting to see you, and is almost delirious with joy. Mr. Clifford will excuse me while I conduct you to the apartment, and then I think my presence can be dispensed with."

The servants had flocked to the hall to see their dear young mistress again, and to find if it were indeed, as John had declared, her very self. It was with some difficulty that Agnes made her way through them, but shaking each warmly by the hand, and with many kind inquiries, she passed on, requesting, however, the cook to prepare some refreshments for the gentleman in the library.

Arthur, as he threw open the drawing-room door, observed that Mr. Denham had raised himself on the couch, and was gazing eagerly in that direction. Agnes instantly sprang forward into her uncle's outstretched arms, the old man murmuring with a voice weak with emotion, "My darling

here,—you come back to your old uncle once more.”

With instinctive delicacy Mr. Bernard softly closed the door, and retired, feeling that the scene had become too sacred for a stranger's eye.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIGHTS streamed gayly from every window of Mr. Hilton's spacious and hospitable mansion, where a party of friends had assembled to celebrate the return of the long-lost Agnes. This gentleman, whose letter had confirmed to Arthur, while yet in France, the painful intelligence of the destruction of the steamer in which Agnes had embarked, and the subsequent supposed shipwreck of its passengers, had been among the first to hasten to welcome her home, for a warm admirer of woman in general, Miss Wiltshire had secured his especial regard, and having no daughters of his own, he used often to remark to his excellent wife, that there was but one thing he envied Mr. Denham, and that was the possession of so winningly lovely a niece.

The party had been postponed from time to time, awaiting Mr. Denham's recovery, and it was not until early in July, that his perfect restoration to health, enabled him, together with Mrs. Denham, to accompany his niece on this festive occasion.

Mr. Denham, as he entered the brilliantly illuminated drawing-room, seemed by his appearance almost to have recovered his youth, so much so, as to call forth from more than one of the company, —

“The old gentleman is looking twenty years younger, than when I last saw him. What a change the return of his niece has made.”

Mr. and Mrs. Denham were accompanied by Mr. Clifford, on whose arm Agnes leaned as she entered the room. His fine form, no longer enveloped in sailor-garb, but in more appropriate costume, was displayed to full advantage, and elicited the admiration of not a few of the ladies, as the whispers, here and there, of “What a fine looking man ; so tall, and dignified, so imposing in appearance,” — bore ample testimony.

Agnes was attired in snowy white ; a few rosebuds forming her only ornament ; her face was lit up with a joyous smile, as she greeted one after another of her old companions ; and there was something in the expression of that countenance, a blending of the highest and loftiest emotions, with all the social tenderness in which woman finds her chief earthly happiness, so irresistibly attractive, that he who could turn away coldly or unmoved, must indeed be a cynic, if not the veriest stoic that ever trod our beautiful earth.

In a recess, formed by a large bow window,

and which, though at the furthest end of the room, was admirably fitted for a looker-on, commanding, as it did, a view of the whole, two ladies were seated, busily engaged in that most delightful of occupations, gossiping, for which they found ample material, as guest after guest paid their respects to the mistress of the dwelling.

“Only look,” said the elderly lady, addressing her companion, as Arthur crossed the room, to speak to Agnes; “just look, what a melancholy appearance Mr. Bernard wears. I wonder where his sister is to-night?”

“I heard Mr. Clifford, who you know is a visitor there, say that she had a violent toothache, and his mother, fearing she would feel lonely, had remained at home with her.”

“Mr. Clifford’s mother! You surely do not mean that that old lady, Mrs. Cartwright, who accompanied the Bernards on their return from France, is the mother of that fine looking young man?”

“Yes, indeed, his is quite a romantic history.”

“Oh, I should like to hear it of all things. Do oblige me by narrating it, will you? You are so intimate with the Bernards, that you have an opportunity of hearing everything.”

The younger lady’s face wore a gratified expression, for it was very pleasant to learn, whatever the facts of the matter really were, that others believed her on terms of close intimacy

with a family, whose high standing in the community had never been disputed ; and she now gladly complied with the request, certain that it would afford to her friend confirmation of her previously expressed opinion, "strong as Holy Writ."

"You must know, then," she commenced, "that when Ella was visiting the South of France for the benefit of her health, (for I told Mr. Bernard, again and again, before they left, that nothing but change of air would restore her,) she met with this Mrs. Cartwright, whose own home was in America, but who was then on a visit to a relative. They became quite intimate in a short time, and Ella, on her return to B——, persuaded Mrs. Cartwright to accompany them, and to spend some time with them.

"A widow and childless, as she then supposed, and having no near kin to bind her to her home, she accepted Ellen's invitation, and, accordingly, they all returned together.

"But this old lady, it appears, had a son, the child of a previous marriage,—for she has buried two husbands,—who, some five years ago, sailed on some distant voyage, I do not exactly know what his destination. However, no tidings were ever received of the vessel having reached the desired port, and, of course, Mrs. Cartwright, who Ella told me was exceedingly attached to him, mourned him bitterly as one dead. But instead of being

lost at sea, he had been picked up, the only survivor of the shipwrecked vessel, by Moorish pirates, who, taking him into their country, sold him as a slave.

“He managed to make his escape somehow, about six months ago, though he had a terrible time of it; but he succeeded getting on board an English vessel, which was just about leaving for America.”

“But how did he come to meet with Miss Wiltshire?”

“Why the vessel put into the place where Agnes was conveyed by the Captain of the fishing schooner, who went to her rescue, and, of course, Agnes gladly availed herself of the opportunity to return home, and this accounts, in part, for their intimacy.”

“And how did Mr. Clifford meet with his mother? Surely he did not expect to find her here?”

“No; it was a very singular coincidence. Mr. Bernard happened to be at Mr. Denham’s when Agnes, accompanied by Mr. Clifford, arrived there; and in the course of subsequent conversation with him, Mr. Bernard ascertained that he was the son of the very lady who was then a guest at his dwelling, and, of course, insisted that he, also, should be a partaker of his hospitality.”

“What a strange circumstance,” loudly ejaculated the attentive listener, “and how delighted

the old lady must have been. You know I was out of town at the time, and never heard the rights of the matter."

"Yes, I remember, and the old lady, as you say, was indeed delighted, so much so, that at first she was completely overcome. She took immediately to her bed, from which she has not been able to rise, till within the last few weeks."

"Ah, so that is the reason they have resided so long at Mr. Bernard's."

"That is one reason, but I strongly suspect there is another and greater," was the reply, as the younger lady, observing that Mr. Bernard had approached, and stood by a table near examining some very exquisitely carved ornaments, thought it a good opportunity to give him, without pretending to notice his proximity, some little information, — information which might hereafter aid in accomplishing her own well-planned schemes.

"You said he had another reason for remaining so long, did you not, Maria?"

"Oh, yes, and one palpable enough to any person who has eyes. Just look yonder, and you will see for yourself."

Mr. Bernard involuntarily raised his eyes, and glanced at the spot indicated. At a side-table, a little apart from the others, Agnes was seated, looking over a large and elegant portfolio, the peculiar beauties of whose admirable engravings,

Ernest Clifford seemed eagerly pointing out, as he bent over her chair; his handsome countenance lit up with a smile of pleasurable emotion.

“Ah, yes, I understand you now, Maria. But I heard Mr. Bernard had some partiality that way.”

“Hush, speak lower, for he is standing at the table near you.”

“Oh, dear me, I had no idea he was so handy.”

“That was mere idle gossip, I assure you,” was the reply, as the tones sank into a whisper. “I have the best evidence in the world as to that.”

“Well, well, they will make a handsome couple, I must say,” remarked Maria’s companion, as Mr. Bernard moved away with a firm step, which gave no indication of the mental agony that was rending his soul.

Glad to make his escape, he stepped out from an open window in the balcony, and from thence descended, by a short flight of marble steps, into the large and thickly-shaded garden, which it overlooked.

With a feverish step he traversed its winding walks, until wearied he sank on a rustic seat, beneath the welcome shade of a graceful elm. The sounds of music and mirth came wafted to him through the open casement, and never seemed they less congenial to his feelings.

“If I could only think it some of that ill-natured

woman's gossip, I would not care," he said, half aloud, "for the mind that could indite such an epistle as Ella received, containing the account of Agnes's supposed death, would be capable of anything, — but, alas, I fear it is too true.

'Her heart it is another's, and
It never can be mine.'

Yes, she appears reserved, almost cold with me. I am evidently shunned by her, while *he* is welcomed most warmly, whenever he appears. But I cannot blame her. It was natural that an acquaintance, thus strangely formed, should lead to such a result, and he, too, yes, he is worthy of her. He loves her dearly, I am sure of that ; but never, never can he regard her as I do."

Again the sounds of music swelled on the balmy evening breeze. It was now a woman's voice that warbled clear and sweet a touching strain.

"It is Agnes," he murmured, adding as a fine manly voice took up another part, "and that is Ernest Clifford. My fondest hopes, a long, a last, farewell."

CHAPTER XIV.

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed subsequent to the festivity recorded in the preceding chapter, when, late one afternoon, Arthur, — who had been engaged from early morning in a distant part of the city, transacting some business of importance, — as he returned, passing by Mr. Denham's dwelling, suddenly came in contact with Mr. Clifford, who, with a quick, eager step, and a countenance all aglow with some pleasurable emotion, was hurrying on, so absorbed in his own thoughts, that he was only arrested by the sound of his friend's voice.

“You seem to be in a great hurry, Clifford,” said Arthur smiling, though it must be confessed his heart felt little attuned to mirth; “and, judging from the expression of your countenance, combined with your unusual absent-mindedness, something more than usual must have occurred, and that of a very pleasurable nature, to have thus excited you.”

“You have made a capital guess of it, Arthur. I have been putting forth every energy of late to win a priceless treasure, and after a desperate

effort, have succeeded. Is not that a subject for congratulation ? ”

“ At last, at last, she is won,” inwardly murmured poor Arthur, while his whole frame seemed convulsed, but controlling himself, as he observed his companion’s glance fixed eagerly upon him, he replied, in a tone which, in spite of his efforts, sounded cold and somewhat ungracious.

“ I shall be a better judge of that, Clifford, when I know what the nature of the prize, and whether it was valuable enough to warrant the efforts put forth to obtain it.”

“ *Valuable*, there is no boon on earth to be compared to it. I might exhaust comparisons in vain to furnish a fit simile ; for, in it, is combined all that is lovely, virtuous and excellent. To descend, however, from parable, in order to enlighten you, allow me to say,” and a slight flush mounted to the speaker’s face, while his companion’s cheek grew ashy pale, “ that I have been so truly fortunate as to secure a place in the affections of a woman, to my mind, the loveliest of her sex. But, happy as I am in obtaining such an avowal, there is one drawback to my felicity ; her consent must be ratified, so she affirms, by a beloved relative, before I am to consider it binding. And I — do you know, Arthur — I never dreamed I was a coward until now ; but it seems such presumption in me to expect a man to part with a flower that he has tenderly nurtured and cherished, that

it may adorn with its beauty and grace another homestead, far removed, perhaps, from the eyes that delighted to watch its expanding charms."

"This suspense is intolerable," murmured Arthur Bernard to himself, while in blissful unconsciousness his companion went on. "Why does he not speak her name out clearly, and put an end to this torture, which racks every nerve of my frame?"

"And now, Arthur, I want your advice. Woman-hater as you are," — Clifford said with a smile.

"I suppose Agnes told him that, she thought so herself, no doubt," was Arthur's mental parenthesis.

"Woman-hater as you are, I know you deem my hopes and fears as both unfounded; but, never mind, you will, I trust, know by experience some day or other, so, in consideration of that coming, happy time, will you inform me in what terms I can possibly have the presumption, to request of the lady's relative, that he graciously permit her to bestow her hand upon your humble servant?"

"I do not foresee any difficulty," said Arthur, with a tremulous effort at composure. "The lady's consent once secured, I should think all others of comparatively little moment, and with the knowledge that her happiness depends on their sanction, it will, I believe, be readily accorded."

"How happy you make me, my dear fellow,

though you did deliver that speech, as though you were negotiating some bank business. And so, you would advise me to put a bold face on the matter, and say to them, ' she is mine, and I will have her.' ”

“ If that form of expression suits you best, use it, by all means ; I have no objection.”

“ Then I shall act upon your advice immediately, Arthur Bernard,” and the voice at once became deeply solemn and earnest. “ Are you willing to resign to my fondest, my tenderest care, your only and beloved sister Ella, to whom I am aware you are so deeply attached, and who returns your affection with all the warmth of her loving nature.”

Arthur Bernard could not reply. He was bewildered, stunned, at the intelligence. From the very depth and agony of despair, to be raised to the very summit of hope, was almost too much for poor human nature to bear. His friend observed his emotion, but attributed it to a very different cause, and his countenance, so joyous a moment before, clouded instantly.

“ I see,” he said, in a low and mournful tone, “ that this does not meet your wishes, nor can I wonder at it, for I feel I am not worthy of so precious a gift, except for the intense love I bear her,— a love which, I trust, if permitted, shall be manifested in every action of my future life.”

“ Not meet my wishes ! You have totally

mistaken me, my friend, my brother, as I would now joyfully call you," pressing fervently his companion's hand as he spoke ; " you are worthy of my darling Ella, my beloved sister, and there is none other, to whom I could yield her less reluctantly than yourself. With a brother's blessing I commit her to you, and as she has been to me the most faithful and affectionate of sisters, so, I am sure, you will find her the truest and most devoted of wives."

There was a pause. Both the gentlemen were affected, and they continued their walk, which had been extended to a solitary part of the city's suburbs, for some time in silence, which Ernest was the first to break.

" I cannot thank you in words ; they are too poor to express how I estimate this frank and generous consent ; my actions will, I trust, show how truly I appreciate it. Forgive me, Arthur, for my unjust suspicions, but I imagined when I commenced the conversation, that you suspected the nature of my embassy, and by cold looks and words strove to divert me from speaking in plainer terms, and forcing you to a denial of my request."

Arthur was slightly embarrassed, and his companion looked at him, wondering what could thus discompose his usually sedate friend.

" The truth is," he said after a pause, " that I totally misunderstood you, so you see there has been a mutual mistake. I have been blind, in-

deed, but I had not the slightest idea that you entertained any feeling but friendship for Ella."

"And pray, then, if you will permit me to inquire," and there was something mischievous in the speaker's glance and tone, "to whom did you imagine I alluded, when I informed you that, woman, dear woman, was the prize so much coveted?"

"Well, I did think," and the speaker's hesitancy was not by any means unobserved by his friend, "for report affirmed, that Miss Wiltshire was the lady to whom you intended to vow life-long allegiance."

"And so you supposed I had come to make a confidant of *you*. I wonder you did not knock me down for my presumption, in expecting to eclipse you in her eyes. No, no, my dear Sir, I was not such a simpleton, for had I entertained hopes of that kind before, the joy which lighted up her fine eyes, and glowed on her countenance, on that eventful meeting with you on her return, combined, how often, with subsequent similar observation, would have been quite sufficient proof to me that my expectations were 'baseless as the fabric of a vision.'"

Arthur smiled and shook his head, though the subject was by no means an unpleasing one, at least judging from his animated countenance, and the rapt attention which he paid to every word.

"But who, may I ask, Ernest, was your infor-

mant as to my claims to the title of 'woman-hater?'"

"Not Miss Wiltshire, I can credibly affirm. More than that I do not think it is fair to tell you."

"Well, well, I am perfectly satisfied, and now I think it is time for us to retrace our steps in the direction of home."

CHAPTER XV.

“AND so our dear young lady is married, Ellen?” said Mrs. Williamson to her daughter, who had just returned from a visit to B——.

“Yes, mother, and a beautiful bride she made.”

“Ay, I doubt it not, and as good as beautiful,” said the father, who had just come in to Ellen’s neat little cottage, to hear all the particulars connected with her late journey.

“And they treated you well, Ellen, did they not?”

“Treated me *well*? why, mother, it was like a new world; and they were so kind to me, took me to every place, and showed me everything worth seeing. And, dear me, but it is a beautiful city; such grand buildings, such water-works, such parks, all laid out with trees, and walks, and grass-plots, and seats, where you can rest whenever you choose, — and then at night, the splendid shops are so dazzlingly lit up, and the streets almost as bright as day. Oh, surely it is a fine thing to live in the city!”

“Ha, ha,” said a clear, manly voice, and the

speaker entered the door ; " so my little bird has become restive since her taste of city life, and longs to fly away again."

" Indeed, Edward, that is not true. If I had been brought up to city-ways, I think I should like to live there ; but, now, I like my home better, far better. I only wish we could have the meetings on Sunday, that I went to there ; oh, mother," she said, as she turned suddenly round to address her, " it would have done your heart good to have heard the singing, and have listened to the sermons, and such grand churches, all crowded too."

" But I want to hear everything from the beginning," said Mr. Williamson.

" Well, then, I will commence my history from the time we got there. You know Miss Agnes was expecting me, and they kept a constant lookout, so that the vessel had not been an hour at the wharf, but what should I see but a splendid carriage, driven by two white horses, galloping down, and how overjoyed I was when Miss Agnes stepped out, and came on board, and ran up and kissed me, and we both shed tears, I believe, for I saw her put her handkerchief to her eyes, and I cried for joy at seeing her again. And then I must go right home with her ; she would fain have had Edward, too, but he could not leave his vessel, yet was quite willing that I should go, so my trunk was handed in, we both stepped into

the carriage, and were off in a few moments, Edward standing on the deck, watching till we were out of sight ; at least I take that for granted.

“ Well, we drove to her uncle’s dwelling, a large white house, with splendidly ornamented pillars in front, and a balcony all round. It stands in the midst of a park, at least so I call it ; and there is a fountain just before the door, flinging its glistening waters to a great height, and grass, and flowers, and large shady trees, and winding walks, and it looked altogether so lovely to me, with the sun shining down upon it, that I cannot find words to describe it. Well, we got out at the hall-door, and I followed Agnes into a parlor, where her uncle and aunt were sitting, and, would you believe it, as soon as they saw me they came forward, and kissed me, and made me sit by them, and told me that Agnes had related to them all the kindness that had been shown to her by our family, and how thankful they were to us all for it ; and then asked me about my husband, who, they said, had rescued her from a watery grave, and how anxious they were to see him, and hoped he would be able to call soon, and so he did that very evening, and a happy time we had of it !

“ The next morning there came in to Mr. Denham’s, a young gentleman with Mr. Clifford, who you know stopped here with Captain Pierce ; and they both shook me warmly by the hand. This young gentleman’s name was Bernard, and while

Agnes was talking to Mr. Clifford, he asked me many questions about my home, and about the people that lived here, and wanted to know if there were often shipwrecks near the place. I knew well enough what he wished to find out, for I saw him, every now and then, look at Miss Agnes so wistfully and sad, and then at Mr. Clifford, as though he envied him the seat near her, and so I felt a kind of pity for him, and began to tell him, in a low tone, what I knew he was longing to hear, though I suppose he had heard it all before; but, somehow, people never get weary of hearing about the one they love. And, oh, he grew so lively, as I went on, and seemed such a pleased listener,—and when I told him how much good she had done, and what a change had come over the place, while she stopped here; the day and night schools she had formed, and the services she had held on the Sabbath, his very eyes seemed to thank me, they shone so brightly; and when I had finished, he said, in a low tone, which he did not think I overheard,

“Yes, she is indeed an angel; so much the more bitter for me!”

“They left soon after, Mr. Clifford being in somewhat of a hurry; so Mr. Bernard had but little opportunity of conversing with Miss Agnes; and after they were gone, she stood by the window in silence for a few moments, and when she turned to speak, I saw that a tear had fallen on

her long lashes, but she said, in a cheerful tone, 'We will go now and take the promised drive.'

"And so we did, and a charming one it was. Mr. Denham came with us, and he pointed out everything to me that was new and beautiful; if I had been his own daughter, he could not have been kinder.

"But still, while I was looking at all the noble buildings, I could not help thinking of Mr. Bernard; and then Miss Agnes, while she talked and laughed a good deal, seemed as though she were striving to be cheerful, I thought it did not come as natural to her there, as it did when she was with us, and I half fancied something was going wrong.

"Then her uncle began to talk of Mr. Clifford, and to praise him very much; and I watched her, though she little knew it; but she joined with him warmly, and her color never rose a bit, nor her voice faltered. By and bye, somehow or another, I believe it was myself spoke of Mr. Bernard, and he, too, came in for a large share of praise from Mr. Denham; but Agnes only responded, 'Yes, I have no doubt of it,' looking at the same time very earnestly out of the carriage window; but I caught a glimpse of her face, as she turned it, and saw a delicate rose-color flush her cheeks, and then I knew that Mr. Bernard need not despair.

"So it went on from day to day. We rode,

and walked, and shopped, and visited, and attended museums, and lectures, and meetings, and yet I fancied Agnes grew sadder and sadder; and Mr. Bernard, when I saw him now and then, for he did not come much to the house, looked like a man who was bravely struggling against some misfortune, which, in spite of his efforts, was well nigh crushing him.

“But one evening, Agnes had been invited out to a dinner party; they had sent me an invitation, also, but I declined going, for I knew I should not feel at home among so many strangers, and they so far above me; so I remained with Mr. and Mrs. Denham.

“‘I would far rather stay with you,’ Miss Agnes said, ‘than go out this evening, but these are very particular friends, who would feel I slighted them, if I remained away; but, indeed, I do not feel at all well.’

“I was in her dressing-room at the time, and she was preparing for the occasion.

“‘You do look pale, Miss Agnes,’ I replied, ‘and your eyes look heavy.’ I was pretty sure, from their appearance, she had been weeping that afternoon.

“However, she went; for it was not her fashion to consult her own ease, when others were to be gratified.

“It was little more than 10 o’clock that night; Edward had been with me during the evening,

but had just returned to his ship, and Mr. and Mrs. Denham had retired to rest, for they kept early hours ; I was sitting in the parlor, reading a beautiful book, a present from Agnes, when I heard steps coming up the gravel walk, and a murmur of voices in earnest conversation. I peeped through the half-closed blind, and beheld Miss Wiltshire arm in arm with a gentleman, whom I took to be, though I could not see very distinctly, Mr. Bernard.

“In a moment after they entered, and sure enough it was Mr. Bernard, though every trace of sadness had disappeared from his face, and as he came forward and shook hands with me, asking me so kindly how I was, his very voice seemed altered; it was so gay, so joyous. I tried to catch a glimpse of Miss Agnes’s countenance, — it was some time before she lifted her veil, but when she flung it aside, as she took off her bonnet, I saw that her former paleness had been succeeded by a rosy-red, and her eyes seemed beaming with new life.

“We sat and talked for some time, at least Mr. Bernard and I, for Miss Wiltshire was unusually silent.

“At length he took his leave, but as he clasped her hand, and bade her ‘Good night,’ I heard him say in a low tone, ‘I shall see Mr. Denham, if nothing happens, early to-morrow morning,’ — and so departed.

"We soon separated for the night, and I heard nothing until the next day, when Agnes told me all the particulars.

"It seems there had been a mistake all round; Mr. Bernard having believed that Mr. Clifford was his rival, and Miss Wiltshire imagined, from something some lady told — Maria as they called her, I heard her other name, but forget it — that Mr. Bernard had been paying her very great attention, and had almost, if not actually, proposed for her hand.

"There was not a word of truth in that, of course; but this Maria, it seems, was determined to have the young gentleman, and did not care what she said or did, if she could only secure him.

"But it came out right, after all; Providence is always good to those that trust Him, and so, just a week ago to-day, for we sailed immediately after the wedding, they were married, and Mr. Clifford at the same time."

"But who did Mr. Clifford marry?" inquired one of the deeply interested listeners.

"Mr. Bernard's sister, a sweet pretty young creature, with eyes as blue as a summer's sky. And such a sight it was to see the two brides; both dressed alike in white satin, with orange blossoms in their hair, and white veils on the back of the head, falling over their shoulders like a mantle. It was so strange, too, that the clergy-

man who married them, and who was a great friend of Miss Wiltshire's, had been a passenger in the very steamer from which she had so narrow an escape ; he had embarked in another boat, and with the rest of the male passengers had got safe to land. A short time before her wedding, Agnes met him in the street, just after his arrival from some distant part, and she said, she did not know which was the greatest, his joy or surprise at seeing her, for he had never heard of her wonderful preservation, and had not, therefore, the most distant idea she was in the land of the living.

"Well, as soon as it was over, and they stepped out of the church, the joy bells rang out, so merrily, and every person looked so pleased and so happy. There was a grand lunch at Mr. Denham's, and then the bridal party drove away to spend the honeymoon in travelling."

"Well, she deserved a good husband, and I trust she has got one," said Mrs. Williamson, as Ellen paused to take breath, "and I pray that Heaven may bless them both !"

"Amen," was the hearty response of the listeners, a response which, we trust, kind reader, you will have no hesitation in echoing.

The wish of Ellen, which she gave expression to, as she narrated her visit, unlike most earthly wishes, was, in the space of a year or two, abundantly realized.

Through the instrumentality of Agnes and her

devoted husband, a neat little church was erected ; a school-house quickly followed ; a minister and teacher were obtained ; the people, stimulated by their example, rebuilt and improved their dwellings ; began to cultivate their land, and that with such success, that fruit and flowers, and shady trees, and fields of waving grain, were, in a comparatively short time, to be seen in every direction, so that with regard to those changes, and the instrumentality through which they had been effected, it is little wonder that Mrs. Williamson, as she pointed them out to her family, would now and then exclaim, —

“The wilderness and the solitary place were made glad by her, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose.”

Verily Agnes Bernard has her reward now, in the enjoyments which cluster so thickly around her ; in the happiness of which she is at once the dispenser and partaker ; but how greatly shall it be increased, when, from a Saviour's lips, shall be heard the welcome plaudit : —

“Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me.”