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ACORN LEAVES:

A SERIES OF

CANADIAN TALES.

BY

NELL GWYNNE.

TORONTO:
COPP, CLARK & CO., 47 FRONT STREET,
1873.

1970

TO

EDWARD SHELDON WINANS, ESQ.,

IN MEMORY

OF MANY KINDNESSES,

THIS BOOK IS

DEDICATED

BY THE

AUTHORESS.

INTRODUCTION.

As these "leaves" have all, with the exception of "Hawk's Perch," already appeared before the public, there is no necessity of going through the ceremony of introducing them.

"Tall oaks from little acorns grow." But allow me to remind the public that if the nightly dews and summer rains, and now and again a ray of sunlight, did not come to nourish and foster the "little acorns," the "tall oaks" would be few and far between. In consideration of which, it is to be hoped that "Acorn Leaves" will receive a due amount of encouragement from the Canadian public.

NELL GWYNNE.

VALLEY FARM, COBOURG,
December, 1873.

CONTENTS.

ACORN LEAVES.

SCHOOLDAY RECOLLECTIONS.

How I came to be in possession of the name of one of the "Merrie Monarch's" mistresses is more than I can tell. However, that is neither here nor there. I do not purpose writing a history of my life, and so need not commence telling how or where I got my name, or "I am born," like David Copperfield. Let it be sufficient to say that the scene of my "early recollections" lies in Canada West, near the banks of that vast body of water called Lake Ontario. My earliest recollections are of school, being sent there very young; the very longest thing I can remember, being standing with my pinafore pinned to the knee of a kindly-faced old man, with an Irish accent, and feeling very much ashamed, which was, I suppose, what impressed it on my memory. There were not many of us at this school, though the school house was very large, and we were all small; but I think I must have been the least among the lot, for I remember two girls quarrelling almost every day about which would carry me home, which I had occasion to

dread, for they would drag me from each other, and sometimes, to decide the contest, throw me at each other. We used to make O's and "top-turns," as we called them, on our slates, and I think we sometimes said our letters. I have said we were all small, but there was one exception,—Matilda Mary Freer was a "big girl." I don't know how "big" or how old she might have been, I am sure, but she has always dwelt in my memory as a very giantess. Being a highly imaginative young person, with a sense of the beautiful, an appreciation of the horrible and wonderful, and with the most supreme contempt for the truth at all times and on all occasions, she exercised a good deal of influence over our childish minds. Many and many were the tales she told us of her home, her friends, and her possessions—tales to which the adventures of Sinbad the Sailor or Jack the Giant Killer were as Gospel truths. She had, according to her own say, squaw-baskets full of the most beautiful scarlet, and gold, and blue, and amber beads; dozens of wax-dolls with flaxen ringlets, and all dressed in ball-room costume; no end of red silk dresses "trimmed with spangles," and I don't know what else of grandeur. Oh! she was a wonderful person, this same Matilda Mary Freer. She had excited my curiosity, by her flowery eloquence, to such a degree, that I determined to go home with her, and see some of the grand things she was always telling us about. She had just been giving a glowing description of a wax soldier two feet high, dressed in scarlet and gold, which her father had given her for a birth-day present, when I informed her that my mother had given me permission to go home with her that evening after school. She

seemed sowewhat disconcerted by this piece of intelligence, and tried to dissuade me from my purpose, saying it was "so far;" but I had had the scheme in my head for a long time, and was not to be put off. So when she started to go home I started off with her. She said she was very much afraid it would be dark before we got there, and she did not know how in the world I was going to get back home again; though it struck me at the time that she did not appear to be particularly anxious about it, as she walked very slowly. I began to talk about her soldier, and she said in an absent way, "Oh, yes! the one I gave away." "You gave it away," I said, a good deal surprised; for I did not remember hearing her say anything about giving it away. "Why, yes," she said, "you surely must remember hearing me say I had given it away this morning." "Oh, well," I said, a little crestfallen, "I can see your beautiful beads and dolls, and your nice silk dresses." These she informed me were always kept locked up by her mother, who would not allow her to show them to any person, on any account. She evidently expected me to turn back after receiving this piece of information, but I kept walking on. We had gone on in silence for some distance, when I was startled by Matilda Mary standing stock-still in the middle of the road, and exclaiming in a terrified voice, "Good heavens! what is that?" Standing still, I became aware of a low, whining sound, and on looking about I perceived it to come from a shed on the side of the road, where there was a little black dog tied with a rope, and whining piteously. "Oh, what shall we do!" said Matilda Mary in terror; "look at its eyes!

It is mad! It will tear us both to pieces! Go home, Nelly! for heaven's sake, go home!" and, jumping over the fence, she ran down through the field with a speed that was only rivalled by my own, as I turned homeward.

Matilda Mary left school not long after this, and gave us each a little calico printed mat, as a token of remembrance. She had two teeth growing down over her eye teeth, like tusks, which she informed us she was going to have pulled, as her father had promised to give her a handsome piece of jewelry as soon as he saw her without them; and, sure enough, she came to school two or three days afterwards to say good-bye, minus her tusks, and with a pair of purple glass ear-drops, a couple of inches long, dangling in her ears. School was broken up shortly afterwards, Mr. McCord (which I had forgotten to say was the schoolmaster's name) removing with his family to the States. He parted with us very sadly. I thought, then, it was because he was sorry for leaving us; but I have thought, since, he was sorry for losing his living,—poor, old man. He talked to us a great deal on the last day of school,—I don't remember what about, exactly; but it was something about being good children; and after distributing a number of marbles among the little boys, he gave me a torn and elaborately illustrated copy of "Mother Goose's Melodies," which was a source of delight to me for many years afterwards, though I don't remember his giving any of the other girls anything.

I now determined to satisfy my long pent-up curiosity, and pay Matilda Mary Freer a visit, and so set out the very next day after school was broken up, accompanied by four or five of the school-girls, who were as curious as

myself. I dont know what kind of a place I expected to see, I am sure; but I had a vague idea that the house was built of glass, and that there were orange-trees in the garden. The school-house was at the edge of the town, while Matilda Mary lived a couple of miles out of it; so we had a long journey before us, but we trudged along right merrily, speculating on what Matilda Mary would say when she saw us, till we came to the shed on the side of the road where the little black dog, that had been such a God-send to Matilda Mary the last time I came that way, had been tied; but there was no dog there now, so we sat down on the side of the road to rest. We were to pass a row of poplars that were close at hand before we came to our destination, which was all we knew about it. But we passed the poplars and seemed no nearer than ever, the only house in view being a little brown weather-beaten one, with moss-grown shingles, bending over to one side with the weight of years, with a lilac tree in front, which was also bent with age or with something; and a larger one a little farther on, which was likewise brown and weather-beaten, but which did not look so old nor nearly so picturesque as the first one, its only peculiarity being that it had two doors very close together in front, showing that it had been built for the accommodation of two families. Going into the first house, we inquired if Mr. Freer lived about there anywhere, and were informed by a little rosy-faced woman that Mr. Freer "'ad a-lived a' the nigh-hand side o' the double 'eouse," hard by, but the family "'ad ole goned away a wik agon." We looked at each other blankly, and for the first time began to have our doubts of Miss

Matilda Freer. We went into the house, however, which had a clean, scoured look all over, and was papered with newspapers; and we made the interesting discovery that the other end of the house was inhabited by a French potter, who seemed very glad to see us, and who made us more welcome than Matilda Mary would in all probability have done. He took his fiddle, which he kept hanging to the wall in a green baize bag, and played for us, wagging his head from side to side to keep time, and desiring us to dance, which I don't think any of us did, though we laughed and had a great deal of fun. He brought us out into the garden, or field, behind the house, and showed us his pottery, which was built of mud, and where there were a great many pots and pans of all descriptions, ready, he told us, to go through the enamelling process, though we thought them a great deal prettier as they were, they looked so fresh and clean. We were, of course, highly delighted with all this, and parted excellent friends with the old potter, he promising to have some dishes made for us by the time we came again, which we did in about a week, bringing pennies with us to pay for our little dishes, which he would not take. We amused ourselves this day by making cups and saucers of the potter's clay, but they always came to pieces as soon as they were dry. The old potter talked to us a great deal in broken English, bewailing the day he left old France, where he said he had many a time a couple of hundred of his pots bought up by some rollicking young scapegrace of a nobleman, to be used as targets by himself and his no less rollicking companions. "Ah, ha! that was the country to live in; you might make pots in Canada for a

long time before any one would buy them to shoot at," he would say, with a shake of his head.

School had been re-opened in the meantime by a Mr. Lette, who carried it on in a far more magnificent scale than poor old Mr. McCord had ever done. The school-house was crowded to the uttermost corner, with all sorts, and sizes, and complexions; and though all of old Mr. McCord's scholars went there as well as myself, I don't remember ever seeing any of them there. Mr. Lette was assisted by three or four of his own children, who were almost grown up, and by his wife, who came in every morning at ten o'clock, and stayed until twelve, during which time the girls worked at their knitting, or sewing, or embroidery, as the case might be; but the predominant occupation appeared to be knitting dirty edging, which they carried about, rolled up into little balls. Together with this assistance, Mr. Lette made one half the school teach the other half, which kept up a constant scene of confusion, activity and excitement all day long. The first day I came to school, I was called up almost the moment I came in, to spell off a card on the wall, with a crowd of other children, who all spoke together, and as loud as they could bawl, spelling to a kind of tune, to which they kept time by swaying their bodies back and forward. We had scarcely got through with this performance, when we were again called up to say tables off another card, which were likewise roared out to a kind of sing-song tune, to which they kept time as before. We were again called up in about ten minutes to say the countries off a map of the world, which was done precisely the same as the spelling

and tables. I began to like the excitement, and wonder what we would do next, when Mrs. Lette made her appearance, which was a signal for all the girls to rush up to the desk to try who would get her work first. The girls were allowed to talk while they were at work; and such a Babel never was heard. Mr. Lette, who was a very large man, walked about continually, making a great flourishing with a formidable pair of tawse, but he never seemed to hurt any one with them.

No person noticed me, or seemed to know I had never been there before. I had been sitting idly on the end of a bench for some time, amusing myself by watching what was going on about me, when a little girl in a pink pinafore came up to the end of the desk I was sitting at, where there were a number of little printed calico bags hanging, from among which she selected a pink one, like her pinafore, and proceeded to search its contents for something that turned out to be a knitting needle, which was carefully wrapped up in a piece of stiff brown paper. Looking at me coolly as she broke her needle in two, she said,

"See, here! You had better go and get your work, if you don't want to get the tawse."

Replying confusedly to this friendly observation, that I had no work, she said,

"Oh! you are a new scholar," and, without waiting for a reply, went up and spoke to Mrs. Lette, who beckoned me to her and reassured me by saying, kindly,

"So you have no work, my dear. Well, we must try and find some for you, to-day; but to-morrow you must bring a needle and spool, and get some set up for yourself."

After poking about through her desk, she took out a little white cotton sock, with the toe cut off, which she instructed me to rip, giving me a spool to wind the cotton on, and desiring me to sit down on the steps that led up to her desk, where there were a number of little girls all working and chattering away for dear life, and who took my presence in their midst as the most natural thing in the world. A pretty, merry-looking little Irish girl, whom the others called "Johan," was telling a story; but a little girl in a braided apron with pockets in it, and her hair hanging down on her back in long braids, having occasion to go up to Mrs. Lette, the story was suspended till she came back. A little girl who sat beside me—giving me a nudge with her elbow—said,

"Say, did you ever go to Wilson's?"

On my replying in the negative, she put her head down underneath her pinafore, and taking a bite out of a very green-looking green apple that she had in her pocket, passed it to the girl next to her, who, after going through the same performance, passed it to Johan, who also took a "bite," and passed it to her next-door neighbour, when a small piece of the core was returned to the owner, which seemed to amuse Johan excessively, causing her to laugh in a sweet little merry way peculiarly her own, but on seeing that the owner of the apple did not appear to relish the joke, she said,

"Never mine, Jin,—Aggy McPherson is going to bring me a lot this afternoon for doing her sums for her, and I will give you some."

The little girl with the braided apron, and pockets, and long braids, having resumed her place, Johan went

on with her story, which was about a certain Mr. Fox, or Mr. King—I forget which, but think it was one of the two—who lived in a magnificent mansion, surrounded by a high wall, into which no person was ever known to penetrate, having paid his addresses to a certain beautiful young lady, who, favouring his suit, the day was fixed for their marriage, and everything was "in readiness.' Unfortunately for himself, as will be seen, he promised to pay her a visit on a certain day, in the meantime; and not being forthcoming at the appointed hour, she put on her bonnet and strolled out to meet him, going "along and along" till she came to his own gate, which, to her astonishment, she found slightly ajar—such a thing never having been heard of in the memory of man. Presuming, no doubt, on her future proprietresship, she entered the gate, and found herself in the most beautiful garden that ever was seen, full of birds and flowers and winding, shady walks, through which she wound in and out till she came to the hall-door, where she ascended a flight of marble steps as white as snow. The hall-door was also slightly open; entering, she found herself in a long hall, at the further end of which there was a door, and over this door was written, in large gold letters, the awful words, "Be Bould!" Taking the hint, she opened the door and found herself in a second hall, at the further end of which was a second door, and over it, written in the same gold letters, "Be Bould! Be Bould!" Opening this door, she found herself in a third hall, at the further end of which was a third door, and over it written—always in the same gold letters,—"Be Bould! Be Bould! but not too Bould!" Here, glancing out of a window,

what was her horror to see her future husband dragging a beautiful lady along the garden-walk by the hair, and flourishing a glittering scimitar in the air. Evidently having her own reasons for coming to the conclusion that she had been quite "bould" enough, she beat a precipitate retreat; and telling her story to her brothers when she got home, they immediately repaired to the magnificent mansion, accompanied by a band of soldiers with "big, long soords," who "coot" Mr. Fox, or Mr. King, or whatever his name was, all up to "little bits" —releasing no end of beautiful young ladies whom he kept in captivity underneath his house; and breaking into the "Be Bould! Be Bould! but not too Bould" door, they found it led into a closet full of blood, and bones, and skulls.

I brought a knitting-needle and spool the next day, and Mrs. Lette—after breaking the needle in two to make a pair of it—commenced some edging for me, which I very soon learnt to knit. She, however, put me under the guardianship of the little girl in the pink pinafore, whose name was Susie Carter, lest I might go wrong; but I soon became as great an adept at knitting dirty edging as any of the rest. Susie Carter and I became very great friends indeed. She was, or considered herself to be, what was called "very pious," and was always telling stories about good, pious little boys and girls that always died and went to "'eaven," and turned out to be little "hangels." A tall Irish girl that sat opposite to us, who was very pretty, and whose name was Ellen, was an indefatigable story-teller. She kept the attention of the whole desk chained, morning after morning, with

the most wonderful tales of giants, and charms, and fairies, and "butee-ful prin-cesses," but as there were none of them "pious," Susie Carter did not pay any attention to her, and advised me not to either; but I did. Susie Carter had the oddest way of eating her "dinner," as we always called it here. She always carried it wrapped up in a little red handkerchief; this handkerchief she never opened, but holding it down beside her—would put her fingers into a little hole, taking out whatever she had inside in little pieces, each one only large enough for a mouthful—always keeping some distance away from the other girls, and moving off if any one came near her. I had watched these proceedings for some time with a good deal of curiosity, and after making several unsuccessful attempts to see what she could be guarding so carefully I said to her one day, at noon,

"Susie, what have you got in that little handkerchief? I always think you eat your dinner so funny."

Whereupon, after looking carefully about to see that no one else observed her, she unwrapped the little handkerchief and produced what I took to be a little, fat-looking pie, or turn-over, but which, she informed me, was a "titty passy, mixed with hoongions,"—meaning a potatoe pasty, mixed with onions; and telling me confidently that the girls at "Wilson's" never called her anything but "Titty Passy," which explained her reason for wishing to keep her dinner such a profound secret. Henceforward, she ate her "titty passy, mixed with hoongions," unmolested by me; and I don't think any of the other girls ever had any curiosity to know what she had.

We had a half holiday one afternoon, for some reason—I forget what—and Susie Carter took me home with her. She lived at the other end of the town, and I think we must have gone a back way, for I remember going across a great many commons. As we were going along, we came to a pile of rubbish that had been thrown out of some garden, in the midst of which there was a beautiful scarlet poppy with a white edge, in full bloom; but which Susie Carter said it would be very wicked of either of us to pick, as it had been planted there by the hand of God for some person that was too poor to keep a garden, and He intended it to be left there until such an individual should pass that way,—so we left it "blooming alone," like the "last rose of summer." Before we had gone much further, we came to a bunch of thistles, where there were two little boys amusing themselves by catching bees and squeezing them to death. Susie Carter stopped, and began to lecture them on their cruelty, asking them "'eow they would like it, if some big giants were to come and squeeze them to death, for fun?" This view of the case seemed to amuse them prodigiously, for they laughed uproariously, and said they "would like it first-rate, if they went buzzin' round on thistles all the time;" whereupon, putting her hands on the shoulders of the smallest boy, she squeezed them together with all her might—he yelling as if he were being killed, but laughing louder than ever as soon as she let him go, the other boy laughing very much all the time. Finding them so incorrigible, we were forced to go on our way, leaving them to their interesting employment. I don't remember what Susie Carter's house was like, only that

the door-steps were very clean, and that there was a well-kept but very little garden in front of it, where there were sunflowers and scarlet-runners growing; but it struck me that her mother was a very funny-looking old woman —though I don't suppose she was so very old either. She wore her dress very short, showing a pair of blue stockings and stout leather shoes, and had a blue and white checked apron on; a bright-coloured handkerchief about her shoulders, and a black silk bonnet on her head, which she appeared to be in the habit of wearing all the time. She was very kind, however, and gave us some very nice bread and cream, and a bowl of milk apiece, which is all I remember about the visit.

Aggy McPherson, whose name I had heard mentioned the first morning I came to school, was a fine, handsome, well-grown girl, two or three years older than myself, with a broad Scotch accent,—the only drawback to her personal appearance being a slight cast in one of her eyes, that were otherwise particularly fine, which gave her, when she laughed or was amused, a very comical look. Her way home lay the same as mine, which was the cause of our becoming very great friends; and she brought me home with her very often, which I enjoyed above all earthly things. The McPhersons, who lived about a mile from town, were Scotch farmers, and they lived in a style of munificence and dirt I had never seen equalled. They kept a great many cows, and were renowned for their bad butter, which no person that ever saw their milk-pans or cans—which I don't think they ever washed—would wonder at. But their kitchen floor was a sight to behold. I have heard people talk of writ-

ing their names in dust; but, dear me, you could have carved your name with the poker on any part of the McPhersons' kitchen floor, which trifling circumstance, as may naturally be supposed, gave the house a particularly disagreeable smell, or a smell that I have heard called particularly disagreeable, but which to me, in those days, was more grateful than the most delicious perfume. They kept about a dozen men, and I don't know how many girls; but I know one—whom they called "Mera Onn"—was in the habit of washing the potatoes for dinner with a broom. Mr. McPherson was a great, big, good-natured-looking man, with sandy whiskers; and was, as were the whole family, kind and hospitable to the last degree. He always called me the "wee lassie," and would sometimes take me on his knee while he sang, "If a body meet a body, comin' through the rye." The mother was a little woman, and talked a great deal in a funny little gabbling way, but I never understood only two or three words she ever said, one of which was milk, which she called "mulk;" and another, skimmed milk, which she called "skump mulk;" and another, chickens, which she called "little beasties," about forty of which were generally going chirping about the kitchen, which was seldom inhabited by less than seven or eight dogs. The barn-yard swarmed with great, fat, lazy-looking fowls of all descriptions; and in the granary were great bins of peas, oats and wheat, with which Aggy, or "Ogg" as she was called at home—and as I afterwards got into the habit of calling her—would "wile the weary hours away" by pitching me into them head-foremost, as if I were a kitten, and trying to cover me up. Ogg had a twin

brother, named Jock, who was not nearly so large as she was. Jock had been ill of a fever for some months, and having become convalescent, the doctor had ordered him to be taken out for an airing every day, and as we now had our summer holidays, Ogg and I took him out for a drive in the donkey-cart, every morning—he lying in the back on a feather-bed, underneath a blue cotton umbrella, while we sat in the front. I think Jock must have been a very sullen boy, for I don't remember ever hearing him speak, though he might not have felt well enough, poor fellow; and indeed, his feelings were treated with precious little ceremony by Ogg and me. Ogg would go into every orchard we came to—which were a good many—to steal apples, though they had them as plentifully at home as they had everything else. We never thought of such a thing as eating any of them, however, but would amuse ourselves by pelting them along the road. But Ogg's great delight was to get "hunted," as she called it, which I think I enjoyed quite as much as herself—her style of proceeding being to steal slyly into an orchard, and after she had helped herself to all the apples she wanted, commence to hoot and halloa, until she succeeded in attracting some person's attention about the place, who would of course give her chase, when she would fly for her life—sometimes loosing her apples in her mad carreer; but she generally held on to them through thick and thin, till she got into the cart, when she would belabour the poor old donkey most unmercifully with a ponderous stick she kept for the purpose, and then look back with such a droll look in her funny eye, that it made me laugh very much; but I took care not to let her know what I was laughing at.

The school-house being near the lake, we played about a great deal among the ice-banks along the shore, which I wonder we were permitted to do, as it was very dangerous. We would try who dared to venture out the farthest, sometimes going out till we got sprinkled with the spray from the waves that dashed wildly up over the great ledges of ice that jutted out into the water. But this was not the most dangerous part. We frequently came to cracks,—or chasms I suppose they might be called—in the ice, into which if any of us had fallen—and, indeed, it is a miracle that none of us ever did—we certainly never would have got out again. I don't know how deep they might have been, but the dark, gurgling water, which we often stood and watched, looked to be very far down. The ice-banks took all manner of grotesque shapes; some of them were shaped like volcanoes, and were hollow. We would climb to the top of these and look down into them; or if we found a place of ingress, as was often the case, we would go inside and run about, shouting to hear the echo. A great many were like caves, the mouths being closed up with rows of icicles that looked like prison-bars. The larger girls told us there were white bears in these, so we never ventured near them. Others were like mighty monsters; while there were some like piles of ruins.

I don't remember anything about leaving school; but I know I did leave, inasmuch as I found myself a "new scholar" at Mrs. Melverton's seminary for young ladies one fine morning. There was a good deal of difference between my first day here and my first day at Mr. Lette's. We first read a chapter in the Bible, and then,

it being Monday, recited a collect, which was done very indifferently indeed. Mrs. Melverton, who was a fat, jolly-looking, middle-aged lady, in a widow's cap, sat conning a newspaper through an eye-glass till it was almost eleven o'clock, when she said,

"Come, come, young ladies, this will never do."

But as no one paid any attention to her, she said more sternly,

"'Scholars' Companion,' young ladies."

On which ten or a dozen girls, who had hitherto been dawdling about with spelling-books in their hands, went up and stood in a listless sort of way round the little desk at which she sat, stumbling most disgracefully, I thought, through a couple of dozen of hard words, at the termination of which Mrs. Melverton seemed quite as much relieved as they were themselves. The girls then got their slates and began to write exercises, in the midst of which Mrs. Melverton, after consulting her watch, arose, and saying, "School is dismissed, young ladies," marched out of the room, a movement that did not appear in any wise to surprise any one but myself.

It struck me at the time that it had been an idle, mis-spent morning; but I was not long in making the important discovery that idleness and the most wanton squandering of time was the order of the day at this establishment.

Mrs. Melverton had five grown children—two sons and three daughters. Miss Clara, or Miss Melverton, as she was generally called, who was the eldest sister, and took very much after her mamma, presided in the school-room in the afternoon. She sat at her embroidery, chat-

ting in an easy, good-natured way while we wrote our copies, and then heard us read, after which we worked or dawdled about as the fancy took us till it was time to go home. Miss Carrie, who was next to Miss Clara, and who was handsome in a cold, statuesque style, had a class of small children at the other end of the room, which she attended to altogether herself. It appeared to be considered the proper thing by all the girls to hate Miss Carrie, though indeed she gave them as little cause to hate as she did to like her. And then there was Miss Mattie, who had large black eyes and very white teeth and a muddy complexion, and who dressed oddly, always smelling very strongly of Jockey-club; sometimes in the afternoon her proximity would almost take one's breath away. She looked older than Miss Melverton, though she was the youngest of the three. The sons were George and Melverton Neal Melverton. George was the eldest of the family; and Melverton Neal Melverton, whom his mamma always spoke of as "Mostaw Melvawton," and whom the girls called "Mell," was the youngest, and a sadly idle fellow he was.

Mrs. Melverton was so much engaged with her newspaper the first morning I came to school that she did not take any notice of me at all; but on the morning of the second day, after closing the Bible, she turned to me and said,

"Well, little Miss Hop-o'-my-thumb, what have you got to say for yourself?"

Not knowing what to reply to this rather vague inquiry, I turned very red in the face and hung down my head, feeling very awkward and silly. Seeing, I sup-

pose, that I had nothing whatever to say for myself, she desired to see my books, which she turned very carelessly over, asking me simple little questions here and there, which I was afraid or ashamed to answer; for though I did not dare to look up, I had an awkward consciousness of being stared at by the whole school. She seemed very well satisfied, however, and said pleasantly,

"I think you had better take up your lessons with Miss Teasdle."

Turning to a mild, lady-like little girl that stood beside her, she said,

"I think you had better take up your lessons with Miss Gwynne, Miss Flora."

"Yeth, Mitheth Melverton," said Miss Flora, who had a bad lisp, looking at me very hard, a compliment which I returned with interest; for be it said, there was something in the cool, insolent stare of Miss Flora's blue eyes that made me feel as if I would like to pull her back-hair down if it had been up, which it was not.

Notwithstanding this ill-omened introduction, we became inseparable friends from that time forward. She told me afterwards that she took me for a "railroader" until she heard me speak, because I had a silk dress on—"railroaders" being people connected with the railway, in Miss Flora's vocabulary—a class of people that she looked down upon as being exceedingly vulgar, and who, she said, spoke like "nutmeg graters," though her knowledge of them appeared to be limited to the acquaintance of four sisters that came to school, named respectively, Maria, Mary Anne, Kate and Eliza Jane Bunn, which they pronounced "Boon." The Bunn girls, who never

made any pretension of saying lessons at all, always drove to school in a carriage, and scarcely ever got there before eleven o'clock, and sometimes not till twelve. They were all remarkably plain-looking girls, with large mouths and turned-up noses, and little, squinty blue eyes, and any quantity of light, towy-looking hair that was always at sixes and sevens, and every way but the right way. They would bring great baskets of lunch, and were never without strawberries, or melons, or cherries, or plums, or apples, in their season, which they distributed right and left with the most prodigal liberality. They were in the habit of trading their lunch all about school, a habit the girls were not slow to avail themselves of, as they always gave a great deal more than they got.

One day, just after school was dismissed at noon, Miss Carrie only lingering to look over some slates, Nellie Bayley, who was one of the little girls, held out a paper of lunch, calling out to Mary Anne Bunn,

"How will you trade?"

"What have you got?" said Mary Anne Bunn.

"Sandwiches."

"What kind of sandwiches?"

"Why, the sandwich kind, av coorse; what kind would they be?" said Nellie Bayley, who was the greatest little mischief in school, and who had a glib, Irish way of talking that both Mrs. Melverton and Miss Carrie were always trying to correct, but to very little purpose.

"But I mean, what kind of meat?" said Mary Anne Bunn.

After looking at them doubtfully, Nellie Bayley said,

"Oh, I know what kind of meat it is now. It is pig's meat!"

"Miss Nellie," said Miss Carrie, in a horrified voice, "let me never hear you make use of such an expression again; I am astonished at you."

"Well, what ought I to say, Miss Carrie?" said Nellie, innocently, though everybody knew that she understood perfectly well what to have said.

"Why, pawk, of cawse," said Miss Carrie, severely, as she walked out of the room.

Now let it be understood that truant pigs were sometimes in the habit of breaking into the lawn in front of the house, which polite intrusion Melverton would resent by loading his gun with salt, and shooting at them. We were sitting quietly writing our copies one afternoon, two or three weeks after Nellie Bayley had received the reprimand from Miss Carrie about the "pig's meat," when we were startled to hear a gun go off close to the hall-door, which was open.

"Dear me!" said Miss Carrie, starting violently; "what's that?"

"It is Melverton, Miss Carrie," said Nellie Bayley, quietly.

"Melverton! Why, what is he doing out there?"

"Shooting, Miss Carrie."

"Shooting! Shooting what?"

"Shooting the 'pawk' out on the lawn, Miss Carrie."

A dead silence followed this little dialogue, and Miss Nellie Bayley was ordered to stand in the middle of the room until she received permission to sit down, which she did with an air of injured innocence that was wonderful to behold.

There were about thirty of us at Mrs. Melverton's altogether; and as we were allowed to do pretty much as

we pleased, we had a jolly time generally. If we learned our lessons, well and good; and if we did not learn them, why, that was well and good too, for Mrs. Melverton did not have the trouble of hearing them, though she would sometimes declare that this state of things had gone on quite long enough. and she was determined we should commence on the very next Monday and turn over a new leaf. But by the time next Monday came she would have forgotten all about her good resolutions; and so the new leaf never got turned.

There was a great deal of silly talk among the larger girls about beaux and getting married, in which Miss Imogene Cambrige, a young lady gifted with any amount of romance and silliness, was the ringleader. Miss Cambrige, who had long black ringlets, and who was always going about with the hooks and eyes bursting out of her dress, and her boots, which always appeared to be too small for her, bursting out at the heels, was always protesting that if she did not get married when she was seventeen, she would stay single all the days of her life. She appeared to be in possession of any number of dirty, dilapidated, suspicious-looking novels, which she would read to us at noon or any other time that she got the chance. One of these, I remember, had a great deal in it about the Spanish Inquisition, the horrors of which were enough to freeze one's blood; but the generality were full of love, and murder, and madness, and were anything but calculated to improve our youthful minds. Miss Cambrige had two sisters, Emma and Caroline, whom she called "our young ones," though they were only a few years younger than herself. "Our young

ones" were quite as silly as herself. They would fasten bunches of asparagus in their hats, and affect to be riding on horseback, one sitting on each end of the saw-horse.

Next to the Misses Bunn, Flora Teasdle looked down upon the Cambriges, whose father, she said, had been a shoemaker once in his life, though Imogene Cambrige was always bragging about having titled relations in England, where she said her father had been most shamefully cheated out of his rights, and made to flee the country through the treachery of somebody, I forget who, and where the family mansion—Cambrige Manor—was now falling to decay, and haunted by I don't know how many ghosts, wrapped in winding-sheets, who held nightly vigils in its deserted halls and corridors.

"Mostaw Melvawton," who bore a striking resemblance to Miss Carrie, who was said to be passionately attached to him, would go strolling about from week's end to week's end, in a sky-blue smoking cap, embroidered in gold colour, with slippers to match, a cigar in his mouth, and a fresh-looking novel or magazine in his hand. It was whispered about among the girls that George and Melverton frequently had bitter quarrels about Melverton's good-for-nothing ways. George, who appeared to have all the energy in the family, was a lawyer, and had an office down town; he always walked very fast, and appeared to have a great deal to do.

Melverton had a chum named Harry Mountjoy, a young medical student, who had the reputation of being clever, and who was as handsome and apparently quite as idle as himself. These two frequently went fishing, shooting and cricketing together, and we often encoun-

tered them on these expeditions, with their fishing-rods, or guns, or in pink shirts and blue caps, and carrying their cricket-bats, as the case might be. They would sometimes chat and laugh merrily enough with the girls, but avoided them as a general thing, which, I am sorry to say, they sometimes found no easy matter, one-half the girls in school being, or fancying themselves to be, in love with either one or the other of them; and such popping around corners, and peeping through the cracks in the fence, and dodging and manœuvring as there was going on when they were about, to attract their attention, never was seen.

We were sitting as usual one day, at lunch time, under the trees in the play-ground, listening to Imogene Cambrige holding forth from one of her dirty novels—skipping the long words and miscalling the short ones—when Harry Mountjoy and Melverton climbed over the lawn-fence, and came across the play-ground towards us, trailing their guns after them; stopping when they came up to us to light their cigars, which Harry Mountjoy did over the muzzle of his gun, which he held directly on a line with his chin.

"Oh, Harry," said Flora Teasdle, with a shudder, "it frightens me to see you do that. You will surely shoot yourself sometime."

On which Melverton, turning quickly about, said,

"See here, Mountjoy, let the young people mind what the old people say, and so forth. If you are going to shoot yourself, choose another occasion; for I am blest if I am going to carry you home this hot day."

This sally raised a laugh, in which they both joined.

"Who will dig the grave?" sang out Melverton, as they were moving off.

"I the'd Mith Teathdle
With my crothay needle,
I'll dig the grave,"

sang Harry Mountjoy back again, and the two went off laughing and puffing their cigars.

But we never saw poor Harry Mountjoy again, but went the very next week to the churchyard to see his grave, which was not like any other grave I had ever seen, but was flat, and had apparently been filled in with gravel, and had a beautiful white marble cross over it—he having been shot dead a few hours after they left us, in the very way Flora Teasdle had predicted, while lighting his cigar over the muzzle of his gun!

Melverton came home like one distracted, and threw himself on his face on the hall-floor, exclaiming,

"Oh, Mountjoy, Mountjoy! poor Mountjoy!" over and over again.

Mrs. Melverton and Miss Carrie tried to get him to tell what had happened, but he did not seem to know what was said to him, and kept on repeating,

"Oh, Mountjoy! poor Mountjoy!"

But they were not long in finding it out, for by this time the whole town rang with it; poor Harry Mountjoy having been carried home in a farmer's cart. We did not see Melverton again until the morning of Harry Mountjoy's funeral, when we met him walking through the street, leaning on his brother George's arm, which was the first time I had ever seen them together; but they were often, indeed almost always, together after this,

at least for a couple of months—Melverton going daily to his brother's office, where, I believe, he did writing.

Flora Teasdle, though rather contracted in her views of life, was at least a well-meaning little girl, and being very much impressed by Harry Mountjoy's death, began to talk seriously of the way we were all going on; saying it was a great sin to throw away time as we were doing, and proposing that she and I should cut Imogene Cambrige and her clique, and commence to study our lessons, which we had hitherto been shirking pretty much as the rest did. We accordingly began in good earnest, committing pages and pages of Mangnell's Questions, Watt's Scripture History, and Smith's Astronomy to memory.

We had been going on this way for about a month, when it occurred to me that, to perfect our education, we ought to know something of grammar, geography and arithmetic, an idea that Flora Teasdle at once concurred with; and without more ado we cut the Scripture history and astronomy for an old leather-covered Murray's Grammar, that had belonged to one of Flora Teasdle's brothers, and Stuart's Geography, which, if I remember rightly, was a pretty dry book. Morse's was the one used in school, when there was a geography used at all, which was very seldom; but Flora said it was used in the common schools, and it would never do for us to be seen carrying Morse's Geography through the street; people might take us for common school children. We did two sums religiously every morning, which afforded us great satisfaction, though we copied them both out of a "key" that was lying about the school-room. We might have tired of this after a while, but Mrs. Melverton began to

hold us up as an example for the rest of the school, which pleased our vanity; and as we began to understand our lessons, we studied them for their own sake, and with a little guidance and assistance, neither of which we ever got, might have made some progress.

Maple Grove, which was the name of Mrs. Melverton's premises, was situated at the back of the town; as it had originally been intended for a first-class establishment, it had been built on an extensive scale. There were two large wings at the back of the house totally unoccupied, with great cellars underneath, where there were cisterns full of water. We received orders not to go near these cisterns, though we often did. At the front of the house was the lawn, where there were a great many maples growing, from which, in all probability, the place took its name, and which was surrounded by a high close fence. The lawn was forbidden ground to us, though we sometimes took the liberty of peeping through the cracks in the fence. In the yard were stables and sundry offices, all presenting a sad appearance of dilapidation, which was, however, only in keeping with everything else about Maple Grove, the whole place having an air of neglect and desertion about it. The back of the establishment was what had once been a kitchen garden; but the balmy days of early peas and choice cauliflowers were evidently among the things that were, it being now wholly covered with long, coarse, wiry grass. In this garden Flora and I, in our zealous fit of industry, took up our quarters at noon, unknown to the other girls. Watching our opportunity, we would pop through a crazy little wicket that led into the yard, and

running down over the long grass, ensconce ourselves comfortably underneath an old apple tree at the foot of the garden. Here we studied to our hearts' content, and did our embroidery and read various little story books that had been given to Flora by a maiden aunt. I do not remembler what these were about, or even the names of them; but there were a great many pretty little pictures in them of little girls in picturesque gipsy bonnets, walking in bowery lanes with baskets of flowers on their arms, or climbing over old, mossy stiles, with leafy branches hanging overhead, and vines and flowers growing all about, such as Flora said her mamma had often seen in England, or, again, crossing little brooks on stepping-stones, with water-lilies floating about their feet.

It was in this sequestered spot I got the greatest fright it has ever been my lot to experience in the course of my existence. We were sitting reading off the same page one very warm day, when, growing weary, I let go my side of the book, and drawing a long breath, leaned my head back against the fence.

"Dear me," I said dreamily, as my eyes wandered from the blue sky above, flecked here and there with white, fleecy clouds, over the rows of bare-looking windows at the back of the house, and then over the deserted-looking pile in the yard about which there was not a sign of life—"Dear me, what a great solitary-looking place this is! One would think there was not a person in the world but us two souls."

Even as I spoke, the stable door shook slightly, and straightway from it emerged an old man, with a flowing white beard, and very much stooped with age, who walked quickly straight towards us.

"Gracious me, Flora," I said, "look at this dreadful-looking old man."

And, horrible to tell, scarcely were the words out of my mouth, when I perceived that he carried in one hand a human head, with blood-shot, glaring eyes, and dripping with gore; and in the other an axe besmeared with blood. Speechless and transfixed with horror, we clutched hold of each other convulsively. He was coming nearer and nearer. We could hear his short, quick breathing. I felt as cold as ice, with a creeping sensation all over my head, as if my hair was rising up. He was almost beside us, and I relaxed my hold on Flora, and felt her fingers loosening from about my arm. It was a sheep's head, and the old man was an Irishman named Murphy, that we sometimes saw sawing wood in the yard. He did not look up until he got quite close to us, and started on coming on us so unexpectedly.

"Good marnin, ladies; good marnin," said he, with a grin.

He looked hideous enough, supposing it was a sheep's head, and we did know who he was.

"Why, Murphy," I said, "you frightened us almost to death."

"Ouw yiz, Miss; ouw yiz," said Murphy, who was an exceedingly stupid old man, and always answered anything he did not clearly understand by saying "Ouw yiz."

"I was sawin' a bit o' wood for Mr. Banks beyant; he kilt a sheep this marnin' and gev me the head to bring home to the ould 'oman, an' I kim across the fields to get an axe out of the missus' stable," said Murphy, in an explanatory way.

"Good marnin, ladies; good marnin," said he again, as he disappeared through a hole in the fence that he had probably made for his own accommodation, as it brought him a short cut home.

We did not get over our fright for the rest of the day, and henceforward gave up our lonely haunt in the back garden.

In the meantime, Melverton had got back to his smoking cap and slippers, and his novel and cigar, and might be seen lounging idly about at almost any time. He appeared to be in disgrace with every one in the house but Miss Carrie, who sometimes strolled about under the trees on the lawn with him, leaning on his arm. They would have their little miffs, too, sometimes, about Melverton's smoking, which made Miss Carrie sick; and which he did continually, and he would sometimes, like a mischievous fellow, hold her in his arms, and puff smoke from his cigar in her face, until he made her so ill that he would have to carry her into the house, which he appeared to think great fun. Flora and I were reading a book, which for some reason we were anxious to get through, and came to school very early one morning, so that we would have a long time to read before school was called. Walking leisurely along by the lawn fence, our attention was attracted by hearing voices inside, as if two or three persons were quarrelling, and on coming to an aperture in the fence made by a board being broken off, what was our astonishment and dismay to see George and Melverton struggling fiercely together. Melverton had his gun in his hand, which his brother was trying to wrest from him, but did not

succeed in doing. Melverton jerked it out of his grasp with such violence that he almost fell backwards, and turning in a paroxysm of rage, recklessly dashed it at him, it striking him on the shoulder, and going off with a loud report, which seemed to sober them both for the moment. We then saw Miss Carrie coming down the door-steps in a white wrapper, and looking very much distressed. We could not hear what she said, but she was talking earnestly at she approached them, and taking Melverton's hand, placed it in his brother's, and forced them to shake hands, which they did with a very bad grace. Afraid of being caught witnessing such a scene, we took ourselves off as quickly as possible, and resolved not to say anything about it. But it got out nevertheless, and we heard it several times during the day with many variations — one of which was that Melverton had attempted to shoot George, and was only prevented from doing so by Miss Carrie going between them—but we kept our own counsel, and when we heard that day that Melverton had gone out to the lakes with a camping party, we put that and that together to our own satisfaction.

It was again bruited about in about a week that Melverton was at home and ill of a fever, a fact that only became too apparent in a couple of days, for his loud ravings might be distinctly heard in the school-room, and a dreary thing it was to listen to all day long, talking wildly and incoherently in a strange, hoarse voice, not at all his own. I think this lasted for four or five days, when Miss Faucette—who was one of the boarders, of whom there were several, and who had taken charge of

the school for the last few days—came in just after school had been called for the afternoon, and desired us to go home. She said,

"I do not think he can last much longer, poor fellow, and it is best for you to go at once."

Awe-stricken, we crept out on tip-toe, talking in whispers as we took our hats and satchels from their respective pegs in the porch; but the whispered echoes of our departing footsteps had not died away when the dread messenger appeared, silencing poor Melverton's voice for ever.

We had two weeks' holiday, and when we came back again there were saucers of quicklime about on the desks and on the shelves where we left our books. Poor Miss Carrie, who was the first one we saw in the school-room, looked colder and paler, and more beautiful than ever in her trailing black dress, with crape trimmings and jet ornaments.

I had known Flora Teasdle for some time before I knew where she lived, although I had often asked her; but as we became more intimate, she took me to her home, and I became cognizant of the fact that her dwelling-place was on a back street, and was a small white frame-house, with green shutters, and a green door; all of which I subsequently became aware she was very much ashamed of, which was the reason for keeping me so long in ignorance of it. She told me of other days not long ago, when they lived in a beautiful house, and had a garden and an orchard, and horses and a carriage; and how she had once a pretty, grown-up sister, who went out horse-back riding on a wet day, and took cold,

followed by consumption, and she died. She also said she had a brother who studied for the ministry, and who also died of consumption. Her papa, Captain Teasdle, was a British officer, and had been "theven yerth a prithoner in France when he wath young." This was lucky for him, I should think, as he now earned his living by teaching French, acquired during his "theven yerth" imprisonment.

Captain Teasdle was an excessively polite little man, and always going on with a great deal of performance with his hat and his gloves, and his cane and pocket-handkerchief. Mrs. Teasdle was also small, and had a fair complexion, and a quantity of light yellow hair, which gave her a very youthful appearance. She was a sweet, kind lady, and must have been a model housewife, for their house was a temple of spotless purity and order. There were a great many books and pictures and curiosities in the parlour, though it was so small that it seemed almost filled with Flora's piano that stood in a corner. Next to the parlour was the library, which was almost lined with books. It contained a green carpet and a green sofa, and a table covered with green baize, and also two large pictures, both veiled with green gauze. These pictures, which of course aroused my curiosity at once, being concealed, were two portraits in oil—one of a handsome young soldier that looked enough like Captain Teasdle to remind me of him; and the other, that of a lovely young lady, with her hair drawn up over a cushion on the crown of her head, and falling in bright little golden ringlets all about her forehead, and with the most heavenly-blue eyes, and the roundest and fairest of arms

and shoulders. These, Flora informed me, were her papa and mamma, painted by a great artist in Paris when they were first married. Flora brought me home with her one evening to stay over night, and Captain Teasdle took us to hear a lecture delivered by Lola Montez, of unenviable notoriety, who was then making a tour through Canada, stopping to lecture in all the towns and cities as she went along. The lecture, which was something about the beauty of women or beautiful women, was marvellously short—a good deal of a sell on the whole, I should think, though I did not hear any person say so. Speaking of the Empress Eugenie, she said,

"When I first saw Eugenie, she was the liveliest and wittiest and most vivacious woman in Paris."

And again, speaking of the German ladies, she said,

"The German ladies are so pure, and so clear, and so clean, that they always put me in mind of snow-flakes."

This is literally all I remember of the lecture, though I remember her voice as well as if I only heard it yesterday.

Mrs. Melverton was scandalized beyond measure to hear where we had been, and said she was astonished that Captain Teasdle would go to hear such a woman himself, much less take little girls there; though she was very much interested in hearing how she looked, and what she said, having seen her a great many years ago in England.

Mrs. Melverton's pupils were falling off with the summer flowers, which, strange to say, seemed to surprise as much as it annoyed her. A rival school had been opened in town, that grew apace as Mrs. Melverton's diminished, though it could not be classed among the ill weeds, it

being an excellent school—a sort of institution that was sadly needed in the town.

Among the boarders at Mrs. Melverton's was Miss Maria Antoinette St. John, who, for some reason that I never learnt, always went by the name of John Anderson. John Anderson had a greenish-yellow complexion, large black eyes, and lanky black hair that was always coming down and hanging about her neck in little snaky twists, which attributes—not taking a wide mouth, high cheek-bones, and a hooked nose into consideration—were living proofs that her ancestors, at least on one side of the house or the wigwam, had wielded the tomahawk and the scalping-knife, and "paddled their own canoe," or canoes, seeing they very likely had one apiece.

Miss St. John had been four years at Mrs. Melverton's, and was now talking of going home. Her friends very naturally thought it time her education was finished. Mrs. Melverton had been so cross of late on account of losing so many of her pupils, that poor John Anderson dreaded to let her know she was going to leave, and only told it to us as a great secret. It really was astonishing that any one endowed with reasoning faculties could spend four years even at such a school as Mrs. Melverton's, and acquire so very little as Miss Maria Antoinette St. John had managed to do. True, she played the piano, or made a noise on it, and danced quadrilles, and had filled a drawing-book with gates, all in a more or less ruinous condition, and choice bits of tumble-down cow-sheds, or some kind of sheds—they might have been wood-sheds for that matter—and she had made a giant bouquet of wonderfully proper-looking wax flowers; but

she did not know a verb from a noun, and though she wrote a lady-like hand, could not spell a word of two syllables, and I do not think she knew whether she lived on a continent or on an island.

The day for Miss St. John's departure had arrived, and we were all prepared for a grand *denouement,* for we knew that Mrs. Melverton would be doubly angry for not being apprised of it before. There were not more than a dozen of us in the school-room, it being a very wet morning. I was sitting with my spelling-book in my hand, looking out of the window at some clothes that were flapping disconsolately back and forth on the lines in the clothes-yard, when Miss Melverton opened the door, and said,

"Mamma, dear, the omnibus is——"

The concluding part of Miss Melverton's remark is forever lost to the world, for as she spoke a horn

"Did sing both loud and clear,"

like the braying ass in "John Gilpin;" and even at the same instant, Miss St. John rushed wildly past her, dressed in her bonnet and duster, both of which were soaking wet, as well as everything else she had on; and ran through the school-room, and out into the clothes-yard, and grasping frantically at the aforesaid clothes on the lines, she tore them off and rolled them into a lump, and retraced her steps through the school-room, back into the hall. Here she was met by a man in a shining mackintosh, to whom she said, as she ran upstairs,

"It is up here! Come up here."

Mrs. Melverton's look of blank amazement was changed to one of fearful anger as she arose and walked out of the

room, shutting the door very gently after her, which we considered a bad omen, and which did not hinder us from hearing Miss St. John's voice calling to the man to wait "one moment—only one moment." Her voice, though particularly soft when she spoke in a natural tone, always put me in mind of the screeching of some kind of wild bird when she raised it. There was a great deal of running up and down stairs, and banging of doors, and loud chattering in treble voices now going on; and in the midst of it all another lusty blast from the horn floated on the breeze—or it would have, if there had been any breeze for it to float on. The next moment we heard the man tramping down stairs and out of the front door; and, as Miss Melverton afterwards told us, followed by Miss St. John, screeching and gesticulating like a wild thing, with her bonnet hanging down between her shoulders, and her dress flapping about her feet. All this happened so suddenly, and in such an incredibly short space of time, that we had not had time to give way to any feeling but astonishment; but when we found that Miss St. John had really gone—started on a long journey in such a plight, and gone without so much as saying good-bye to one in the house—not even Mrs. Melverton's stormy countenance could keep us from roaring and laughing. She had stolen off down town after breakfast, and made preparations for her departure, thus avoiding he disagreeable task of telling Mrs. Melverton she was going.

The maples on the lawn flamed out gloriously as the season advanced, and we sometimes got into disgrace for climbing up on the lawn fence to gather the leaves before they had commenced to fall.

It was this fall that I first remember being struck by the gorgeous beauty of the autumn woods. Flora and I had long planned a nice little beech-nutting excursion to, take place when the nuts were ripe; and set out accordingly with our little baskets one Saturday afternoon, about the middle of October. We did not get many nuts, as they had not yet fallen, and we could not reach to the branches; but we pulled them down with sticks, which was a great bother. We were in such ecstasies with the brilliant world about us that we scarcely thought of the nuts at all. The whole wood was aglow with scarlet and purple, and gold. It was a world of leaves, leaves, leaves—bright, beautiful, and many-coloured. Every way we turned, we crushed them under our feet, and felt them fluttering down on our heads. They floated down the creek in millions, and flecked the old mossy stumps with many a gaudy tint. We revelled in all this glory of ripeness, entwining each other with the blood-red vines of the Virginia creeper till they hung in garlands all over us, and trailed after us as we walked along. We gathered the leaves, every fresh one seeming prettier than the last, until we could carry no more; and then threw them away, to be replaced by others that we thought too pretty to leave. It was a glorious day this—a day to dream of. I have seen such days since, though not often. A soft balminess and haziness in the air, not a breath stirring anywhere, nor a sound but the soft flutter of the leaves as they fell to the ground, sometimes slowly one by one, and sometimes in little showers. A great stillness and silence seemed to have fallen over everything, and, moreover, there was an impressiveness in the silent

grandeur of the woods that we felt but could not understand—a feeling that recurred to me years afterwards on visiting a grand old cathedral.

We came back again in a couple of weeks, but, alas! the glory of the woods had departed. We waded with a loud crackling noise through the brown, crisp leaves, that had almost set us wild with their beauty such a little while ago. The skeleton branches spread overhead in strange contrast to their leafy splendour the last time we saw them. We got plenty of nuts this time, the ground underneath the trees being literally brown with them.

At Christmas the Bunns gave a party, to which we were all invited, notwithstanding that they had been among the first to be taken away from Mrs. Melverton's to be sent to the new school. Flora Teasdle tried to persuade me not to go, but the girls were all in high glee about the party, and I was not going to let her keep me from enjoying myself with the rest; so when she saw she could not keep me from going, she made up her mind to go herself, stipulating at the same time that we should keep together as much as possible, and hold aloof from the Bunn boys, of whom she said there were about a "dothen," and whom she represented as being the roughest kind of a "thet;" one of them being actually named "Jerry." "Jutht fanthy any one having a brother named Jerry," Flora said, lowering her voice.

I was perfectly willing to stay with Flora and keep the Bunn boys—particularly the one named Jerry—at a distance. So we settled the matter, and went to the party. I do not know if the Bunns sent for all their guests, but I know they sent a handsome sleigh for Flora and me;

and as it was a fine evening, and we had three miles to go, we thought the drive there, while it lasted, was the best part of the entertainment. I had never been at the Bunns' before, though I had often been invited, as who had not that could claim acquaintance with the kind-hearted, generous, social, fun-loving Bunn family.

We were among the latest arrivals; and were shown up-stairs by a kind, motherly lady, who turned out to be the mother. She took off our over-socks and mufflers, and after smoothing our hair with her hands, sent us down-stairs. We were pounced upon and kissed heartily from all quarters as soon as we entered the parlour. Everybody seemed to be in high good humour with themselves and everybody else. I had a sense of light, and warmth, and glow. The excessive warmth of our reception kept me from seeing what kind of a place we had got into for some time; and just as my eyes were taking in the remarkably large dimensions of the room—the flowing crimson curtains, flashing mirrors, and large, massively-framed pictures—I was seized from behind and unceremoniously dragged out into the hall, and up-stairs, where I had got half-way before I became aware that my captor was no less a personage than Miss Mary Anne Bunn, whom I had not seen before, and who had her coat and cap on, and a scarlet sash tied around her waist. I was surprised to see Flora up-stairs before me, and surrounded by three girls—Nellie Bayley, and two others whom I did not know—who were all dressed for out-doors, and who all seemed in a great hurry to get Flora dressed. Nellie Bayley pulled on her coat, while the other two tugged at her over-socks; but Mary Anne no sooner

dragged me triumphantly in, than they left Flora to complete her own toilet, for which I daresay she was heartily thankful, and turned their attention to me, jerking on my coat, cap and socks in less than no time. We were then ruthlessly dragged down-stairs, and out into the frosty night.

A loud shouting came up from what appeared to be a hollow at some distance from us, which Mary Anne Bunn answered by putting her finger into her mouth and whistling a long, loud shrill note that might be heard half a mile off. Two great boys now appeared running towards us with hand-sleighs, calling out to us to "pile on, pile on," and "pile on" we did—three on each sleigh. Flora and the two strange girls on one, and Mary Anne Bunn Nellie Bayley and I on the other. Mary Anne Bunn settled herself comfortably in front, holding out one of her feet before her in what I thought anything but a graceful or lady like fashion—a phenomenon that had yet to be explained, however.

We were evidently drawing near to the aforesaid hollow about which there was not now the shadow of a doubt, and where there appeared to be a great deal of shouting, laughing, and singing going on. Nearer and nearer we came. Suddenly, the boy that drew the sleigh threw the rope attached to the front of it to Mary Anne Bunn, which she caught adroitly, and away we went, flying and whizzing over a long, steep bank, and the mystery was explained. Here were the greater part of the guests amusing themselves, sleigh-riding, down hill; the majority were young gentlemen, however, the scarcity of whom struck me on first entering the parlour.

Neither Flora nor I were in a particularly amiable mood at being forced out, we knew not whither, in this unmannerly style, but we soon got into the spirit of what was going on, and went down hill with any one who would take us, and helped to draw up the sleighs, and shouted and laughed, and had glorious fun. I do not know how long we might have kept this up, if it had not commenced to snow heavily, the air having moderated considerably since we came out. As it was, we did not start for the house until we were all white with snow.

Nellie Bayley and I were drawn back to the house by no less a person than Mr. Jerry Bunn himself, and as I did not want to go without Flora, though the snow was falling so thickly that we could scarcely see each other, he went and saw her taken care of on another sleigh to satisfy me, like a good-natured fellow as he was. Nellie Bayley pointed him out to me afterwards when we were all in the parlour, and I was surprised to see that he was the very handsomest boy I had ever seen in my life. He had a rich, tawny complexion, and hair and eyes of a soft, mellow brown, that put me in mind of ripe nuts falling among brown, crispy leaves on balmy, hazy days, when the leaves are dropping softly and silently, and the far-off woods and hills look like a dreamy vision. But Mr. Jerry Bunn was anything but a sentimental customer, I do assure anyone whom it may concern. When he found out that Nellie and I were the little girls he had brought over in his sleigh, he insisted on dancing a polka with us both at the same time, and whirled us round and round without as much as letting the tips of our toes touch the floor. When supper-time came, he brought us in to supper, and made us drink his health a

great many times in port wine, which he called "poort," trilling his tongue over the "r" as if there were two or three r's. We ate our supper and sipped our "poort" in the simplicity of our hearts, and got very merry indeed. And such a din as there was going on after supper—the piano played, and curtains glowed, and the mirrors flashed, and the lights danced, and everybody laughed very loud and looked very red in the face, and whirled round and round, and knocked against everybody else. All seemed to be having a most uproarious, jolly time of it. I lost Flora, but some way I did not seem to think about her, not even when going-home time came; and indeed the provoking way my cloak acted when I went to put it on was enough to make me forget my greatest friends. No matter how much I turned it right, it would stay on the wrong side, and after I had turned it, and turned it, and it would not stay turned, why, I had to wear it as it was.

Jerry Bunn made a speech at the dressing-room door, in which he declared we were all, what he elegantly termed, "as tight as bricks," and that he was going to drive half a hundred of us home in the "bubs," by which I subsequently became aware he meant a bob-sleigh. The sleigh-bells played the "Jenny Lind" polka, and there was a great deal of singing and laughing going on in the "bubs" all the way home. The confusion of my memory of the events of the latter part of this evening, not to mention my being so stupid as to wear my boots to bed, was a subject of wonderment to me for a long time, and it did not occur to me till years afterwards that the "poort" had had anything to do with it.

And as here endeth my early recollections, I will say, with Mr. Artemus Ward, "Adoo, adoo!"

HAWK'S PERCH.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was a glow over the landscape—a glow of gorgeously tinted leaves and dazzling sunbeams that streamed away from the west, and crept in through the trees, shedding a glory of golden light over the heads of a lady and gentleman, who helped to form a lovely picture as they stood in a setting of brilliant leaves, beside a glimpse of smooth water, with a background of grand old walnut trees, through which wild grape vines twined in and out in many a fantastic wreath and garland, till they reached the topmost boughs, and then came showering down in wild profusion—the purple clusters of grapes dipping into the water beneath, and mingling with the vividly mirrored shadows that seemed to sink into unfathomable depths.

The lady might have been born of the sunbeams and glowing tints about her, so lovely and sparkling was she. Her dress, which trailed over the grass, was of the same soft violet hue as the golden-fringed clouds that floated overhead, while gathered about her waist, and thrown over her shoulder after the manner of a Highlander's plaid, was a scarf of wondrous fabric, in which amber

and crimson mingled with azure, purple and emerald in soft silken threads, that flashed and shimmered as they caught the sunlight. A little black velvet cap, with a sweeping scarlet plume, was perched coquettishly on a waving mass of dark hair that was caught high up on the back of her head, and then went rippling down over her shoulders, flashing back the sunlight which it caught fitfully, and entangling the falling leaves that were everywhere scattered in gorgeous luxuriance under feet—floating on the water, furled in the trailing folds of her dress, caught in the long rich fringe of her scarf, and some of them even now fluttering in mid-air on their way to the ground.

The gentleman was tall and slight, with black hair and a pale complexion, and with a graceful bearing—altogether a gentlemanly looking man—though the expression of his face at this moment would cause you to marvel how he came to be standing among the sunbeams and falling leaves *tête-a-tête* with this lovely little lady on this bright October day—an expression in which craft was mingled with hard pitiless cruelty. His small twinkling eyes, which were very much elongated, were near together, and appeared to slant towards his nose, which was long and pointed, and, together with a long pointed chin, tended to give his face a peculiarly fox-like and sinister expression at all times; but there were cruel hard lines about his mouth now, and a pitiless look in his eyes, as he stood with his head bent, looking furtively at his companion, who was talking quickly and passionately—he evidently having had his say. The lines about his mouth grew harder as she hastily slipped a small gold ring from her

finger and held it towards him, saying scornfully, "Here is your ring. I wish I had thought of it, and I would have sent it to you, and saved you the trouble of coming after it."

He looked covetously at the ring for an instant, and reached forth his hand as if to take it, when a change came over his face, and he drew back; his breath came quick and hard, and he looked at her in a sort of passionate wonder, saying, "Why are you so eager to thrust me from you. I thought—I thought you loved me, Flora."

His face had softened till it was almost handsome, and his voice was soft and pleading, though a few moments before it had been as hard and pitiless as his face.

"You did not flatter yourself that I would be so easily cured, I suppose," answered the lady bitterly, as she still held the ring towards him.

"Flora, Flora!" said he wildly, "I cannot give you up like this, it would kill me;" and taking her passionately in his arms, in spite of her resistance, he kissed her till the bright flush of anger went out of her cheeks and the flash went out of her eyes, and they grew soft and limpid.

Disengaging herself from his arms she moved a few steps away from him, saying, with a pettishness in her voice that was almost a wail, "I don't understand you, Frank; you act like a demented person. First you tell me that our engagement was a mistake—that—that——"

"Say you forgive me, for heaven's sake! I was mad!" he broke in, seeing she was getting back to her scornful mood.

"There are few things in the world that I could not forgive you, Frank," she said, softening again, and putting

her hands into his, which he kissed again and again; "but I don't understand you. I never shall understand you," she continued in the same half-pettish, half-wailing tone as before.

Gently slipping the ring, which she had been holding in her fingers all this time, back into its place, he drew her hand through his arm, and they strolled on through the fragrant woods, now startling a flock of wild pigeons regaling themselves on beech nuts, and now causing some stray squirrel to chirp with affright as it sprang across their path. The gentleman uttered an exclamation of surprise as a sudden opening in the trees disclosed a broad sheet of water, streaked with the crimson beams of the setting sun, and with the lengthening shadows of the trees that grew along its bank, and dotted with miniature islands, covered with green willows that swept into the water. A blue kingfisher was skimming over the water in quest of its evening meal; and a curlew, starting up almost from their feet, winged its way to the opposite shore, which was low and marshy, and fringed with tall green ferns.

"It seems strange that this scene, so familiar to me, should be strange to you," observed the lady. "Fancy your never having seen Lowden Valley before in all your life, Frank."

"It does seem rather odd," he answered, with a low muffled laugh.

"This is the mill-pond, and there, don't you see, are the mills," she said, pointing to an incongruous pile of wood and stone, from the direction of which there came a noise of splashing water. "That, I suppose, you have

already guessed is Hawk's Perch," she said, following the direction of his eyes to a habitation whose windows blazed out with a lurid glare here and there among the dark pines, on the summit of a pine-covered hill that shut in the whole north of the valley, and that, viewed from where they stood, seemed to tower into the sky.

"And this is the place my little Flora loves so dearly. I am glad I have seen it," he said, passing his hand lovingly over her hair, after looking curiously at it for some moments.

"Seen it! Why, you have not half seen it. You are surely coming up to tea? I don't know what Aunt Welland would say if I told her I had met you, and not brought you up to tea."

"But you needn't tell her," said he quickly, as a crafty expression flashed across his face.

"Frank, this secrecy wears me to death. What is the use of it, or what is it for?" she said fretfully, as she took her hand off his arm, and pulling a handful of scarlet leaves off an overhanging bough, scattered them on the water.

"For pity's sake, Flora, don't go back to the old bone of dissension," he said, taking out his watch. "It is past tea time, and I will have to be in Lowden to catch the nine o'clock train."

"Well, good-bye. I will have to go over to the mill; I expect Jack has been waiting for me all this time," she said, holding out her hand.

"Who?" he said, raising his little twinkling eyes suspiciously to her face.

"Jack——Mr. Welland, that takes care of the mills, you know."

"Welland, oh yes, I know," he said, as if suddenly struck with an idea, and then his eyes wandered back to Hawk's Perch, and he said in a hesitating sort of way: "I believe I will go up and see the old place after all."

"Well, if you go, I won't mind going to the mill, and I will tell Jack——"

"Oh, let him go to the devil," said he, interrupting her.

"Really Frank, you are very polite," she said, staring at him; and then, as if something occurred to her, she burst into a merry laugh, saying, "You needn't get jealous of Jack, Frank; he is the most matter-of-fact old stick you ever saw; he never thinks of falling in love with people and going on like you do."

Before the shadows had died out of the pond, we find them seated on the deep sill of one of the ill-shaped but picturesque old windows at Hawk's Perch—the gentleman snipping at the scarlet creepers that trailed over their heads, while the lady, with her cap lying at her feet and her scarf trailing over the carpet, was caressing a large bull dog that stood outside the window.

"Poor Wolf, good Wolf," she said, laying her cheek on the dog's head.

"Flora, I don't see how you can bear to pet that brute so," said the gentleman, moving uneasily. "He looks as if he would tear a fellow to pieces," he continued, drawing back suddenly on the dog's favouring him with a growl and a vicious grin.

"Surely you are not afraid of him, Frank," she said laughing. "See here, old fellow, you must have your ears pulled for being so unpolite as to growl and make faces at visitors," she said, playfully catching hold of the dog's ears.

"Do take your hands off him, Flora," said her companion irritably.

"How cross you are, Frank; you are full of all kinds of crotchets to-day," she said, turning poutingly to him, and still retaining her hold of the dog's ears, who, however, put an end to further controversy by starting off with a joyful bark across the narrow flat underneath the window, and disappearing down the hill. "Jack must be coming," said Flora, gazing out after him. "Yes, here he comes. You must excuse me for a moment, Frank," she said, gathering up her hat and scarf, and running out of the room.

Frank peered curiously out at the individual denominated Jack, whom he had previously observed walking briskly along the road that ran through the middle of the valley, branching off round the hill in a bold sweep on its way to Hawk's Perch, and who was now nearing the house, with the dog bounding joyfully after him. A light-haired, blue-eyed man his nearer approach showed him to be, with short bushy whiskers, and with a brusque sort of air about him—a man somewhat younger, somewhat shorter, and very much better-looking than himself, dressed in a light tweed suit, and wearing a round, light felt hat. Frank was ushered into the dining-room in a few moments. Here were the aforesaid Jack and a middle-aged, gentle-faced lady, to whom Flora presented him as Mr. Leolf, and who shook hands graciously with the visitor. The gentlemen were now presented to each other as Mr. Welland and Mr. Leolf.

Mr. Leolf bowed stiffly, and Mr. Welland nodded and stared, and looked so surprised to see him that it made

Flora laugh, on which he stared again, but did not question what it was that so suddenly recalled to his mind a picture he had seen, when quite a child, in a torn primer, of a fox running for its life with a goose slung over its back, and peering back at a boy in a round jacket who was giving it chase, but whose chance of catching it seemed very slender indeed. Jack did not like the looks of Mr. Leolf—very few people did.

Leaving them comfortably seated at tea, we will now, as in duty bound, give a slight sketch of the history of the several characters with whom we have to deal.

Hawk's Perch had been built thirty years previous to the commencement of our story by Major Lowden, an officer in Her Majesty's service, who having experienced a bitter disappointment in love, crossed the briny deep with the intention of hiding himself with his crushed hopes in the wilds of the Canadian backwoods; but as the sharpness of his grief wore off, he tired of his seclusion at Hawk's Perch, which he had built for a sort of hermitage, and finding the country opening out and growing up about him, he took it into his head one fine morning to invest the remainder of his capital in building Lowden Mills, which turned out such a profitable speculation, that we find him a few years afterwards a gentleman of wealth and importance, living in a fine mansion in a flourishing city a couple of hundred miles from Hawk's Perch; having left the Hawk's Perch property and Lowden Mills in charge of a Mr. Welland, who with his wife now took up his abode at Hawk's Perch, and who died a few years prior to the commencement of our story, leaving his charge to his son, Jack Welland,

whom we have just had the pleasure of presenting to our readers.

We will now have to go back to a yet earlier period, when Major Lowden's betrothed treacherously eloped with a young lieutenant in his own regiment, named Dunwoody—a wild young scapegrace, and a mere boy, being ten years younger than Major Lowden, who was then about thirty. Fifteen years after this event, Major Lowden received the following letter, written in a feeble female hand:

"LONDON, Sept. 7th, 18—.

"MAJOR LOWDEN,—You will think it strange that you, whom I have injured more than anyone else in the world, are the one I turn to in my hour of great need. Whatever wrong I ever did you, has been bitterly avenged. My husband is now serving a term of imprisonment for forgery, and I have been living a life of poverty and friendlessness for some years, subsisting on a pittance allowed me by my friends, who have never forgiven me. But the end is coming at last. I am dying, and leave to you my only surviving child—a little girl of five years, whom you will probably see before you receive this letter. I felt that I had drained my cup of bitterness to the dregs when I parted with my lovely darling yesterday. They promised to send her after I was gone, but I got an opportunity of sending her with a Mrs. Leolf and her son, whose journey leads them past where you are living, so I thought I had better send her before it got any later in the season. Knowing the nobleness of your disposition, I need not ask you to be kind to her,—to protect her. My strength is failing,—I cannot say any more. God bless you and my darling Flora.

FLORA DUNWOODY."

After perusing this letter, Major Lowden buried his face in his hands and wept—wept for the woman loved with his whole heart, wept for what might have been.

The morning after the reception of this letter Major Lowden was seated at his solitary breakfast, when the door opened admitting a tiny girl, who, after looking eagerly about the room with a look of delighted expectation, turned to him, exclaiming in a disappointed tone, "Where is my mamma? I want my mamma."

"Your mamma is not here, my poor little girl," he said, taking her in his arms and kissing her, the truth flashing on him the instant he had seen her; for had she not a pair of soft dark eyes such as he had not seen for fifteen years.

"I want to see my mamma. Where is she? I must see her," continued the child, bursting into a passion of tears.

"You will go to her some day if you are a good little girl," he answered soothingly.

"But I want her now. I came so far after her, you don't know—all over such a wide lot of water. Oh! I want her now, I want her now," she said, breaking into a loud fit of weeping. On which a tall, dark-haired boy, about thirteen years old, presented himself at the door, saying, "I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know where the little girl had gone to. My name is Frank Leolf. This is the little girl——"

"Yes, yes. I got a letter about the child yesterday," said Major Lowden in a choking voice, for the child's grief and disappointment cut him to the heart. "I am grateful to you for the care you have taken of her," he continued, shaking him warmly by the hand; "but the poor little creature should not have been led to believe that she would find her mother here."

"We had to tell her something to keep her quiet," answered the boy with a short laugh, that sounded as if he had a handkerchief tied over his mouth, and that struck Major Lowden as being so exceedingly out of place that he turned and stared at him, when he suddenly remembered a beautiful fox he had once seen standing among the pine cones on the snow underneath the snow-laden boughs of a pine tree, peering back at him, after springing over a fence near Hawk's Perch.

"Lady in the drawing-room, sir," announced a servant, who had first gone to the library in search of Major Lowden, supposing him to be through breakfast, and who stared in open-mouthed astonishment at the scene that met her gaze.

"Your mother, I suppose," said Major Lowden, addressing the boy, as he arose with little Flora Dunwoody in his arms.

"Yes sir," answered Master Frank Leolf, rising to accompany him into the drawing-room, where they found Mrs. Leolf, a tall lady in widow's weeds, standing at the window, and who explained that her son had called her attention to a picture on the wall on their entering the room, in their contemplation of which they did not observe the absence of the little girl, until they heard her cries from the next room.

CHAPTER II.

Fifteen years have passed away, and we find poor broken-hearted, forlorn little Flora Dunwoody a beautiful and accomplished young lady, the mistress of Major Lowden's house, and the reputed heiress of all his wealth. Flora had spent the greater part of her earlier days at Hawk's Perch, under the care of Mrs. Welland, in whose eyes she could do no wrong, in consequence of which she had grown up a little spoilt and self-willed. Many and many a time had sturdy, warm-hearted little Jack Welland carried her in his arms to view the wonders of the machinery of the mills, while she clung to him with her baby hands.

Major Lowden had never lost sight of the Leolfs since the morning they had brought Flora to his house; or rather, they had never lost sight of him, Mrs. Leolf taking advantage on all occasions of his generous offer then made to do anything in his power towards the advancement of her son, who early showed a grasping money-getting disposition. Business sometimes brought Frank Leolf to Major Lowden's house, and in one of these visits, made a couple of years before our first introduction to him, he saw and loved Flora Dunwoody, whom he had scarcely thought of since he had brought her there thirteen years before. Now, one of the great objects of his existence was to make a wealthy marriage, and here was a splendid opportunity thrown in his way, rendered doubly desirable by his love for Flora. But he was not one to plunge head foremost even into wealth and happiness. Major Lowden had relations, and it was not known

positively that Flora was to be his heiress, which was the cause of Frank's resolving to keep his intentions as secret as possible, until he got some further insight into Major Lowden's intentions towards Flora, with whom he formed a secret engagement in the meantime, which was another proof of his caution and foresight.

The relations with whom Frank Leolf had thought it possible that Major Lowden would share his wealth were his step-sister, Mrs. Lewton, and her daughter, who resided near him, and with whom he always appeared to be on the most friendly terms. Mrs. Lewton was a widow with a comfortable competence—a large, stylish-looking woman, who wore stiff silk dresses and a great deal of jewelry, and who left out her r's, and said Canada was not fit to live in, though she, like hundreds of old country people that come out to Canada and "put on airs," rather enjoyed the superiority of her social position to the one she had been accustomed to occupy in her own country. Miss Kate Lewton, who was vain and selfish to the last degree, was a tall, fair, stylish girl, who dressed a great deal and had a great deal of manner, and a great many admirers of the butterfly class.

Flora Dunwoody was the bane of the existence of these two worthies.

"Fancy all that little nobody has taken from Kate," she would say to her confidential friends. "You don't know the aggravation of seeing her queening in my poor child's place; but all is not lost that's in the sea," she would add consolingly. Of which prophecy she reminded her daughter on an occasion of which we shall have to speak hereafter.

CHAPTER III.

Flora had gone on a visit to Hawk's Perch, and Major Lowden was seated all alone in his library one dark wet evening, expecting Frank Leolf, who was then engaged with him in buying some railway stock, when a servant informed him that a man, giving his name as John Drew, wished to see him. Supposing it to be some person on business, he ordered him to be shown in immediately, and was rather surprised on being confronted by a dark, ruffianly looking man, who inquired in a mocking tone if he knew him. On Major Lowden's replying in the negative, he informed him, to his utter amazement, that his name was Mark Dunwoody, and that he had come to see his daughter. When he found his daughter was not in the house he swore terribly, and demanded money from Major Lowden, who refused to give him any, when they had high words, Major Lowden ordering Dunwoody out of the house.

"You can keep me from seeing my daughter now, but I will come back after you are dead, and make myself such a nuisance to her that she will be glad to pay me handsomely to keep out of the way," said he, savagely, as he swaggered out of the house.

And this was how it happened that Frank Leolf stumbled on a strange looking-man on coming up the front door-steps, and how he happened to find Major Lowden in a high state of excitement on entering the library. Major Lowden paced the room while he told him of his

early disappointment and solitary after-life, telling him of Dunwoody's treachery and subsequent villany, which was the first time he had ever spoken of it in his life; and after telling of the threat Dunwoody had just made, he said excitedly, "Flora shall never inherit a cent of my money, Leolf," as he unlocked a safe that stood near him, from which he extracted a folded paper and threw it into the fire. "That scoundrel has done me injury enough in my lifetime, without my leaving it in his power to squander my money after my death. I shall make a will to-morrow, and leave everything I have got in the world to Kate Lewton. There is no doubt of a girl like Flora marrying well," he said, softening; "and she shall never want for anything while she is with me."

Frank Leolf winced when Major Lowden spoke of Flora marrying; but his cruel little eyes glistened as he congratulated himself on his precaution in keeping his engagement so secret that Major Lowden had never even suspected his attachment to Flora. As he could now break off with Flora, whose pride he knew would keep her silent, without having a break with Major Lowden, which would have proved fatal to his interest, his resolution was at once taken to marry Kate Lewton.

Frank Leolf had started for Hawk's Perch with the intention of breaking off his engagement with Flora on the morning of the day we first discovered him standing by Lowden mill-pond talking to her. He knew he was going to do something mean and cowardly, and was prepared for any amount of tears and reproaches; but was rather taken aback by her ready and scornful acquiescence

in breaking off with him; which, as we have seen, was the cause of his going back as much engaged as when he came. Which brings us back to the little group we left quietly taking tea in the queer little dining-room at Hawk's Perch; of which it will not be out of place here to give a slight description. Outwardly it was a picturesque little clump of buildings, partly embowered in the dark pines that surrounded it. You could not for your life have told what manner of house it was until you had viewed it from all points. Every few yards disclosed something new and unexpected in its structure. Now it was a little balcony overhanging a vine-wreathed bay window, now a strip of trellised verandah, now a portico supported on rough pillars, and now an open French window leading into some cozy little nook. The front door, which was entirely of glass with a broad window on each side of it, led into a broad entrance alive with little golden canaries, who hopped and fluttered about their cages, and warbled their sweet songs in the midst of a bower of flowering and creeping plants, the latter trailing overhead out of mossy baskets, and twining about and hanging in festoons from one to the other of the fluted pillars which separated it from the next room, on each side of which were four corresponding pillars, which separated it respectively from the dining-room, drawing-room and library—a partition being formed with a heavy crimson drapery. Scattered about were various tokens of Flora's endless wanderings—a few crow's feathers, picked up on the hill-side; a couple of sprays of scarlet berries in a saucer; a few ferns in a vase; a blue jay's nest; some

mosses arranged with shells and pebbles on a piece of birch bark; a cluster of nuts; some cones; a scarlet maple bough; a kingfisher's egg; and various other odds and ends, all of which had their little history.

After tea Frank and Flora wandered about, visiting the various objects of interest about the place; among which was a waterfall in a deep gorge, a short distance from the house, which was a favourite resort of Flora's, and which now caught the scarlet leaves that came floating down the creek, and dashed them about in the spray and foam. The silver rim of the moon appeared over the woods as they strolled back to the house; and by and by deep shadows lay about, and the pond gleamed in the moonlight like a sheet of silvery light.

"I must say good night now, Flora," said Frank, holding her tightly in his arms, and kissing her as they stood on the verandah, with the moonbeams playing over them.

"Good night," said Flora, turning into the house just as Jack Welland came out of a side door with a cigar in his mouth.

"Good night, Welland," said Frank, running down the front steps.

"Where are you going to-night?" inquired Jack, whose voice Flora thought sounded strangely.

"I have to be in Lowden in time for the up-train," replied Frank; "I expected to have gone on with the nine o'clock, but I will be in plenty of time for this one. I can allow myself half an hour for the three miles walk."

"Nonsense," said Jack; "Tom can drive you there in

the dog-cart." And without more ado he disappeared into some back region, reappearing in a short time walking beside a dog-cart driven by a boy, into which Frank sprang; and after thanking him, he soon disappeared down the hill. Flora sat at her bed-room window far into the night, enjoying the moonlight and listening to the crickets chirping in the grass. But long after she lay dreaming, Jack Welland wandered among the shadows down by the mill-pond. "Why should she care anything for me?" he said, seating himself on a log and laying his face down on his knees. "I suppose she has loved this fellow for a long time, and I have been such a fool—such a confounded fool," he added, throwing the end of his cigar into the water.

It happened that Flora had a strange dream on this lovely moonlight night, which was so full of happiness for her and so full of misery for Jack Welland. Shortly after going to sleep, she found herself gliding down a river that rolled like molten silver, in a tiny crystal boat which was laden with orange blossoms that trailed out among the silvery waves that broke about the boat, and sprinkled the blossoms with spray. On, on she went, through a glamour of sunbeams and soft silvery mists, now moving a little more slowly and now careering along faster than ever. Suddenly her boat knocked against something with a thud which shattered it into ten thousand pieces, and straightway she found herself in a darksome place surrounded with great slimy rocks, between which were black yawning crevices, and about which numberless slimy snakes were coiled. As she looked about with the

hope of seeing some way out of this horrible place, her eyes fell on a fearfully emaciated infant, with ghastly sunken eyes, that lay almost at her feet, and which, though she had the greatest horror of it, she felt compelled to take in her arms. As she leaped from rock to rock, the snakes uncoiled themselves and leaped about her head in thousands—bristling, horrible creatures; but in no instance did they touch her, and in no instance did she miss her footing as she sprang madly on her way. Gradually the snakes grew less and less; and at last, together with the infant in her arms, disappeared altogether. And now the scene changed to an endless grove of trees laden with spring blossoms, through which myriads of golden-crested humming birds boomed in and out. The ground was covered with soft spring grass, and limpid streams full of tiny gold and silver fish rippled in all directions. A soft pink mist was rolling in clouds through the golden sunlight that shone over this scene: floating under her feet, it seemed to raise her from the ground, when, feeling her hands tightly clasped, she looked up and met Jack Welland's eyes looking down at her—oh! so passionately!—while her whole heart seemed to go up to him with a great yearning trusting love, as they floated upwards through wreaths of pink clouds.

CHAPTER IV.

The occasion on which Mrs. Lewton had reason to remind her daughter of a certain proverb, was when Major Lowden gave them a cordial invitation to spend the winter at his house—with a *carte blanche* to be as gay as they pleased at his expense—which he did the morning after Mark Dunwoody's unlucky visit, and was precisely what she had been jockeying for ever since her arrival in town two years since. Major Lowden had taken this step in the hope that it would forward his now darling scheme of seeing Flora well married. As may naturally be supposed, Flora was disagreeably surprised, on her return from Hawk's Perch a couple of weeks afterwards, to find the Lewtons, whom she had every reason to consider her natural enemies, comfortably installed in what she had always considered her home. For although Major Lowden had invited them there for her special benefit, he had shrunk from writing to her about them, with the instinct that it would be disagreeable to her.

Among the various appendages with which Mrs. Lewton considered it incumbent on her position to encumber herself was a Miss Lecroix, a lady she had brought from England as French governess to Miss Lewton, and whom she still pretended to retain in that capacity, though that young lady was four years older than Flora Dunwoody. Miss Lecroix was a little dark-complexioned woman, with a French accent and a vixenish temper, whom Flora had always regarded as a sort of little horror, and whom she

was somewhat staggered to find coolly brushing her hair before the dressing-table in her room on the night of her arrival.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Lecroix; this is my room," said Flora.

"I beg *your* pardon, Miss Dunwoody; this is where Mrs. Lewton said I was to sleep; and this is where I am going to sleep," answered Miss Lecroix, tartly.

"Oh! we shall see about that in the morning," said Flora, who was tired and worried, and a good deal bewildered—the more so as she had not yet seen Major Lowden, who was away on business, and who, as Mrs. Lewton informed her, was not expected home till very late.

The sun was streaming in at the window when Flora awoke the next morning. For a moment she imagined herself at Hawk's Perch, and turned her head to catch the dash of the waterfall, which could be distinctly heard from her room, when her eyes fell on her bed-fellow, recalling the events of last night to her mind with a rush, and causing her to spring out of bed like lightning. On entering the breakfast-room, Flora found Major Lowden standing before the grate, with the morning paper in his hand.

"Papa!" she exclaimed, springing joyfully towards him.

"My darling!" he said, taking her in his arms and lifting her off the floor to kiss her.

"Why is Mrs. Lewton here, and that horrid Miss Lecroix? She shall not sleep with me. I shall go back

to Hawk's Perch, and stay while they are here. Mayn't I, papa?" she said coaxingly.

"Nonsense, my dear," said Major Lowden; "we are going to be very gay this winter, and could never think of such a thing as doing without you. I don't see why Mrs. Lewton should have put Miss Lecroix into your room; there are surely rooms enough in the house without that," he added in a tone of annoyance.

"Good morning, Arthur," said Mrs. Lewton, who entered the room at this juncture in all the splendour of a stylish morning cap, and who did not deign to take the slightest notice of Flora.

"How is it that Miss Lecroix has been put into Flora's room?" asked Major Lowden, after returning her salutation.

"Her own is not quite ready, and I don't see what difference it makes," she answered carelessly.

"It is annoying to Flora, and I think she had better be put somewhere else," said Major Lowden in a decided tone.

"Annoying to Miss Dunwoody?" said Mrs. Lewton, elevating her eye-brows. "Really, Arthur, you are a little too ridiculous. If you are willing to have your household governed, and be governed yourself, by a person who would have died a pauper in the streets if it had not been for your charity, I am not."

"Caroline!" said Major Lowden, indignantly.

"Papa, I want to go away; I want to go away," repeated Flora, clinging to him.

"Papa;" repeated Mrs. Lewton sarcastically. "Miss Dunwoody, I give you to understand that you are to 'papa' no brother of mine."

"Don't be absurd, Caroline," said Major Lewton. "Let the child call me what she pleases."

"Or what her dear 'Aunt Welland' pleases," added Mrs. Lewton in the same satirical tone.

The entrance of Kate Lewton and Miss Lecroix put an end to further hostilities for the present, to Major Lowden's intense relief. He began to see the ever polite and agreeable Mrs. Lewton in a new light, and to understand Flora's excessive dislike to her, which had hitherto been a puzzle to him. He strolled down town after breakfast in anything but an enviable state of mind. Something must be done to protect Flora against this sort of insult, but how it was to be done he had not yet made up his mind. When he returned a couple of hours afterwards, he found, to his astonishment and excessive annoyance, that Flora had packed up her clothes immediately after breakfast and started on the morning train on her way back to Hawk's Perch, leaving part of her clothes, however, in her haste to catch the train.

Mrs. Lewton imagined that she and her daughter had made a bold stride towards Major Lowden's fortune when they found themselves established in his house, which she flattered herself was the result of her skilful manœuvring; and she resolved next to make a bold stroke to get rid of Flora, at least for the winter,—revolving in her own mind that a girl of Flora's beauty would be a dangerous rival to Kate, while at the same time she represented to herself that Flora's absence would colour the insinuations she had taken care to spread abroad, that Kate was to be Major Lowden's heiress.

If she had known how affairs really stood, she would not likely have taken so much trouble. However, she was rather taken aback by Flora's decided movement this morning; the more so, as Major Lowden did not appear to relish her tirade against what she was pleased to term her ingratitude.

Major Lowden started after Flora as soon as possible, and arrived at Hawk's Perch almost as soon as she did, when good, simple-hearted Mrs. Welland represented to him that it would be better to let her stay where she was for the winter, as the Lewtons evidently intended to make their visit as disagreeable as possible to her; and, to use her own words, "It would be a wicked thing for him to leave it in their power to fag the life out of the poor lonely thing that had been intrusted to him by her dying mother."

Mrs. Lewton had been very uneasy during Major Lowden's absence, and was vastly relieved when he returned without Flora, though she would not have been very much flattered if she had known his secret thoughts, in which, it is to be feared, he cursed her more than once on his way home.

CHAPTER V.

Ripe nuts were dropping among the brown crispy leaves which now lay knee deep in the woods; soft purple mists hung about the hills, and purple shadows shimmered in the mill-pond, as Flora sat in her usual mossy seat down by the waterfall listening to the splashing of the water, which had always a charm for her. There was a troubled look in her face to-day, and a listlessness in her manner as she sat idly turning over the leaves of a large sketch-book by her side. Here was Hawk's Perch from every point of view, and racy little sketches of such objects or bits of scenery as had struck her fancy in her wanderings about the woods and hills. Now it was a little bit of the bed of the creek, where the water rippled over the shining pebbles with a soft trickling sound, and where the water-cresses wreathed about the stones and trailed away through the pure rippling water; and now it was a tall elm, from which she sometimes heard the owls hooting as she sat and watched it in the twilight, with the evening breeze sighing through its weird boughs that trailed about like weepers, and that seemed to sob and moan as the darkness gathered about. Suddenly her eyes fell on a small dark picture that fluttered between the leaves as she turned them listlessly over, her look of dreamy apathy changing to one of intense interest as she gazed curiously at it. It was an exquisite little engraving, representing a night scene, the chief interest of which was centred in the figure of a lovely woman, who stood in a small rough boat, with her large soft eyes raised to the

dark cloudy heavens, and her beautiful hands raised as if in supplication, and who wore a white ruff about her throat and a large cross hanging from her girdle, and a strange sort of robe which partly covered her head, it falling down over her brow in a point, and then waving back, falling about her person in a cloud of light drapery. In one end of the boat, just in the act of pushing it from some rough stone steps, was a handsome dashing-looking gentleman, with long waving plumes in his cap and a broad open collar about his neck, who was gazing earnestly at her; while, standing beside her, with one arm about her waist and her hand clasping her arm as if trying to reassure her, was a woman scarcely less lovely than herself. In the background was a glimpse of the grated windows and towering battlements of an old grey castle, seen dimly through the gloom of the night.

"Surely that is Mary Queen of Scots escaping from Lochleven Castle," said Flora; "and that is young George Douglas. I suppose he was in love with her. It is a beautiful little picture; but it was a little ridiculous of Frank to think I looked like that beautiful lady." And she gathered up some little sketches that were strewn about on the moss; and after replacing them in her book, strolled back to the house, with her spirits wonderfully revived by this little incident.

This picture had been sent to her some months previously by Frank Leolf, who had bought it, as he informed her, because of the striking resemblance between her own face and that of the principal figure. She must have laid it in her sketch-book, which she now remembered was lying open on the table when she received it, while she

read her letter. He had desired her to return it; but she had never laid her eyes on it, though she had searched high and low in every possible place, until she had come accidentally on it this afternoon. It was just a month to-day since she had parted with Frank Leolf in the moonlight on the steps at Hawk's Perch, and she had neither seen nor heard from him since. As day after day went by and no letter came, the light went out of her eyes and she grew dull and spiritless. "He may be ill; he may have written and his letter gone astray—letters very often go astray"—she argued, as she sat dreamily turning over the leaves of her sketch-book. As she walked back to the house, after finding the picture, she continued her argument in the following style: "Supposing he is not ill, and supposing he has not written, it will only be right for me to return his picture. He desired particularly to have it returned," and so she sent it to him with a little note, telling him how she had found it.

The purple mists melted away from the hills, and the purple shadows died out of the pond; sharp, bitter frosts came and changed the water into hard black ice, and made the roads like iron, but no letter came.

"I am getting very anxious about Flora, Jack," said Mrs. Welland one morning, as she arranged the cups and saucers on the breakfast table; "she seems so down in her spirits, and she does not look nearly so well as she did when she first came here. I am afraid it is dull for her here. I have a great mind to write to Major Lowden about her to-day."

"She does not go out enough," said Jack evasively; "I will take her to town in the dog-cart to-day if she

will come. I would not write to Major Lowden if I were you, mamma; she will be very much annoyed if you do —that is, unless you think she is really ill," he said, looking at his mother a little anxiously.

The entrance of Flora with a plate of toast put an end to further conversation on the subject. It was settled at breakfast that Flora should drive to town in the afternoon with Jack. And very lovely she looked as she stood on the steps in her black velvet suit with grebe trimmings, with her skirt caught up, disclosing a rim of scarlet underneath, and an exquisitely shaped little pair of high-heeled boots. On coming out of the post office without a letter for her Jack read in her look of disappointment a confirmation of what he had long suspected was the cause of her depression of spirits.

Flora was quite merry as they drove home over some caricatures in some new magazines they had got, and persisted in walking up from the mill, where Jack informed her business would detain him for a short time. Her feet were cold, and she walked briskly along over the frozen road. As she passed the pond she noticed a little drift of silver maple leaves that had been frozen into the black ice. It was a queer idea, but they put her in mind of a funeral, and her heart grew heavy as with some new sorrow. Wolf now came bounding down the road to meet her; and as she patted him on the head with her muff, an impulse came over her to enter the woods which she was now passing, instead of going straight to the house. After climbing over the fence she wandered up through the dark pines, that seemed to moan and sigh even when there was no wind to stir them. The further she got into the woods the heavier her heart

grew, and the more lonely and miserable she felt; but still she wandered on, till it got so dark that she could scarcely see the bright green leaves and scarlet berries of the squaw-berry vines that crept in and out among the cones and brown pine needles that were strewn everywhere; and then she sat down, and, burying her face in her muff, wept as if her heart would break, while Wolf stood by wagging his tail and looking very much puzzled. She felt better after this; and fearing that Jack would come home and she would be missed, she hurried back to the house, where she arrived just in time to help Jack to take the parcels out of the dog-cart.

"Where have you been all this time, Flora?" he asked in surprise; "I was detained a great deal longer than I expected at the mill."

"Wolf and I went for a walk," answered Flora with some embarrassment; "didn't we, Wolf?" she said, playfully striking the dog on the nose with a book she held in her hand.

"You took a strange time for your walk, Flora," said Jack, as a vague suspicion darted across his mind—did she meet Leolf secretly, he queried; and if so, what was the cause of his cowardly sneaking conduct.

Flora could make rare music come out of the little old-fashioned piano at Hawk's Perch; and she used sometimes to play and sing for hours in the evenings while Jack lay on the sofa, or, when she would let him, stood by to turn over the leaves, while Mrs. Welland sat quietly by at her knitting. But she never touched it now; she had tried it a couple of times at Jack's begging solicitation, but every note seemed to strike on her heart with an agony.

CHAPTER VI.

It was midnight, and Flora stood at her bedroom window watching the northern lights as they darted in sharp streaks across the northern sky. As she watched them her mind wandered far away over many a weary mile of land and water, to those vast solitudes where the white bears wander in and out of their icy caves, and where the seals lift up their heads out of the sea and cry like some weird human creatures. And then she remembered having read an instance of two skeletons being discovered lying in a boat wedged in between the icebergs, that had lain there undisturbed for twelve years. She thought of the bones rattling against the boat with a hollow sound, and of the screeching of the wild northern birds as they flew by. It was fearful to think of such a solitude as this; and in thinking of it she began to think her own room very silent and solitary. She threw some more wood on the fire, which had gone down, and stirred it till it crackled and blazed and sent a shower of sparks up the chimney, and then proceeded to undress herself for bed. After putting on her night-dress, she wrapped herself in a heavy orange and purple striped wrapper, and taking a packet of letters out of her desk, she knelt down on the rug before the fire, and after reading them one after the other, she laid her face down on the rug and wept long and bitterly, her whole body quivering with the intensity of her sobs. When her grief had spent itself, she replaced the letters in her dress, and kneeling down beside her bed said her accustomed evening prayer.

She lay for a long time watching the fire with a far off hungry gaze, but by and by her eyelids drooped, and she slept.

The sun was high in the heavens when Flora awoke, and every branch and twig was fretted with hoar frost, that had fallen over the earth like a cloud of rare lace, warping itself about the trees and shrubs, and changing the shower of vine tendrils that hung over the verandah into a bridal wreath for a princess. The blue jays were darting through the pure morning air, now sending a shower of feathery frost down through the sunlight as they lit among the branches, and screeching wildly as they flashed hither and thither. Flora turned impatiently from the window where she had been standing looking out at the glory of the morning. She remembered with a bitter pang when she would have delighted in such a morning as this, but the sunlight seemed to mock her now—she liked the dark days best.

There came a thaw after this and heavy rains that broke up the ice in the pond, and sent it careering in great ledges down the swollen creek, and that threatened to carry away the machinery at the mill. It was eleven o'clock at night, and Mrs. Welland and Flora sat at the dining-room fire waiting for Jack, who had not left the mill all day.

"You had better go to bed, my dear; you are not looking at all well, I am afraid you will be ill," said Mrs. Welland, looking anxiously at Flora.

"Nonesense Aunt Bella, I want to get some supper with you and Jack," said Flora, a little impatiently.

Mrs. Welland was a little mollified at her mention of supper; but she sighed as she raised her eyes and looked at her a moment afterwards, for a terrible fear was creeping into her heart—a fear so dread, that she did not dare to put it into words even to herself. Flora had given up looking for a letter, and she never cried now; but her complexion had grown grey and ashen, and there was a leaden hungry look in her eyes, that it cut Mrs. Welland to the heart to see.

Jack came in just as the clock was striking twelve, wet and tired, and hungry enough to appreciate with the utmost intensity the bright fire and hot supper, and loving welcome that awaited him.

"Poor Jack, how tired he is to-night," said Flora to herself, as she sat in a little rocking chair before the fire in her own room, but who did not appear to have any notion of going to bed, though the kitchen clock had just struck one.

"How fearfully the wind blows," she continued, glancing up at the window which rattled again as a fierce blast went whistling by. Turning down the flame of the lamp as low as possible, she placed it on the floor, and pulling open the window, looked out at the wild, windy night. Dark ragged clouds were flying across the sky, now and again giving a glimpse of the wan moon. The wind came down through the dark pines with a wild roar, whistling and shrieking about Hawk's Perch, lashing the heavy pine boughs against the house, and rattling the brown cones against the window panes as if they would shatter them to pieces. As Flora listened to the dash of the waterfall, which could be distinctly heard above the

roaring of the winds, a great longing came over her to be near it—to stand out in the wild night, and feel its spray upon her face. Closing the window, she went to a closet, from which she took a pair of rubbers, which she pulled on over her slippers; she then proceeded to array herself in a large waterproof cloak, and after tying a crimson knitted kerchief over her head, she again opened the window, and crept out over the roof of the verandah, closing the window after her. She crept cautiously along till she came near the edge of the verandah, quite close to which a large tree stood, into the branches of which she climbed, and after a good deal of scrambling and slipping, she found herself on solid ground, with Wolf standing beside her, wagging his tail, and looking up wonderingly into her face, which a little glimpse of the moon showed looking as wan as itself. In a few minutes she was sitting on a stone down by the waterfall, with the spray spattering over her, with her eyes closed, and with her face buried in her hands, listening to the dashing of the water and the howling of the wind. As she sat thus she felt very desolate, and yearned passionately for her mother, as she remembered doing when she first came to Major Lowden's, and whom she remembered as a gentle, angel-like woman, with a voice like the cooing of a dove. Gradually there seemed to come a lull over the wind and the water, and Flora found herself enveloped in a soft silvery cloud; looking up wonderingly, she saw a face through which the light of heaven seemed to beam as it looked pityingly down at her. A great peace came over her, and she stretched her hands towards it with a joyful cry, for she knew that it was her mother's face;

but it receded from her, and other faces came and grouped themselves about it, and as the silvery light that surrounded them grew brighter, she saw that they were angels with snow-white wings, and though all their faces were before her, she could see none but her mother, who never took her soft, pitying eyes from her face. Here Wolf put his cold, damp nose on her neck, and she started up. Where were the silvery cloud and the angels? Great Heavens; what a noise the wind and the water was making! How came she down by the waterfall at this dread hour of the night! A glance at Wolf, who now began to whine, brought it all back to her mind in an instant, and, catching hold of his collar for protection, for a terrible dread was creeping over her, she fled back to the house, scrambling up into her room by the same way she had scrambled down out of it. After turning up the flame of the lamp, and replenishing the fire, she undressed herself as quickly as possible, and, putting on her wrapper, sat down before the fire to warm her feet. Suddenly remembering that Mrs. Welland might come into her room in the morning and see her cloak, which was quite wet, she hung it before the fire to dry, and taking a book out of her desk, sat reading till the wind had gone down, and a purple blush appeared in the Eastern sky.

It was almost mid-day when Flora awoke, or rather when Mrs. Welland awoke her, for when she opened her eyes Mrs. Welland was standing by her bed-side with some letters in her hand.

"Here are some letters that Jack sent up to you, my dear," she said, laying them on her pillow. "I could not

bear to wake you before," she continued, "you seemed to be sleeping so comfortably, and I thought I would bring up your breakfast;" and she drew a little table towards the bed, on which she proceeded to arrange Flora's breakfast. A bright fire was blazing in the fireplace, and a pleasant odour of coffee and beefsteak pervaded the room.

"Dear aunt Bella, how good you are," said Flora, kissing her. "There is no need for me to have my breakfast brought up, I am sure; a person would think I was sick," she said, laughing, and then catching her breath with a little sobbing sigh.

When Flora sat up, she found that her neck was stiff, and that her head ached; but seeing that Mrs. Welland was very low-spirited, she did not say anything about it.

"I wonder who the letters are from," she said, turning them over indifferently, as she sat sipping her coffee, after Mrs. Welland had gone out of the room. One was from Major Lowden. She gave a little joyful gasp, and her fingers closed lovingly over the other one; it was from Frank Leolf. On tearing it open impatiently, she saw that it was very short, and on reading it she found that it was very cold, very business-like, and very formal. He acknowledged the reception of the picture she had sent him, and thanked her for it, and then made some every day inquiries about a book she had promised to lend him some time before. There was no apology or explanation for not writing to her all these months. This was the man she was engaged to be married to, and this was the letter she had waited and watched and longed for so passionately. She crushed it in her hand

till her nails cut through the paper, and then threw it to the other side of the bed. She then opened Major Lowden's letter. Mrs. Welland had written to him that Flora was not at all well, and he seemed very anxious about her. "I will be glad to see the spring," he wrote, "I am sick of this partying and routing, and everlasting squabbling with servants;" and a little further on he said: "We have seen a good deal of Frank Leolf lately; he seems to be quite gay this winter." "Gay!" "He was gay! while she——" but she did not finish the sentence. Taking the crushed letter, she stepped out of bed, and, walking over to the fire, threw it in. Slipping a little gold ring from her finger, she threw it in after it; and taking a packet of letters from her desk, she threw it in also, and stood and watched it till it mingled with the ashes. This was the funeral pile of her love for Frank Leolf.

Flora felt as if she had been viewing the world through a pair of enchanted spectacles, which had been suddenly snatched away from her eyes, showing it to her as it was.

Here was she fretting and wearing her life away, and making every one in the house miserable, for one that never gave her a thought.

"Oh! how selfish and ungrateful I have been," she exclaimed, as she remembered their unceasing efforts to interest and amuse her, and how kind and patient they had been with her through it all.

It was so long since Flora had taken any interest in anything about the house, that Mrs. Welland was quite surprised to see her enter the kitchen with her apron on, and volunteer to help her with some cheese cakes she was baking.

"I am afraid you will tire yourself, my dear," she said, letting her have her way, however, as indeed she did in everything. After the cheese cakes were baked, she helped Nancy the kitchen-maid to set the table for dinner, and fussed about, feeding the birds and watering the flowers, which acted on Mrs. Welland's spirits like the sun on a thermometer.

As Jack neared the house on his way home to tea, he heard the piano going merrily, which, strange to say, sent a sharp pain through his heart, which he was ashamed of the next moment, however. He had long guessed the cause of the change in Flora's spirits, which he saw was beginning to prey on her health, and it was with a feeling of thankfulness that he had taken Frank Leolf's letter out of the post that morning; but he was only a man, and it was a little bitter to think that a few words from another—a person she had not seen or heard from for months—could alter her whole being, while he, who was with her so much, had not the power to rouse her for an instant. He tried to remember when it was that she had crept in and entwined herself about his heart till she had grown to be part of his very existence.

There came heavy snows at Christmas time that blocked up the roads, and kept the Hawk's Perch people from getting to town even to get their wants for Christmas. Jack brought Flora snow shoeing to all her favourite haunts among the hills, and Mrs. Welland rejoiced to see the sparkle come back to her eyes and the blush to her cheeks.

"I wish we could get to town; I do so long for the Christmas magazines," said Flora one morning after

breakfast, as she stood at the window looking out at the white world, while Jack stood by strapping on his snow shoes, preparatory to going down to the mill. "It would scarcely be worth while to attempt it for the sake of the Christmas magazines," he answered in his matter-of-fact way.

"I should think you would want to go to the post by this time," said Flora, as she picked up a couple of stitches in some knitting she held in her hands. Jack looked up quickly at her and then bent down over his snow shoe, catching his hand awkwardly in one of the straps.

The table was set for tea, and Mrs Welland having espied Jack afar off by the aid of the bright moonlight, had gone out to overlook the making of the tea, leaving Flora lounging in a large arm-chair before the bright wood fire that danced and sparkled in the parlour fire-place. The crimson hangings that separated the two rooms were looped up, and the light from the fire streamed in over the tea table, tinting the delicate white china with crimson.

Flora's thoughts must have been far away indeed, for she did not hear Jack come in, nor had she yet looked up though he stood in the bright fire-light, with the crimson hangings brushing his forehead.

"I have got a letter for you, Flora," he said in a low voice as he advanced towards her.

"Why, Jack, how you frightened me," she said, starting and looking up at him with a bright smile, as she stretched out her hand to take the letter which he held towards her; but as her eye caught the address, written in Frank Leolf's hand, she drew back, and looking wist-

fully up at him, said in a low wailing voice, "I don't want it; put it into the fire."

His heart gave a wild bound, and the sparks danced madly before his eyes as he threw it into the flames. It blazed out, and then flew up the chimney a blackened cinder.

"Where did you get it? is the road broken?" asked Flora, suddenly.

"No, I snow-shoed it to town," he answered.

"Jack, you walked to town because you thought I expected that letter," she said, looking quickly at him, and meeting with no denial, she caught hold of his hand, and holding it caressingly against her cheek, she said in a low voice, "And you did not want me to get it, did you, Jack?"

"No," he answered, and his face went ashy white and then crimson, as he twisted his hand awkardly from her, and went and leaned over the mantel-piece.

Her heart stirred strangely as she looked up and met his eyes, which were very blue and full of light, looking down into hers. She thought she remembered seeing those eyes looking down at her like that once before, but she could not remember when.

Mrs. Welland and Nancy now came into the dining-room with tea and lights, and they were all in very good spirits over the Christmas magazines which Jack had brought from town, Flora giving Nancy some of them to bring into the kitchen. This was the forerunner of many happy evenings at Hawk's Perch, during which Flora grew bright and rosy again, to Mrs. Welland's great content.

The January thaw came almost before the roads were passable, and took the snow away with a rush, and they had a weary time down at the mill through the breaking away of the dam.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Mrs. Welland was asleep on the sofa, having sat up half the night waiting for Jack, who had been up all night at the mill, notwithstanding which he had gone to church with Flora in the morning; but being very anxious about the machinery, he had gone down to the mill in the afternoon.

Flora was sitting all alone at the window, looking down at the mad rush of water that threatened every moment to take away the bridge that ran through the middle of the valley.

She had not visited the waterfall since the stormy midnight hour, of which she now thought with a shudder, and a sudden desire came over her to go down and see it; and putting on her hat and jacket, she sallied forth, little dreaming of the adventure that awaited her. The waterfall was in a narrow gorge, one side of which hung some feet above it. As Flora stood watching it, she thought it would be a grand thing to stand on the overhanging bank and look down at the rushing, foaming water. Crossing the swollen creek by the aid of a fallen tree that lay across it, she soon found herself in the desired spot. It had been dull and cloudy all day, and it was with a good deal of surprise that she saw the clouds at the west roll up like a curtain, flooding the woods on the hill tops with golden light, and changing the rain drops that were now falling about her into a shower of sapphires. As the sun sank lower the light

deepened, and trailed across the valley, shedding a bright glare over the windows at the mills, and dashing the leaping flood with crimson. As she stood intently watching the clouds, which were piled up against the western sky like golden-crested purple mountains floating in seas of gold, she felt herself seized in a pair of strong arms, and turning her head with a shriek, she found herself face to face with Frank Leolf, who looked sallow and pinched and worn.

"Let me go," said Flora, struggling frantically. "How dare you insult me so?"

After kissing her a score of times, he said, "Why have you never written me a word, Flora? do you want to drive me mad?"

"Let me go; do let me go," she said beseechingly.

"Tell me why you have never written to me," he repeated, still holding her in his hard cruel grasp.

"I don't know; I did not open the letter. Jack burnt it—I told him to," said Flora, scarcely knowing what she said.

"Who burnt it?" he asked, in such an altered tone that she looked up at him. His eyes had changed from their usually light grey colour to jet black, and were set in his head with a savage glare. "Welland burnt it, and you told him to?" he repeated in the same tone. His breath came pantingly, and his grasp tightened about her as he said, "Now, Flora, there is one thing you have got to tell me before you leave this spot, and that is, if you are going to marry Welland."

"You are hurting me, Frank," said Flora, calling him by his name for the first time, which seemed to soften him,

for he relaxed his hold of her, and a little of the savageness went out of his eyes.

"Aren't you going to tell me?" he said, drawing her so close to the edge of the bank, that she clung to him for fear of falling over. "You are a little mite of a thing to cause a fellow so much misery," he said, looking down at the tiny hand that grasped his coat sleeve. "I could kill you with one grasp of my hand," he continued, speaking in a low tone as if talking to himself, as he encircled her round white throat with his fingers; and then, looking down at the rushing flood below, he continued in the same tone, "If I were to throw you down there no one would be any the wiser—they would think you had fallen over the bank, and you could never marry any person."

Flora was naturally brave, but her heart quailed, for she felt that for the moment she was at the mercy of a madman. "I am not going to marry any one, Frank," she said soothingly. "Do let me go away from here; the water makes me dizzy."

"You are not going to marry any person now, but that does not take the maddening fear away from me that you will marry some person some time," he said, still looking down at the foaming water, and lifting her off the ground as if to try her weight.

Here Flora's heart gave a glad bound, for she heard Wolf's bark as he came bounding down to the waterfall. A few moments and he had scrambled across the creek, and was tearing up the bank towards them. Frank was afraid of all dogs, but he had a deadly fear of this one, and he immediately released his grasp of Flora when he saw the great savage-looking creature bounding towards them.

"Don't move; if you stir, he will tear you to pieces!" said Flora, who saw that it would take all her power over Wolf, if not all her strength also, to keep him off him.

"Poor Wolf, good Wolf," she said, coaxingly, as she sprang towards him, stopping his intended attack on Frank by throwing her arms about his neck and holding him with all her strength.

"Go away now, Frank, and walk slowly till you get out of sight," she said, in a low voice that had a quiver in it, for she did not know how long she might be able to retain her desperate hold on the dog. She watched his receding figure with an anxious eye till it disappeared over the side of the hill, and then her arms relaxed, and she fell down on the ground in a dead faint.

Wolf had been coming up from the mill with Jack when he had taken a notion to take a race down to the waterfall, and as Jack neared the house he did not think it anything strange to see him running towards him from that direction; but when the dog came up to him he began to whine, and ran back a few paces towards the waterfall, and then retraced his steps as if trying to get him to follow him. Attracted by this strange conduct, he looked wonderingly at him, and perceiving that he was wet and draggled, a sudden frantic fear darted through his heart, as he thought of the swollen state of the water and Flora's adventurous disposition, and he ran down to the waterfall at full speed, with Wolf running before him at such a rate that he was soon out of sight, his loud barking from the opposite bank few moments afterwards attracting Jack's attention to Flora's prostrate

form. Flora had partly regained her senses when Jack reached her.

"What is the matter, Flora?" he asked breathlessly, as he took her in his arms.

"The water made me dizzy and I was frightened," she murmured.

Jack carried her to the house, though she had quite regained her senses by the time he had waded through the creek, and though she assured him again and again that she was able to walk.

This was the third Sunday Frank Leolf had spent at Lowden in the hope of seeing Flora at church, though he did not wish to be seen by her. In which desire he had never been gratified until this morning, when he had seen her with Jack Welland. He no sooner saw her than all his ambitious schemes melted away, at least for the time, like snow before the sun. A passionate desire to speak to her, to hear her voice once more, took possession of him, and he started off to Hawk's Perch in the afternoon, with a desperate resolve to see her if he died for it. As he neared the house he espied Flora going over to the waterfall, and followed her, going round in another direction, when the scene which came so near ending tragically to both of them took place.

Flora was very quiet for the rest of the evening, and indeed for two or three days. Frank Leolf had always been a puzzle to her, but now she had come to the conclusion that he had gone mad. She, however, received a letter from Major Lowden a few weeks after her adventure at the waterfall that served to throw a light on his conduct. Major Lowden's letter was full of very strange

news to Flora. He first informed her of her father's visit, of which she had not heard before, and which surprised her very much, as she had thought him dead for many years; and then he went on to say that he had received a letter a few days previously apprising him of his death. The latter part of the letter was scarcely less wonderful: "Frank Leolf and I have had quite an eruption. I ordered him out of my office this morning. He has acted shamefully with Kate Lewton. Having occasion to think I intended to make her my heiress, he formed an engagement with her some months ago, which, finding he was mistaken, he has broken off within the last few days. The Lewtons and Miss Lecroix start for New York next week, from whence they intend to sail for England as soon as possible."

Flora sat for a long time in deep meditation after reading this letter. It was a solemn thing to think of her father's death, though she did not remember ever having seen him, and though she knew him to be a bad man. And there were many things relating to Frank Leolf that had hitherto been a mystery that were now as plain as daylight. She was startled out of her reverie by Nancy, who had come in to tell her there was a gentleman in the parlour who wished to see her. Flora had a presentiment who it was, and she was not mistaken, for in a few moments she was standing in the shadow of the crimson hangings looking scornfully at Frank Leolf.

"Flora," said he, advancing towards her.

"Don't dare to come near me!" said Flora with blazing eyes. "Say whatever you want to say from where you are. I am not deaf," she continued, waving her hand contemptuously towards him.

"Have you no pity, Flora? you don't know what I have suffered——"

"In trying to get Major Lowden's property," said Flora, finishing the sentence for him.

But Frank was playing his last card, and he was not to be daunted by trifles. "What is the use of taunting me with anything so ridiculous when you know how I love you? Our engagement has never been broken off."

"Engagement! pugh! don't talk to me about engagements. I threw your ring and your letters into the fire months ago," said Flora contemptuously. "It is a pity you broke off your *engagement* with Kate Lewton until you found out if I was willing to renew the old one or not," she added quickly, seeing he was about to renew his protestations of love.

"Flora," he gasped.

"You need not trouble yourself to say anything more; it is only a waste of time, which must be very precious to a man so anxious to make a fortune as you are," said Flora.

"How can you mock me so, Flora? Tell me, for pity's sake, have I any hope. But you are angry; some person has been prejudicing you against me. I will wait."

"Oh! don't trouble yourself; that too would be only waste of time, for I would not marry you were you to wait for forty years. Good-bye;" and, lifting the hangings, she disappeared into the next room.

She heard him mutter an oath as he jerked open the front door, and then he said, "I beg your pardon," as if he had knocked against some person; and the next moment Jack entered the room, looking very pale.

"What is the matter? are you ill?" asked Flora anxiously.

"No," he answered, looking steadily at her. "What brought Leolf here?"

"He came—he wanted—he wanted me to marry him," stammered Flora.

"And what did you tell him, Flora?" asked Jack in a low voice.

"I told him I despised him," said Flora; and her eyes flashed again, and the scarlet blood leaped into her cheeks.

Jack was close beside her now, and taking her hands in his, said, "I love you, Flora; I have loved you for a long time. Will you be my wife?"

"Yes, if you want me to," answered Flora simply.

"Are you sure you love me enough, Flora," he asked.

"You know I do, Jack," she answered; and he took her in his arms and kissed her for the first time since she was a child. As Flora looked up and met his eyes looking down into hers, she remembered the evening he burnt Frank Leolf's letter; and then her mind wandered back to some other time, when she remembered seeing him looking down at her like that, as it had done on that evening: a soft pink mist seemed to gather about his head, and she remembered her dream.

Immediately after the departure of the Lewtons, Major Lowden came to Hawk's Perch and brought Flora home. But when the wild flowers were blooming in the woods, and the trees were purple with spring buds, Jack went after her; and one sunny day, when the golden orioles were whistling among the apple blossoms, he brought her back as his wife.

Almost the first news Major Lowden received from the Lewtons was that Kate had married a gentleman she met on shipboard, and gone out to India with him.

Frank Leolf never married, but spent his lifetime in accumulating a fortune which was a source of misery to him in his old days, as he knew he would have to leave it behind him when he died.

MIND-PICTURES.

THERE are sights and sounds and events met with up and down in our journey through life, that stamp themselves indelibly on the mind, retaining their vividness through a lifetime, though one sometimes has occasion to wonder how or when they got there. Sometimes it is a soft violet-tinted cloud, a budding leaf, a streak of sunlight, a dew-drop, the tendril of a vine, the rippling of water, the carolling of a bird that thus fixes itself on the mind, to be erased only when the mind ceases to be. Some of these "mind-pictures" lie dormant, enclosed in a case, as it were, the spring of which has to be touched by some sight or sound or circumstance before the picture can come to light. I met with a striking illustration of this a short time ago, which I shall relate for the good of the community in general.

Going into a store in my native town not long ago, I was politely waited upon by a tall, black-haired man, whom I did not notice particularly until on paying him for my purchases. He said "Thank you" in a peculiar nasal tone that seemed to strike some chord in my memory, and caused me to turn and look at him attentively; and straightway there rose up before my mind's eye a vision of a little boy standing very close to a white wall, with his toes turned out, and dressed in a blue

pinafore, made with a yoke, and with the skirt trailing down almost to his feet—such a pinafore as one never sees now-a-days; and with a black leather belt fastened round his waist—that is, supposing his waist to have been about six inches long—and a white collar six inches deep about his neck, and fastened with a bow of black ribbon. His face is long, his complexion sallow, his hair jetty black, and parted smoothly down over his head. He holds a book up underneath his chin, the top part of which he grasps firmly with both hands while the bottom part rests against his chest, and from which he reads, in a high-pitched, sing-song, nasal tone:—"Accord-ingly-with-a-great-army-he-pursued-and-overtook-the-Israel-ites-just-as-they-had-encamped-on-the-shore-of-the-Red-Sea-a-a!"

"What an odd thing for that man to make me think of!" I say to myself, as I go out of the store. And as I walk up the street, I turn and involuntarily glance up at the sign over the door I have just left, and a conviction flashes itself across my mind like lightning. The little boy in the blue pinafore, and the tall, black-haired, and rather fine-looking man are one and the same person. How strange that I did not think of that before, and how strange that that picture should stamp itself so vividly on my mind when I was not much more than a baby!

Many of these "mind-pictures" come crowding up as I write, which I shall describe as they come, numbering them, to keep them from getting confounded one with the other. And now for picture No. 1:—

I am standing at the door of a small old-fashioned room, with a very white ceiling and bright blue walls,

and with a dingy threadbare carpet on the floor. At one side of this room is a window that reaches the whole width of the room, and that looks out east, west, north and south, as far as the eye can reach, on the smooth blue waters of a lake. Underneath the window is a long green flower-stand, covered with potted-plants. Fuchsias there are that trail down luxuriously over the dingy carpet, their waxy scarlet, and purple, and pink, and white blossoms peeping out from the midst of a shower of leaves. Suspended from the top of the window are baskets—wonders of shell and moss—from which miniature plants creep up over the white crisp muslin valance that runs along the top of the window, or trail down among the plants underneath. Seated in an easy chair in the full light of the window, is an old gentleman with long, thin grey hair, and an eye like an eagle's, enjoying one of the most delightful of earthly pleasures—rest after labour; and a picture of enjoyment he is as he sits with his slippered feet resting on a hassock, reading his newspaper, with the most wrapped interest depicted on every feature. The low, washing, sobbing sound of the waves on the beach may be heard from without, which casts a soft peacefulness over the scene. The old gentleman, seeming to have become suddenly conscious of my presence, looks up, and smilingly addresses me in a deep, rolling, sonorous voice, and with an accent that calls to my mind a picture of an old grey castle in a wild rocky place, high up above hills covered with blooming heather, and surrounded by clumps of dark firs, through which strange wild birds sweep in and out, while dark, lowering clouds hang overhead—a picture that I have certainly

never seen, but which has stolen into the album of my memory in some unaccountable way.

No. 2.—The scene of picture number two lies in the interior of a church. A young lady is kneeling on a purple velvet cushion, beside a snow-white marble font. Her pure white dress floats away behind her like a cloud, and her white crape shawl is gathered about her throat in fleecy folds, and fastened with a miniature wreath of white ivory roses, in the midst of which nestles a dewy-looking moss rose-bud. Her bonnet is of white lace, and can be compared to no earthly thing but a fleck of foam encircled by a spray of purple hare-bells. Her dark hair falls in massive curls on each side of her full, oval face, that is almost as white as the marble she rests against. Her soft grey eyes are bent on the golden-clasped book she holds in her hand, and her lips, expressive of subdued sweetness, move slowly as she reverently repeats—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," after a white-haired, white-robed clergyman, in a voice like the cooing of a wood pigeon. The refulgent rays of the setting sun stream through the stained chancel window, casting a gorgeous bar of purple and crimson and golden light across the floating cloud of white muslin. What is she like?—a snow-drop in the shadow of some gorgeous exotic flower, I think.

No. 3.—A low-roofed verandah, embowered in grape vines, pendant with purple clusters of grapes, in the shadow of which stoops a tall, large-boned negress, as black as jet, and with pure African features that fairly sparkle with good nature as she holds a lovely little three-year-old boy by the hands, to whom she is saying, "Now,

won't Charley give Pauline a kiss?"—a request that Charley complies with very readily.

"And now, won't Charley give Pauline two more to bring to Frank and Emma?" which request Charley complies with as readily as before.

"And now, another for Pauline's self," says Pauline again, and her face glistens as he kisses her again and again.

Poor jetty Pauline! she looks like a kind-hearted, sunny-tempered creature. How proud she seems of little Charley's perfect confidence and love, and what a grotesque-looking figure she is with her gaudy, broad patterned dress, and with an orange and scarlet-figured cotton kerchief tied over her head, from underneath which her wool frizzes out in little bunches here and there —a strange contrast altogether to little pearly-skinned, golden-haired Charley, with his white frock and blue ribbon sash.

No. 4.—It is a bright, clear, warm, moonlight summer evening, and I am sitting on the door-step enjoying the beauty of the night. Suddenly, the moon becomes obscured by a cloud, and it commences to rain heavily. The cloud over the moon grows brighter and brighter, until the whole atmosphere is aglow with a bright amber light; the rain, which continues to fall in a perfect stream, having the appearance of a shower of precious stones. I keep looking on the ground as it falls to see if the sparkling amber drops can really be nothing but pure water. The rain ceases after a few moments, and is followed by a soft amber mist that presents a truly magnificent spectacle as it rolls through the air, bathing the heavens and the earth

in a flood of golden light. The light grows gradually less and less vivid, and finally floats away altogether; and the moon sails out, looking as cool and clear as if nothing had happened.

No. 5.—It is a sunny morning in the proverbially fickle-minded month of April. The morning sun has converted the hoar frost of last night into millions of shining drops, that glitter and sparkle at every turn, though the mists still hang in the valley. The carolling of many birds proclaim that the spring time is coming, and anon a blithe little red-breasted blue bird comes to breakfast off the crimson berries of the mountain ash, that have weathered so many wintry storms—a little bit of vivid colour in the midst of a maze of brown twigs. It now pecks greedily at the berries, and now trills its morning song.

No. 6.—Scene, a street. *Dramatis personæ*, a lady and gentleman and a little morsel of a girl, who is dressed in a wine-coloured velvet pelisse, that does not reach to her knees, with a little sweeping cape to it, and the tiniest white velvet bonnet, ornamented with a long curling white plume that sweeps around it and down over her shoulder like a wreath of foam. And such a face as the bonnet encircles—a mouth like a rose-bud, and eyes like the sky on a sunny summer day; cheeks brighter than any rose, and hair that clusters about her temples like rings of sunlight, and goes rippling down underneath the fairy bonnet like rills of molten gold! Lace-ruffles cover her knees, and on her feet are the veriest mites of slippers. The lady and gentleman, each holding a tiny hand, lead her carefully along. I dare say they are her father and

mother, to whom she must be precious beyond words. I turn and gaze after her, and the little fairy girl fixes herself on my mind forever!

No. 7.—A woman is walking in a green lane in the shadow of a tall picket-fence, the shadows of the pickets seeming to chase each other over her as she walks along. She has evidently been washing somewhere all day, and looks "aweary," if any one ever did. Her hair hangs down on her back in a frizzy-looking coil, and her dress is gathered into a bunch and thrown over her arm, as being the easiest way of holding it up. She has a thick slice of bread and butter in her hand, and I have never in all my life seen any one eat anything with such a gusto as that poor, fagged-out-looking creature eats that bread and butter. She does not eat it greedily, but with a perfect enjoyment and heartfelt satisfaction that it does one's heart good to look at. But enough of "mind-pictures" for the present. Kind reader, fare-thee-well!

THE BRIERS.

CHAPTER I.

AUNT SOPHY'S STORY.

THE verandah at Carew Farm was what our American cousins would call an "institution" of itself. It was a regular out-door room, being twice as wide as any ordinary verandah, protected at each end by two projecting wings of the house, and partly shaded in front by a luxuriant curtain of grape vines. Large well-worn home-made mats lay scattered up and down as they listed over the floor, and in one corner stood a flower-stand, one mass of foliage and bright blossoms. A bird cage, containing two carolling songsters, hung from the white-washed roof; and, suspended over a little rustic table, was a hanging basket, from which the vines wreathed and trailed in profusion; and then it contained a delightfully comfortable old lounge, with a faded chintz cover, and two just as comfortable easy chairs, in one of which Mrs. Carew, the mistress of the farm, sat at her knitting on the particular afternoon of which we write. She was a middle-aged lady with a soft, serene expression of countenance, on whom the hand of time lay lightly—as it ever does on those to whom the world goes smoothly;

and as she sat slowly plying her knitting needles, ever and again glancing mildly up at a couple of pee-wees that fluttered noisily in and out of their clumsy-looking nest in the corner of the verandah, she presented a picture of homely comfort and quiet contentment not often to be met with in this world of many cares and sorrows.

"Aunt Sophy, I have been away up in Aunt Lisette's parlour looking for you to clasp my belt," said a voice from within.

"Well, come here, child, and I will clasp it for you," said Mrs. Carew, who was the Aunt Sophy thus addressed.

"Oh, thank you, Aunty, it is clasped; Aunt Lisette did it for me," said the same voice, the owner of which appeared on the threshold of the French window that led out on to the verandah the next instant. Miss Lisette Carew, whom we hereby take the liberty of introducing to our readers, was a young lady, apparently about fourteen years old, with bright blue eyes and a sweet little mouth, and a quantity of golden yellow hair that shimmered down about her shoulders like rippling streams of yellow light. She wore a white dress, clasped about the waist with a golden belt, and had a pair of dainty white boots on her feet, while in her hands she bore a blue velvet tatting-holder, fretted with white glass beads. This young lady had come a great many miles to spend her summer holidays at Carew Farm, where she was a special favourite.

"Aunt Sophy, don't you think it is very warm this afternoon, to work?" she said, after she had taken her seat on a little stool at her aunt's feet and taken a tiny ivory shuttle from its fairy receptacle.

"Just as you think, my dear," said Mrs. Carew, quietly. "I was just thinking what a beautiful afternoon it was."

"Oh, yes; but I mean for working," she said, rising and going over to the flower-stand to pluck a spray of crimson blossoms, which she fastened in her belt.

"Aunt Sophy, why doesn't anybody ever live at the Briers?" she said suddenly, after she had resumed her place at her aunt's feet.

"At the Briers, child. What put that into your head?"

"Why, nothing; I have often thought of it before. I thought of it just now when I was brushing my hair. I asked Sarah about it once; but she told me I must never mention it while I was here. It seems so strange to see such a nice place all falling to ruin."

"Falling to ruin! the Briers falling to ruin! and it seems such a little while, oh! such a little while! and yet the years have been long and weary enough to poor Lisette," said Mrs. Carew in a murmuring voice, as if communing with herself; and her eyes wandered far out over the landscape, as if looking back at the past.

"Do tell me about it, Aunt Sophy," said Lisette coaxingly.

"Well, child," said Mrs. Carew with a sigh, "I suppose you know your aunt Lisette once had a son."

"Oh, yes; the little boy that was lost. I have heard mamma tell about him; but why don't you begin at the beginning, and tell who first lived at the Briers, like a real story, you know?"

"Who first lived at the Briers? why, your aunt Lisette and her husband. You see, my dear, after your grandmamma died there was no person here on the farm but

your grandpapa and the servants; your aunt Lisette being at school, and your papa at Edinburgh studying for his profession. So your grandpapa sent for your uncle Richard and me to come and live with him till your aunt Lisette should be old enough to take charge of the house; and here we have been ever since, and always will be now while we live, for your grandpa willed the old place to your uncle Richard when he died. When we had been here about a year and a half your aunt Lisette came home from school, and a sweet little rose-bud she was, as like my little Lisette as two peas," she said, patting her listener's cheek; "and by and by your papa came home also, and with him came a young, foreign-looking gentleman whom he called St. George, and a fine handsome young fellow he was, with a dusky complexion and dark flashing eyes, and a careless sort of dashing air about him. All your papa could tell about him was, that he had met him at the medical college in Edinburgh, where he was a student like himself, and that he had had, as he expressed it, 'a row with the governor' about money matters, and had started off to Canada on French leave in consequence. But we afterwards found out that his father was an English baronet—though young St. George had never been in England himself, having been born in the Island of Cuba, from whence he had been sent to Edinburgh to study for the medical profession. Well, my young gentleman took up his quarters at the farm as free and easy as if he had been born and bred there, and he had not been with us more than two months when one fine afternoon he took your aunt Lisette out for a horse-back ride, and they did not get home till tea was almost

over, when in they walked, and, without saying one word or another, St. George marched up to your grandpapa and held up your aunt Lisette's little white hand to show that it had a wedding ring on it, for he had taken her off to a little out-of-the-way village in the country and married her. Well, child," said Mrs. Carew, drawing a long breath, "there is no need to say that we were all struck dumb with astonishment, and that your grandpapa was very angry indeed, as I am sure he had a right to be; but he got over it after a while, and settled the Brier farm on your aunt Lisette until she should come in for her own money; for she had a considerable fortune in her own right, left her when quite a child by a French lady, a distant relation and great friend of your grandmamma's, and whose god-child and namesake your aunt Lisette was. But as she could not get a cent of it till she was twenty-one years old, and she was now only eighteen, they had to have something to live on in the meantime, and it was then that the Briers was built. Young St. George's father had never taken any notice of him since he had been in Canada, though I believe he had written to him two or three times, by reason of which my young gentleman was utterly penniless; but that would not have mattered so much if he had not been as wild as a deer, and a reckless young spendthrift when he got anything to spend. And many an aching heart he gave your poor aunt Lisette—off hunting and horse racing, and I don't know what, month in and month out, and half the time she would not know where he was. But it was not till he got his wife's money into his hands that he showed what a mad rig he could run—he must

have half a dozen race-horses and a yacht, and the Briers must be pulled down—such a house, he said, was not fit for pigs to live in; he must have a billiard room and a smoking room, and dear knows what; but as luck would have it, he had not commenced his projected improvements when he took it into his wild head to go off on a European tour in spite of all your grandpapa or anybody else could say.

"It was about this time that your aunt came over to the farm one afternoon. I remember it as well as if it only happened yesterday. I was sitting at my knitting just as I am now, and she sat down at my feet just as you are doing now. She looked pale and worn; but I thought it best not to notice it, for I knew what she had to trouble her; and for all her scapegrace of a husband was breaking her heart and squandering her fortune before the face of the world, she would not breathe a word against him if she were to die. After we had talked for a while she said, 'Sophy, do you believe in dreams?'

"'In dreams, child! I never thought of any one being so silly as to think of such a thing,' I said.

"'Sophy,' she said solemnly, 'you have never had a vision sent you to warn you as I had last night, or you would not talk like that.'

"'Well, my dear, what was this wonderful dream or vision?' I said, for I saw that, whatever it was, it troubled her, and I thought it best to make light of it. So your aunt began in a solemn, earnest way:—'I thought I was sitting on the lake shore on a moonlight evening, watching the moonbeams that glittered and sparkled in the smooth water like millions of diamonds.

Suddenly, as I watched them, these shadows died out, and, glancing up at the moon, I perceived that it had become obscured by a cloud. As my eyes again fell on the water, it appeared to have become very much troubled, the waves growing wilder and wilder, till they roared and lashed about with a terrific frenzy that was fearful to look upon, while the sky turned to an inky blackness. Dark jagged rocks rose up between me and the sky, over which the roaring waves dashed wildly up, sending their spray into the very heavens. Now and then there would be a lull, and the waves would sough and sob down among the rocks with a doleful sound. All at once the clouds parted and the moon shone out, looking ghastly and wan amidst the black ragged clouds, that looked as if they had been torn to pieces in some terrible strife, and casting its pale beams over the sharp edges of the rocks; and now, borne up from the midst of the wind and the waves, there came a cry—a long, piercing, heart-rending wail that could only be wrung from a breaking heart. Nearer and nearer it came—that terrible cry, that seemed to sink into my soul with a dreadful agony; and as I gazed in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, there appeared moving, in the pale, shuddering light on the rocks, the figure of a weird woman, with long, waving, yellow hair that streamed in the wind, and a face as wan as the moonbeams, and Sophy,' said Lisette, grasping my hands, 'as she came nearer to me, I saw that it was my own face, grown haggard and stony with some great agony; and as I wandered over the rocks—for I know it was a vision of myself—I kept looking down among the seething waves as if seeking something, and then I would wring my hands and send forth that agonizing wail.'

"'My poor child,' I said, when I found she was through —for I thought it best to let her tell it her own way without interruption—'my poor child, you should not let that dream trouble you; I dare say I have had many just as strange if I took the trouble to repeat them.'

"'No! no! Sophy,' she said, 'it was not a dream, it was a vision sent me to warn me of some great trouble that is to wring my heart till I weep and wail, and till my face grows haggard and stony like that weird woman's.'

"'Lisette,' I said, 'you are getting morbid; God forgive me, child, you have been left alone too much in your thoughts and troubles.' For the conviction smote upon me like a blow that I had been neglectful of your poor aunt. In the petty cares of my own peaceful household, I had forgotten that she must have many an anxious and lonely hour at the Briers, all alone with the baby; for by this time she had a little boy a couple of years old.

"Well, I talked to her and tried to cheer her up as well as I could; and as I could not persuade her to stop to tea, I put on my hat and went over to the Briers with her, for I could not bear to leave her alone in her troubled state of mind; and it was a blessing that I did, for it was this very evening that young St. George was drowned in some of his mad pranks at a yacht race at C——. This was your poor aunt's first great trouble, but it was not the trouble that was to wring her heart till she wept and wailed, and till her face grew haggard and stony"—said Mrs. Carew solemnly. "But that came all in time, as you will see, my dear. After her husband's death, your poor aunt seemed to turn with her whole soul to her little

son, whom she had called Charles after his grandpapa; she could not bear him out of sight an instant, day or night—not even while he spent a few hours with his grandpapa, who was very fond of him. Often and often have I said to her, 'Lisette, you set your heart too much on that boy; you should remember, child, we are all mortal.'

"And then she would look at me in a frightened way and say, 'Sophy, what is to happen to my child?'

"Little Charlie was the very image of his father, and promised to be as wild as ever he was. When he was only six or seven years old he took to running away from home, which was a great worry to his poor mother—though I do think, through her great love for him, she was to blame for it herself. You see, the natural impetuosity of his disposition chafed under the constant watch over him; if he had had his liberty like another child, I don't suppose he would have thought of such a thing. And so things went on till Charley was about ten years old, when one Saturday afternoon his mother sent him to C——to post a letter, and from that day to this he has never been seen or heard of; and it will be ten years ago on the fourteenth of next month."

"Why, Aunt Sophy, what became of him?" said Lisette, interrupting her for the first time.

"Heaven knows, my dear child," said Mrs. Carew. "He was advertised all over Canada and the States; the country was searched for him far and near, and the lake dragged for miles,—for the poor mother seemed to have a conviction from the first that he had been drowned. 'Take me away from the Briers, Sophy,' she said, 'I

can't bear the roaring and sobbing of that dreadful lake. Its waves seem to beat against my heart,' and so she came to live with us. Your uncle Richard took the management of the farm; but, for some reason, your aunt would never hear of having any one to live in the house; and so you see it has stood, just as you see it, ever since she left it. For a long time after your poor aunt's great trouble we feared for her reason; night after night she would pace her room in terrible agony.

"'I think I would be contented if I knew he was dead—even drowned,' she would sometimes say, 'but where can he be, what can have become of him?' And she would wring her hands and moan till it made my heart bleed to look at her. As month after month rolled away and no tidings came, her very heart seemed to die out.

"'Sophy,' she said one day as I sat in her room at my work—for I am thankful to say I never left her a moment alone that I could help—'Sophy, don't you remember the dream I told you of a long time ago—on the very day that they carried my husband home to me dead?"

"'Yes, my dear,' I said, 'I remember it very well.'

"'Well,' she said, 'when I looked at my face to-day in the glass, I thought of the weird vision I saw of myself that night, wandering over the rocks with the cruel waves dashing up about me. Oh! I have had a great deal of sorrow,' she said in a wailing voice, 'almost more than I can bear.'

"'My dear,' I said, taking her hands in mine—for she had sat down at my feet as she was wont to do a long time ago—'my dear, we never have more sorrow sent to

us than is good for us; we should learn to put our trust in God, and think all he sends us is for the best.'

"She looked at me earnestly as I said this, and said, 'Sophy, you look worn and ill. I have forgotten in the selfishness of my grief what a drag and worry I have been to you all since I have been here, but I will try and bear it more bravely for all your sakes.' And from that day she took a little heart and would go out walking, sometimes even over to the Briers. Gradually the poignancy of her grief wore off, and she settled down into what you see."

"And there never was anything heard of the little boy?" said Lisette.

"Never," said Mrs. Carew as she arose to go into the house, for now the pleasant tinkle of cups and saucers could be heard from the dining-room, and the sun had crept round till it peeped through the grapevines and lay in little fretted patches on the floor of the verandah—falling across the doorway in a broad beam that changed Lisette's bright locks into a shower of gold as she stood gazing over at the Briers, which had now a new interest for her, as had also her gentle Aunt Lisette, whom she had often in her own mind likened to a lily of the valley; while Aunt Sophy, good kind Aunt Sophy, was a marigold—not a French marigold with crimson velvet petals, but a good, old-fashioned, yellow marigold that bloomed in the sun, and always looked cheerful, and that she sometimes sent her to gather to flavour the soup for dinner. Perhaps it was because the marigold was useful as well as pleasant to look at that caused Lisette to liken it to her Aunt Sophy.

CHAPTER II.

HOME AGAIN.

It is Christmas Eve, and our scene lies in a small bedroom with a small window looking out over the roof of the identical verandah we described at the commencement of our first chapter; and here again is our old friend Lisette, come to spend her Christmas holidays—for holidays would be no holidays to Lisette if she did not spend them at the farm. She looks plumper and rosier than when we last saw her, and has changed her white dress for a Garibaldi as blue as her eyes, and a black skirt and bodice; and she is now in the act of divesting herself of a small linen apron, for she has been all day in the kitchen helping Aunt Sophy with her mighty preparations for Christmas, and has only now come up-stairs to wash her hands and brush her hair for the afternoon, though it is almost four o'clock. Instead of proceeding to wash her hands immediately she got her apron off, she turned a small wooden button on the aforesaid small window and pulled it open. It had been snowing all day, and Lisette was struck with the dead calmness that reigned outdoors. The snow was piled up in a long narrow heap like a grave on the top of the verandah, over which the dark branches spread like skeletons of birds' feet; and it lay like a pall over the landscape, the dark woods looking darker against the white hills, and the Briers looking drearier than ever with its white roofs standing out in bold relief against the dark waters of Lake Ontario, whose inky blackness put Lisette in mind of a picture she had seen at a panorama when quite a child, of a woman dressed in trailing white

garments, and with a white band wound about her deathly face, crossing just such a lake and looking back with such a ghostly look in her white face that it made her shudder to think of it; and then, as she made prints with her little dimpled hands in the grave-like snow-bank underneath her window, her thoughts wandered back to a certain summer day when the leaves rustled on the trees and the fields were yellow with golden grain, and the lake lay sparkling in the sunlight, skirting the horizon like a broad belt of silvery light, when Aunt Sophy had told her the story of the Briers and Aunt Lisette's little lost boy. Her thoughts were here interrupted by a knock at the front door, which it was her business to answer for the day. Hastily dipping her hands in the basin, she wiped them as she ran out of the room, throwing back the towel after she had got a couple of yards from the door. A moment afterwards Lisette found herself standing face to face with what appeared to her to be rather an odd-looking gentleman; but as he politely doffed his broad-peaked cap, which he wore rather rakishly on one side of his head, there was something that struck her as being exceedingly jaunty and pretty about the style of his short blue cloth cloak with its stiff collar and little full cape; and what was it that brought her Aunt Sophy's words with a rush to her mind—"With a dusky complexion and dark flashing eyes, and a careless sort of dashing air about him?" Was it that the description tallied exactly with the gentleman before her? or was it that that story had kept running in her head because she had been just thinking of it? In the meantime, the stranger had enquired for Mrs. St. George, and been shown into the parlour.

"Aunt Lisette," said Lisette, bursting into her aunt's room, "there is such a handsome gentleman in the parlour wants to see you."

"To see me," said Mrs. St. George, "who can it be?"

"I don't know, Aunt Lisette, but he is so handsome."

"Well, let us go down and see what this very handsome gentleman wants," said her aunt with a smile.

"But he only asked for you, Aunt Lisette."

"Nonsense, child; come down and see what he wants."

As she opened the parlour door Lisette observed that the stranger had not sat down, but stood at the window with his head turned as if looking over at the Briers. He turned quickly about as they entered, and to her utter amazement, advanced towards her Aunt Lisette, extending both hands, and exclaiming "My mother!" Mrs. St. George, whose face had turned to an ashy pallor, stood gazing at him like one petrified, but spoke not a word. "Mamma," said he again, "have you no word of welcome for me after all these years?"

"It is he," said Mrs. St. George in a faint voice; "it is my little lost boy grown to be a man. My God, I thank thee!" she said, fervently clasping her hands, and the next moment she lay fainting in the arms of her long lost son.

It is needless to say that Aunt Sophy and everybody else concerned were very much astonished indeed at such a totally unlooked for event as the return of Charley St. George after ten years' absence; which event, as Uncle Richard observed, made his mother ten years younger in one night.

Young St. George's story was soon told. He went to Rochester on a steamboat that was receiving its cargo on the wharf at C—— on the afternoon of his disappearance. He met a gentleman on board the boat, to whom he gave a false name and told a fabulous story, who engaged him on the spot to accompany him to New Orleans to work in a factory, which he did for about a year, after which he had many ups and downs until the breaking out of the war, when he entered the army, where he rose to the rank of captain.

"Did I not tell your Aunt Lisette, years ago, that God ordered all things for the best," said Aunt Sophy when she wrote to Lisette in the spring time to tell her that Aunt Lisette and her son were comfortably settled in their old home at the Briers. "If Charley St. George did not go off when he did," continued Aunt Sophy, "now would be the time he would be breaking his mother's heart by going out to see the world; but he has seen the world to his heart's content, and promises to be a blessing and a comfort to his mother; and, if the truth must be told, there was a time when I thought he would be the very reverse."

Lisette now divides her holidays between the Briers and Carew Farm, and often thinks of the time when she used to wonder why nobody ever lived at the Briers.

THE BOX OF SHELLS.

OUR scene lies on the shore of Lake Ontario, on an evening in early autumn. Dark lowering clouds hung overhead, and there was a wild roar in the woods and the waves; bright coloured leaves were whirled down over the steep, precipitous bank along the shore, and carried out on the receding waves, and then dashed back on the pebbly beach looking brighter than before. As the waves dashed against the flat rocks, sending up showers of spray, and the trees lashed about in the wind, there emerged from a dark opening in the woods that skirted the bank, a wild, shaggy-looking black pony, bearing on its back a young girl wearing a scarlet cloak, with the hood drawn over her head, and carrying in her hand no less an article of industry than a hoe with a broken handle, which she threw on the ground together with a tin box that she had underneath her cloak, as she hastily dismounted, and proceeded to tie the pony to one of the large beeches that stood on either side of the opening in the woods that led to the dark winding road she had just traversed, and which was made conspicuous by the mass of tangled foliage that surrounded it, the edge of the woods being rendered almost impregnable by a thick undergrowth of young trees and shrubs of various kinds. The pony being secured, she picked up the hoe and tin box, and walked quickly to the edge of the bank, where she stood

for a moment—with her dress sweeping the yellow plumes of golden-rod, and her cloak streaming back from her shoulders like a scarlet flag—watching the gulls skimming over the dark waters of the lake; but it was only for a moment. Making her way a few feet down the bank by the aid of a tall maple which had recently been precipitated down the bank by the earth beneath it giving way —and now lay with its roots partly bristling out of the bank and its brilliant foliage dipping in the water—she proceeded to excavate a hole in the bank with the hoe, and into this hole she thrust the tin box, stopping up the mouth with pieces of sod pulled from the overhanging bank. A few moments and she has remounted her pony and disappeared into the woods by the way she came, and the scene closes.

The next rolling up of the curtain discloses the interior of a lofty room furnished in rather a chaotic style. In one corner stood a mirror with a tarnished gilt frame, and in another a piano. Between these two articles of furniture was a hair sofa, and behind the hair sofa was a mantelpiece, on which, among other miscellaneous articles, was a stuffed owl and a life-size portrait of a young lady with black hair and a sort of pink and tan complexion, and with her eyes turned up so very much that it seemed doubtful if she could ever get them down again. Running up through the middle of the room was a table made of rough pine boards, that looked like a carpenter's bench, which was partly covered with half of an old woollen shawl, the other half of which hung on one of the lofty windows in lieu of a window blind. On this table were strewn books of all descriptions, slates, paint boxes, and

various other boxes, writing materials, drawing materials, beads, cones, pressed flowers, pressed mosses, half-finished drawings, fragments of wax and paper flowers, pieces of perforated card, pieces of wax, pieces of glue, pieces of ribbon, pieces of music, maps, knitting, sewing, Berlin wool, and all manner of bottles, large and small; vases, dolls and dolls' furniture, and various other articles too numerous to mention. This grand mass of confusion was presided over by Miss Tremore, who reigned supreme in this her school-room, and who was now engaged in the hopeful occupation of disentangling some sewing silk from some other sewing silk, some thread, some floss, and some Berlin wool. Miss Tremore's cheeks were purple, and her eyes glowed with a feverish light, and moreover Miss Tremore was as hoarse as if she had a violent cold, and all from over-exertion in the discharge of her duties in imparting French and German, music and singing, drawing and painting, English in all its branches, and fancy work in all its branches, to a couple dozen of young ladies of various ages that now surrounded her, and whose occupations were almost as varied as the articles on the table. "Miss Campbell, my dear, your paint is too thick. Miss Hanly, where is your thimble? Miss Martin, you are not studying. Miss Dacy! Miss Dacy! how much oftener shall I have to tell you to cross your t's?' was a sort of running fire that Miss Tremore kept up all day long.

"Miss Tremore, I can't find my shells," said a little girl, putting her head out from underneath a marble-topped table on which a bird-cage kept company with some books, a pin-cushion and a pitcher of water.

"Nonsense, my dear," said Miss Tremore, "they could not have walked out of the room: you must search. Young ladies, help Miss Ollivet to search for her shells;" which request was promptly complied with, searching being one of the standard occupations at Miss Tremore's. Indeed, the greater part of the valuable time passed there was spent in searching for things.

"Miss Rogers, has your desk been searched?" said Miss Tremore, addressing a young lady seated at a desk that bore a strong family likeness to the long table.

"No, Miss Tremore," said Miss Rogers, who had hitherto been so intent on her work that she did not seem to notice what was going on about her, and in whom, as she turns her head, we recognise the dark troubled eyes and flushed cheeks of the heroine of the mysterious tin box.

"This is very strange, young ladies—quite unaccountable, I am sure," said Miss Tremore; "but it's four o'clock, and the search must be given over for to-day—prayers, young ladies, prayers," she added with a suddenness which characterised all her movements. With Miss Tremore's prayers closes the second scene; and now for a peep behind the curtain.

Miss Tremore had come out to Canada in the capacity of governess in an English family of some note, who, however, found it convenient to dispense with her services shortly after their arrival in the country. Being of an enterprising turn of mind, she set up a ladies' school on her own account a short distance from a village, which we shall call Preston for want of a better name. About a month prior to the commencement of our story Clara

Rogers, who was the daughter of an affluent farmer in the neighbourhood, had brought a number of fresh water shells to school, which she had been some time collecting for the purpose of making a miniature shell cottage, in imitation of one she had once seen at a provincial fair, which had taken her fancy prodigiously. She first had a regular little frame of a house made at the carpenter's shop, from which she cut the shape of the cottage in thick card-board, which she glued on the frame, having previously cut out the windows, the frames of which she formed with tiny slats of cedar. She then proceeded to glue the shells on the card-board as close as one could lie against another, till it was all covered excepting the roof, which she sanded. Having reddened the chimneys with brick dust and varnished the shells, she placed the cottage in the centre of a thin board about half a yard square, which she enclosed with the most wonderful little fence cut out of card-board and sanded like the roof. The enclosure was then filled in with the most beautiful green moss, which was arranged in picturesque little banks and mounds, and dotted about with tiny cedar trees; but the crowning beauty of the garden was the strawberry vines that crept in and out everywhere, climbing up over the windows and over the little porch, from whence they made their way up over the roof, twining about the chimneys and trailing down over the eaves, the deep green leaves and bright scarlet berries contrasting beautifully with the paler green of the moss and the dark colour of the cottage. Clara was delighted with her work, which had greatly exceeded her expectations, her cottage being much prettier than the one she had intended to imitate.

"Miss Tremore, I have got such a lot of pretty shells at home that mamma brought from England; don't you think I could make a cottage, too?" said Katy Ollivet, as she stood watching Clara, admiringly, putting the finishing touches to her mossy garden.

"I suppose you could, my dear, if you have got shells enough. Bring them with you to-morrow, and we will see what we can do," said Miss Tremore; and accordingly when Clara came to school the next morning there was an admiring group standing about Katy Ollivet's shells, which were scattered on a newspaper on the table.

"Ah, Miss Clara! you will have to look to your laurels," said Miss Tremore, playfully. "Katy's cottage is going to cut your's out altogether. I am afraid it will be—Miss Ollivet, first prize; Miss Rogers, second."

And as Clara looked at Katy's beautiful, smooth shining shells, so much prettier than her own, a bitter feeling came into her heart. It had long been her intention to enter her cottage for a prize at the county fair which was to be held at Preston; hence Miss Tremore's remark, which she little thought would rankle like a thorn in Clara's heart, till she put on her cloak to go home in the evening, which she did not do for an hour after the others had gone, it being her evening to stay after school for her music lesson. As she was putting her books in her satchel her eye fell on the box that contained Katy Ollivet's shells. It was a peculiar looking box, painted black with a green stripe running about the edges. Lifting the lid, which, it struck her, was remarkably heavy for that sort of a box, she looked in at the shining mass of delicately tinted shells, when an idea seemed to strike

her. Suddenly closing the box, she looked about at the deserted room, and then thrust it under her cloak, and snatching up her satchel and music book, she walked quickly out where the trees—resplendent in scarlet and yellow—were flaunting about in the wind. She took her way over the beaten path across the fields, and she had not gone very far when she espied Ned, the servant boy, riding towards her on her pony. Now, she was frequently in the habit of riding over to her grandmother's, which was some distance the other side of Miss Tremore's, after she had returned home from school; and as she intended going over this evening, her mother had sent the pony to meet her, with instructions to Ned to carry home her books, as she was afraid she would be late coming. Clara gave Ned the books, but held the box of shells tightly under her arm, intending to hide it in the fence until she would be coming back, which she did after she had got out of sight of Miss Tremore's. As she galloped homewards she began to think seriously of what she would do with it, her intention being to hide it until it got too late for Katy Ollivet to make her cottage for the fair, and then bring it back and put it in some obscure corner of the school-room. But where was she to hide it? If she brought it home she would always be uneasy about it for fear of its being discovered. While this question was puzzling her brain, her eye fell on an old hoe with a broken handle that was lying in the ditch. Here was an idea!—she would bury it. She picked up the hoe, and was looking about for a good burying place, when she perceived that the pony, which she had left untied, had wandered into the woods, and was already half a dozen

yards down the road that led to the lake, and the thought occurred to her that she would go down into the woods and bury it in the bank. It would surely be safe there, and she would know where to find it when she wanted it.

Clara took care to be late for school the morning after the search, in hopes that search number two would be over by the time she got there; but what was her chagrin to find that Katy Ollivet had not yet come to school, and of course the shell question would not be broached until she came. As the morning wore away without Katy making her appearance, Clara's peace of mind for the time being began to return. She would be spared the search, at least for to-day. But lo! even as she was congratulating herself, a dark shadow fell across the window, causing her to look up and behold Captain Ollivet, Katy's papa—booted and spurred, and followed by an odd-looking black and white spotted hound—walking quickly towards the hall door. An instant after a thundering double knock brought Tibby Day, the housemaid, to the door. Captain Ollivet could not come in; he was anxious to get to Preston in time to catch the English mail; would Tibby give his compliments to Miss Tremore, and ask if he might see her for a moment. As soon as Miss Tremore made her appearance Captain Ollivet proceeded to narrate how Katy had been kept at home in disgrace by her mamma, for abstracting the tin box from his library for the purpose of carrying some shells to school; the said box, which by some mistake he had left unlocked, having contained valuable papers, part of which Katy had thrown carelessly into a drawer, and part of which still remained in a drawer in the lid of the box, the secret of which was

only known to Captain Ollivet himself; and as he understood the box had been mislaid, would Miss Tremore be so very kind as to have it hunted up by the time he came back; he was sorry for giving her so much trouble, etc.

A cold perspiration broke out on Clara's forehead, and her ears began to sing. Oh! why had she touched that horrid box.

Everything in the room was turned topsy-turvy. Tibby Day and Mary the cook, and even Mrs. Munroe, Miss Tremore's landlady, were called in and questioned; but, it is needless to say, there could be no clue found to the missing box. "Tibby," said Miss Tremore suddenly, as if an idea had occurred to her, "Tibby, are you sure you have seen nothing of the missing box?"

"Yes, Miss Tremore, quite sure," said Tibby, reddening under the sharp scrutiny of Miss Tremore's eyes.

"And you have swept and dusted the room every morning?"

"Yes, Miss Tremore," said Tibby again, whose face had grown crimson under the simultaneous stare of the whole school, which appeared to have become suddenly imbued with the same idea that had suggested itself to Miss Tremore.

"I did not take it, Miss Tremore," said Tibby, piteously.

"Well, Tibby, nobody said you did," said Miss Tremore, in slow and measured tones.

"No, Miss Tremore, but"——

"But what?" said Miss Tremore, severely.

"Nothing, Miss Tremore, but I did not take it," said Tibby, beginning to cry.

"Nobody has accused you of taking it," said Miss

Tremore, in the same measured tones, as she looked significantly about the room. "But I think we have had enough of this. French exercises, young ladies, French exercises," she continued, rapping a pen-holder on the table; and Tibby walked out with her apron to her eyes, followed by Mary the cook and Mrs. Monroe, both of whom looked very suspicious indeed.

Miss Tremore told Captain Ollivet on his return that the box had not been found, but that he need not be uneasy about it, as she was confident it would turn up before long, adding in a confidential tone that she "hauf" suspected the housemaid, which of course explained worlds. . . . .

The last rays of the setting sun tipped the many-coloured tree tops with gold, and lay mirrored on the smooth waters of the lake in bars of purple and crimson. All along the shore the waves were sobbing —sobbing for the dying summer—sobbing for the glory of the woods that was so soon to be no more. And here again—standing on the edge of the bank, crushing the yellow plumes of golden-rod — was Clara Rogers, whose thoughts were neither with the purple sky nor the sobbing waves, but evidently concentrated on a tin box that she held in her hand, and from which she was brushing the yellow clay, she having just excavated it from its grave in the bank. "I will ride to grandpapa's and back so slowly that it will be getting dark by the time I am going past Miss Tremore's, and they will be all at tea. I will steal into the gate and throw the box at the hall door, and be well rid of it," she soliloquised, as she placed it under her cloak.

And it was thus that Tibby, when she opened the door to sweep in the morning, found the missing box of shells lying on the door-step, to her great joy and amazement.

"Well, young ladies, the box of shells has been found," were the first words with which Miss Tremore greeted her scholars on entering the school-room a couple of hours afterwards; "and Tibby has been dismissed," she added in a slightly triumphant tone.

"Tibby dismissed! Miss Tremore!" exclaimed Clara Rogers, letting go her spelling-book, at which she had been tugging nervously to get it out of her satchel.

"Yes, dismissed," said Miss Tremore. "She came rushing in with the box in her hand while I was at breakfast, and said she had just found it on the door-step. I told her point-blank that I did not believe her, but offered to say nothing more about it in consideration of her former good conduct, if she would own what she had done, and promise never to do such a thing again. But, gracious me! such a fuss as she made—crying and protesting that she knew nothing about the box, only what she had just told me; so I told Mrs. Munroe what I thought about the matter, and she dismissed her on the spot."

"I don't think Tibby did have anything to do with the box, Miss Tremore," said Clara Rogers with scarlet cheeks, and with a confession of the whole affair trembling on her tongue.

"Nonsense, my dear; it was as plain as daylight," said Miss Tremore, to whom Clara's defence of Tibby did not seem anything strange, as she was a general favourite with the whole school.

"Poor kind-hearted Tibby Day to be branded as a thief

—dear, dear, dear," groaned Clara inwardly. "What spirit of evil could have tempted me to touch that horrid box?"

Half a dozen times through the day the impulse was strong on Clara to make a confession to Miss Tremore; but as many times her courage failed, and she walked home in the evening carrying her miserable secret with her to be her companion through many a weary month.

As there was nothing more said about Katy Ollivet's cottage, Clara bore off the once coveted first prize at the fair, which now afforded her more pain than pleasure. If she could have found any reasonable excuse, she would not have brought it to the fair at all, the very thought of it having become hateful to her.

It was a bright sunny morning in March, and all outdoors was light and glitter, every branch and twig being encrusted with ice, that now and again came shattering down through the sunlight, startling the blue jays that sent forth their wild mewing cries from among the glittering branches; and Clara Rogers stood on the verandah at her home, scattering crumbs to a myriad of chickadees, that now fluttered through the tangled network of crystalized vine tendrils that showered down between her and the bright blue sky, and now hopped about her as tamely as chickens, sometimes even pecking from her hand. A sound of voices came welling through the half-open door. They were the voices of some morning callers of her mother's that had no interest for her, till suddenly her ear caught a name that caused her to listen intently: "We called at Mrs. Day's about Tibby," said a lady's voice, "and the poor creature seems quite broken-

hearted. She had a long string of troubles to tell about —her husband having cut his foot chopping out at the shanties and being in very poor health herself; and, what she seemed to consider the worst of all, Tibby being sent home in such disgrace from Mrs. Munroe's, which she said was the cause of her being out of a place all winter. I really felt sorry for the poor woman," continued the speaker, "she looked so miserable surrounded by her little ragged children; though she flew out at me like a wild cat when I offered to take Tibby a month on trial, and said Tibby never should go anywhere to be spied after like a thief—she would starve first, and I don't know what else."

"How much money did Tibby steal from Miss Tremore?" said another voice.

"It was not money, but papers, deeds, or something of that kind, you know, that belonged to Captain Ollivet," answered the first voice. Clara did not wait to hear any more; but going up to her own room, she took out her writing materials and wrote an humble confession, as plainly and briefly as she could word it, to Miss Tremore, adding what she had just heard about Tibby. Before the ladies had finished their morning call, Ned was speeding towards Miss Tremore's with it in his pocket; and Clara felt happier than she had done for months.

A week wrought a wonderful change in the fortunes of the Days. Miss Tremore and Clara Rogers had been to see them, and brought clothes for the children and nourishment for the sick mother. And with a shower of apologies for her mistake, which she said she had just discovered, Miss Tremore offered to reinstate Tibby in her old place

at Mrs. Munroe's if she would accept it. The story of Tibby's false accusation spread far and wide, and her sympathisers were legion; charity poured in from all sides, with the most liberal offers for Tibby's services, who, however, preferred her old place at Mrs. Munroe's.

"I thought everybody would know what I had done; and I felt as if I deserved that they should for doing Tibby so much harm; but you were very good not to say anything about it, Miss Tremore," said Clara, taking her handkerchief from her eyes as she sat on the sofa in Mrs. Tremore's parlour the day after Tibby's return.

"My dear, I was quite as much to blame in the matter as you were, if not more," said Miss Tremore. We have both received a lesson which, let us hope, will be a benefit to us through life."

ON THE TRAIN,

UNDER THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.

On we go through the morning mists with a jolt, and a rattle, and a roar.

"If there is anything I do dislike it is those early starts," remarks a stout, handsome lady, addressing the car in general, as she deposits a bandbox and another box a paper parcel, a satchel and a drab silk veil on the seat beside her.

Having been curled up into the form of a letter G on a leather chair in the waiting room of the railway station for the last three or four hours, I do not agree with her, but say nothing.

One by one the drowsy passengers begin to arouse themselves as the first rays of the sun stream through the windows.

A plaid bundle on a seat near by, after a couple of uneasy movements, becomes upright, and behold, a pretty blue-eyed girl is revealed, with long waving yellow hair, and a pair of immense gold hoops in her ears.

"Ha, ha, ha! look at Nelly," laughs a good-natured-looking lady in a waterproof cloak—who has been sitting at the window for the last ten minutes copying music, with the most natural air in the world. The laugh is taken up by a couple of thin, sallow-visaged gentlemen with goatees, in the next seat, and re-echoed again by the

whole party, as a second young lady with waving locks and ponderous ear-rings comes out of her shawl like a butterfly out of a chrysalis—a dark-eyed beauty this time, who pouts, and asks pettishly "Where we are?" but whose equanimity is at once restored on encountering the sleepy visage of her golden-haired sister.

"Oh dear! What frights we all are," she says, joining in the laugh, with a vain effort to smooth back her hair.

"An opera troupe, I think, from their style and manner," whispers the stout lady over my shoulder, who, by the way, I have discovered to be a lady-doctor on a lecturing expedition.

"How do women's rights take in Canada?" asks the "doctor," after a little preliminary conversation.

"Oh, not at all," I reply a little testily at the bare idea.

"What a pity. I have been thinking of going to Canada, but I am afraid I will have to wait till the Canadians get a little more enlightened," she says with a mournful shake of her head.

"So sorry we will have to wait," I reply, looking thoughtfully out at a tangle of wild flowers by the wayside, and wishing vaguely that she and the opera troupe and the two young ladies in the next seat, not to mention the enlightened American public in general, did not speak such vile English.

"Twenty minutes for breakfast," shouts the conductor at the next station, and in a few minutes the greater part of the passengers are out on the platform, some going here and some there, and some into the dining room to breakfast. When last we saw the "doctor," she was disappearing into an omnibus. There are plenty of people

waiting for the train and plenty of people at breakfast in the dining-room, where the tables looked as if they had been standing in their present condition for the last year and a half—the tea and coffee also bearing evidence that the tea leaves and coffee grounds have seen service.

"Some more bread, please; this is nearly worn out," sings out one of our party holding up a piece of bread which he was pleased to call a "hunk," and which to all appearance had been getting "passed round" from one table to another for the last six months.

On re-entering the car, I am a little startled to see the "doctor's" place occupied by a tall thin young lady all cheek bones and Grecian bend, who holds in her hand a globe containing a gold fish, while on one side of her is a monthly rose-bush in full bloom, and on the other a bird cage with a solemn-looking canary in it. This young lady, who looks vinegary enough to have breakfasted off the best English pickles, occupies herself in gazing intently out of the window during the entire length of her journey.

Sitting opposite to each other on the other side of the car are an old man and woman, who evidently belong to what Sam Weller would call the "lower horder," and who are complacently eating their breakfast out of a basket into which they have enough provisions packed to last them for a week.

"Do let me wash your face, John, it will freshen you up so," says the old woman, dipping the corner of a napkin into a wide-mouthed bottle which she has taken all the trouble to go to the other end of the car to fill with water.

"Do let me alone," says John testily; "I am as fresh as I want to be: wash your own face." And he composes himself to go to sleep as comfortably as circumstances will permit, and is soon in the land of dreams, with his mouth open and his head awry; out of which slumber he is rather rudely awakened, however, by the old woman slapping the wet napkin over his face. A skirmish ensues in which the old lady proves victorious, to the rage and disgust of her lord and master, who fumes and rubs his face furiously with a red cotton handkerchief; while she, after mildly straightening her flat sun bonnet and putting her shawls to rights, proceeds to stow away the remains of the breakfast.

"Nice fresh figs," calls a childish voice in the distance, and the next moment the train boys are down on us in full force with figs, oranges, peanuts, popped corn and prize packages. "Book, Miss," says a little sharp-faced fellow, flinging a dime novel at me, which bears the rather startling appellation of "The Convict Horror;" and "an 'orrible tale" it must have been to judge by the illustrations that enlivened its pages, one of which represented a man of giant stature and ruffianly appearance threatening a fragile young lady with a great deal of hair, who was on her knees before him, with a bludgeon big enough to fell an ox, while in the background was a fashionably dressed young gentleman with very large eyes, flourishing a horse pistol with what was intended to be a tragic air, but who looked for all the world as if he was dancing a hornpipe.

Two of those books were bought by two youths who were in the seat in front of me, between whom the

following dialogue took place while they were cutting the leaves with their jack knives, the blades of which were encrusted with tobacco:—

No. 1.—"I saw Joe at Dayton last week."

No. 2.—"Joe is a nice fellow."

No. 1.—In a doubtful tone—"Ye-es, a very nice fellow."

"Oh, I think he is so handsome," chimed in a young girl who was sitting opposite to them.

No. 1.—"Yes, but a fellow can't live on his good looks."

No. 2.—"Well now, Bob, tell me, honestly, did you ever know a nicer fellow than Joe?"

No. 1.—"Well, honestly, I can't say I ever did know a nicer fellow, but I have known plenty of fellows with more snap."

No. 2.—"Joe minds his business."

No. 1.—"Yes, but some person has got to give it to him to mind."

No. 2.—"He'll stick to a thing."

No. 1.—"Yes, that's so; he'll stick to a thing. He has got to get put at it; but when he once gets put, I'll be hanged if he ain't the all-firedst fellow for staying put I ever did see." With which decisive observation Joe's character was dropped for the mysteries of their yellow-covered purchases, while I look out of the window with the melancholy reflection that there are more Joes than one in the world.

As the day wears on the car becomes close and dusty and crowded. There are tall lanky men with sallow complexions and goatees like inverted church steeples, who always dress in black and wear a duster and a silk

hat, and who also most invariably carry a hand trunk and a slim-looking overcoat; and who look as if they never had smiled since the day they were born, nor never intended to smile the longest day they have to live, such is the earnestness of their expression of countenance. There are also women who are tall and lanky, and who have sallow complexions, and who speak through their noses and wear buff travelling suits because they are not buff enough. These females—who have likewise a smileless expression of countenance—ask each other in a high key where they live and where they are going, what they are going for and how long they intend to stay, how old they are and, if they are matrons, how many children they have got, and how old they are, and finally conclude by inquiring of each other if the car is not very close and very dusty and very much crowded. And still we go on and on, and the day drags very wearily. Now we are trundling along the edge of a mighty precipice that for a moment makes us feel as if we were hanging in mid-air, and now we are rattling over a broad sweep of prairie, over which there are gaily-tinted birds skimming hither and thither, and diving into the green waves of prairie grass that are rolling towards us for miles and miles like the waves of the sea, and which, as they chase each other before the summer breeze, I almost expect to break and send up showers of white spray.

My fortieth attempt to go to sleep brings up for the fortieth time a vivid picture of the waiting-room of last night—a picture of people sleeping in all manner of tortuous positions, on long rows of leather-covered chairs that run the whole length and breadth of a vast and dimly

lighted room. Standing beneath the gas-light winding her watch is a large handsomely dressed lady with a large hooked nose, who reminds me very forcibly of the picture of the Duke of Wellington in an old *Illustrated London News* at home. And straightway there looms up before my mind's eye a vision of Napoleon standing with folded arms on a ledge of rock watching a receding ship with the dark waves dashing wildly about him and wild sea-birds swooping through the spray.

"Maw, did you say our train went at five or six?" asks a sleepy voice from the depths of a grey shawl a few chairs up.

"Six!" says the hook-nosed lady, shutting her watch with a snap.

"Oh, ho! I feel as if I had been here a week," yawns the voice again, which a moment afterwards I discover to belong to a young lady in a blue and white striped blouse and with a great deal of overskirt, who takes after her "Maw" in point of nose, though happily she has not got nearly so much of it.

Sitting broad awake in the midst of a long line of sleepers is a poor lady in deep mourning, to whom my heart goes out with a great yearning sympathy as she anxiously sways back and forth, with such an agony in her face as I have never seen in a human face before—an expression that reminds me of the face of the statue of a woman I once saw standing on a monument in a cemetery; I have never thought of it since, though I remember being very much struck, at the time I saw it, by the life-like expression and painful agony of the face. And some way, half-sleeping half-waking, my mind got wandering

on this statue. I thought of it standing beneath the stars at dead of night, with clasped hands and drooping head, surrounded by weird shadows and with the pale moon-beams falling about it; and I thought of it standing in the crimson glow of the setting sun, and in driving wintry storms and soft summer rains—always with the same agony in its face and the same despair in its attitude. And then I began to think it was not in such a bad fix after all, seeing it never had to wear any rolls in its hair, nor any hair-pins to get twisted the wrong way and stick into its ears and its neck and otherwise torture it, nor any sleeve-links to get printed on its wrists, nor any laces in its boots to get tied too tight, nor anything else to squeeze and pinch it when it went travelling. At which high flight of imagination some person gave me a shake. Starting up, I was surprised to see the gas lighted, the car standing perfectly still and every person crowding out. So I straightened my hat and fastened my gloves, and crowded out too. On stepping off the car the queerest feeling of littleness came over me—I felt as if I was not a whit bigger than Mrs. General Tom Thumb; and no matter how fast I walked, I felt as if I were going very slowly and only taking steps an inch long. In proportion as I felt little everybody and everything else looked big; and I had to stand and look at the car for the space of five minutes to realise that I was really and truly "off the train."

MISS VANDYKE.

CHAPTER I.

A LOW, deep-roofed, old-fashioned Canadian house was Robinsrest, with many gables and broad eaves, beneath which the pee-wees built their nests in the budding spring time. Grey lichens covered the low picket fence that enclosed the garden, in which the first wild snow-drops were now nodding their fragrant pink and white heads among the little drifts of last year's leaves that lay about the fence. Such was our house—the household consisting of my mother, myself who was fourteen, my sister Carrie who was seven years old at the time my story commences, and Mattie Bray, our maid of all work, a good simple-hearted creature, to whom we children were very much attached. My mother, who was a widow with a moderate income, had hitherto devoted the greater part of her time to our education; but having fallen into ill health, she considered it expedient to get a governess for us, particularly as she would be under the necessity of spending the summer months at the sea for the benefit of her health. Mattie Bray's father and mother, who were very decent people, were to live with us during her absence. The governess—who was coming from Montreal, and whose name we were informed was Miss Vandyke—had been highly recommended by one of my mother's

greatest friends. Though, child-like, I was rather pleased at the novelty of all this at first, the first sight of Miss Vandyke cast a damper on my spirits that I did not get over for some months. She was a short thick-set woman with a square strong face and good features, and with deep blue eyes that contrasted strangely with her sallow complexion and shining black hair, of which she had a great quantity, and which she wore twisted about her head in great coils, and when she laughed she showed a set of strong white teeth. I did not like her looks, though I could not have told why. My mother seemed very well satisfied with her, however.

"You need not be at all anxious about us, Mrs. Elden," she said, in a deep though very pleasant voice, while she took Carrie on her knee; "we will have become such fast friends by the time you get back that you will be quite jealous. Do you know, Norah," she said, turning to me, "that you and I are namesakes?"

"No, Miss Vandyke, I don't like my name," I said, in such a graceless tone that my mother stared at me in surprise.

That evening my feeling of repugnance towards her increased tenfold, as I sat watching her standing by the piano with her knitting in her hands listening to Carrie running over her scales. She wore a black lustre dress with a great deal of bugle-trimming on it that glittered in the lamplight, and that made a rasping noise when anything rubbed against it. Her knitting, which was a long scarlet cloud, trailed down over the carpet, and as she worked on it, it moved in and out among the shining folds of her dress like a great serpent, as I imagined.

But the worst of it all was, when I awoke the next morning, there lay Miss Vandyke fast asleep in Carrie's place in my bed. Edging as far as possible away from her, I observed her curiously as she lay with her yellow talon-like hands clawed in among the shining jetty coils of hair that streamed down over her night-dress. My attention was then attracted to a long white scar across her temple that looked like a welt, and that was suggestive to me of a tigerish encounter with some creature like herself, she looked so horribly strong. Here a slight movement of her hands disclosed the crimson stone of a ring on one of her fingers that gleamed out from among her hair like the eye of a snake. Ugh! I fairly sprang out of bed.

"Mamma, what made you put Miss Vandyke into my bed?" I asked as calmly as I could on entering the breakfast room a short time afterwards.

"Why, my dear, I thought the spare room smelt damp when I brought her into it last night, so I took Carrie into my bed and put her into her place," said my mother, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a person to sleep with a woman with hair like snakes and hands like talons, and teeth that looked as if they could masticate tenpenny nails. I am happy now to say that I was wise enough to keep my rather extraordinary impression of Miss Vandyke to myself. Carrie was charmed with her, and I was tired listening to my mother telling all her friends how thankful she was for being so fortunate as to have secured such a highly estimable and trustworthy person to take charge of her children in her absence.

In due time my mother went away; and though Miss Vandyke was kindness itself, and did everything in her power to instruct and amuse us, my feelings towards her did not alter one single jot; in consequence of which, I am afraid I did not always deport myself as amiably towards her as I might have done.

I was crocheting a Berlin wool sofa pillow-cover in many-coloured little diamond-shaped blocks, in the arrangement of which I had to confess to myself that Miss Vandyke's taste was exquisite. It looked like a little cloud of autumn leaves scattered on green moss when it was finished.

"What a pity I cannot have it made up by the time mamma comes home, it would be such a surprise for her," I said, as Miss Vandyke put the finishing touches to it.

"And why cannot you?" she asked.

"Because I have nothing to make a cushion of," I said, thinking ruefully of my meagre stock of pocket money.

"Oh, we will see about that," she said, folding up the cover and putting it into a drawer.

CHAPTER II.

Lazily, dreamily I lay among the pink clover blossoms and yellow buttercups, looking up with half-closed eyes at the blue sky overhead, over which the white gauzy clouds swept like angels' wings. The swallows were skimming hither and thither through the vast space between the clouds and the tree tops, and the bees made lulling music as they hummed in and out among the overhanging boughs of the acacia trees that on this glori-

ous June day were one shower of creamy blossoms. Now and again a humming bird went booming by, flashing through the sunlight like a living jewel—now nestling in the heart of a rose, now alighting on a clover head, and now flashing in among the clustering honey-laden acacia blossoms. Mingling with the twittering of the swallows and the humming of the bees came the sound of the reaper whetting his scythe, that with the sweet fragrance of new mown hay was wafted down from the hill side. Naturally enough I sank to sleep as I lay dreamily taking in these sights and sounds of a summer day. I do not know how long I might have been asleep, when I awoke with a start caused by some sharp noise near by. Turning my eyes in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, they fell on an old ruined summer house in the corner of the garden which was embowered in clematis vines, the flowers of which covered it like a shower of stars, and which our dread of caterpillars had kept Carrie and me from entering since spring. And—great horror! oozing out from among the foliage near the floor was a stream of blood, which must have been falling a good deal more plentifully before I saw it, for the flowers all about it were dyed scarlet. Before I had time to collect my senses Miss Vandyke stepped quickly out of the ruined doorway, which was almost obscured by vines, and walked round the house towards the back door. Oh! what a sickening horror came over me when I saw that her hands were covered with blood, and that there was a crimson streak down the side of her dress. What instinct was it that had told me that that woman was capable of any dark deed! But whom had she mur-

dered? May be it was Carrie. The thought gave me strength, and I started up; but no, there she lay sleeping peacefully on the lounge on the verandah with Miss Vandyke's fan beside her. I could see her through a sheath of golden lilies that Miss Vandyke had tied up herself that very morning—she was so fond of flowers, the horrid creature. I think I must have fainted at this point, for I do not remember anything more until I became conscious that I was lying with my head twisted in a very uncomfortable position. Sitting up, I gazed about in a half-dazed state of mind. Crimson shafts of sunlight were shattering across the garden and flashing in among the shadows about the house, so that I knew it was evening. Getting up with some difficulty, I made my way into the dining-room.

"What is the matter, Norah; are you sick?" asked Carrie, who was arranging some pressed flowers in an old copy book in the simplicity of her heart. Before I had time to answer Miss Vandyke came in carrying the tea urn, which I had never seen her do before. She had changed her dress, and she had on an old pair of white kid gloves.

"Why, Miss Vandyke, what are you wearing your gloves at tea for?" asked Carrie in astonishment.

"I got my hands stained in the afternoon," she answered quietly.

"Where is Mattie?" I asked as natur'ly as I could, though I knew my voice sounded strangely

"She went to Bentford after dinner to see her sister who is ill. I don't think she will be back until some time to-morrow," said Miss Vandyke in the same quiet tone.

Oh, it was Mattie, then; but what had she killed her for?

"Norah, my dear, you look ill—is there anything the matter?" said Miss Vandyke in some alarm, as she handed me my tea.

"Thank you, I am very well," I said stiffly.

"What a lovely sunset," said Miss Vandyke, looking out at the golden mist that looked like a veil of gauze hanging between us and the garden.

To this observation I deigned no reply whatever. The idea of her talking about sunsets. I have before hinted that I did not always act as amiably towards Miss Vandyke as I might have done. She, no doubt thinking I had not a very good temper or that I was difficult to understand, did not take any notice of the various little acts of rudeness and ill nature to which I was in the habit of subjecting her. I could not have eaten a morsel if my life had depended upon it, and it was with the greatest difficulty I managed to swallow a couple of mouthfuls of tea.

After tea I took Carrie up into my room, and having locked the door, informed her that I did not wish her to go down-stairs again that evening.

"Everything seems queer this evening," she said poutingly, not being at all pleased with this arrangement; but being a sweet-tempered little thing, she was soon absorbed in the wonders of a deserted wasps' nest she discovered underneath the eaves.

What ought I to do? This was the question that had been chasing itself through my brain all the evening. I had at first thought of taking old Mrs. Bray into my

confidence, but I knew there would be such a hue-and-cry raised at the very mention of such a thing, that Miss Vandyke would likely have time to make her escape, and I was determined to do everything in my power to bring her to justice for her wicked deed. If I had been near any friends, I would likely have unburdened my mind to them, but as we had no personal friends nearer than Bentford, which was three miles away, there was nothing for it but to sit at the window and watch the night wearing away; for I never thought of such a thing as going to bed. The insects were chirping in the grass, and the bold clear notes of the whip-poor-will came down over the dewy meadows from the edge of the woods, over which the silvery rim of the moon was just appearing, when I heard a swishing noise in the grass below. Looking down, I saw Miss Vandyke with her skirts gathered up out of the dew, walking quickly towards the summer house, from whence she returned in a few moments carrying some wet trailing thing in her hands, that might have been a handkerchief. It was a full hour after her usual bed-time before she came up-stairs to bed; and I heard her washing and scrubbing at her hands for a long time—half an hour, it seemed to me. I thought of Mrs. Bluebeard and "Sister Anne" rubbing at the fatal key, and of David Rizzio's blood on the floor at Holyrood. And then I began to wonder, in a vague sort of way, what my mother would say to all this when she would hear it. Becoming conscious that my ideas were getting confused, I laid my head down on the window sill to collect them, and knew nothing more until I awoke in the midst of a broad sun-beam that was streaming in

through the window. I felt stiff and uncomfortable, and my head ached miserably.

"Why, Norah, how long have you been up? You look as if you had been sitting there all night," said Carrie, looking wonderingly at me as she unbuttoned the ruffled sleeve of her night-dress. I yawned, and took the hair pins out of my hair in reply to this remark.

"Come here, Carrie, I want to speak to you," I said, when she was ready to go down-stairs. "Tell Miss Vandyke that I have got a bad headache, and that I want a cup of coffee and something to eat sent up-stairs, and mind and bring it yourself."

"Yes," said Carrie.

"And tell her that I am going to walk in to Bentford after breakfast. I think it will do my head good, and I am anxious to get a letter from mamma;" which was true enough. Carrie brought me up a very nice breakfast, with a message from Miss Vandyke saying I had better not go to Bentford, as she was afraid it would be too much for me. But I had my course of action laid out. I would go to Mr. Wardly, our clergyman, and tell him my story. He would of course send out the proper authorities to investigate the matter, and Miss Vandyke would be arrested before she dreamt of being suspected.

"Norah, come into the schoolroom; Miss Vandyke has got something to show you," said Carrie, catching hold of my dress just as I was going out of the door, and just as a sight met my gaze that made my heart bound. There was Mattie coming into the gate with her hat over her arm and her parasol over her head, and with her face like a full blown peony—she having, as she expressed it,

"walked every step of the road from Bentford without a bite o' breakfast." Miss Vandyke came out to inquire for her sister, and as she had a good deal to say about her, we all turned into the schoolroom together. It seemed a month since I had been there, though I had said my lessons there the morning before. The first thing that caught my eye was my sofa pillow-cover on a beautiful crimson cushion with a large tassel at each corner, lying on Miss Vandyke's chair.

"I wanted to surprise you," she said with a smile, seeing me looking at it. "I dyed a piece of white French merino crimson to make the cushion," she continued. "Carrie says she has a piece she would like to have dyed to make a pin-cushion; but I was rather unfortunate with my dye. I brought it into the old summer house—I wanted to be so sly about it—and I spilt it as soon as I was through with it, and spoilt the sidebreadth of my buff wrapper, and got it all over my hands. Mrs. Bray says I ought to have put gloves on, but I did not think of it. I rather think I will remember it the next time I go dyeing. I rubbed them last night before I went to bed until I made them smart, and there is some of it on my nails yet."

While she was saying this in the most every-day matter-of-fact manner possible, I felt as if there was an invisible hand pressing down the crown of my head. "You are very kind, Miss Vandyke; I do not know how to thank you," I said, taking her hands in mine. Her cheeks flushed with pleasure at this unusual manifestation of gratitude on my part, for I had hitherto taken all her little acts of kindness as a matter of course. I tried to

say something more, but a great lump came into my throat and I began to weep vehemently.

"You are not well, my dear," said Miss Vandyke, taking off my hat. "I knew you were not well yesterday evening; it would be madness for you to think of walking into Bentford this morning."

"Oh! I don't want to go to Bentford, Miss Vandyke," I said passionately. All that day my head ached, and I was so feverish that Miss Vandyke thought I was going to have a bad illness; but I was quite well next morning, and in the quietness of my own room resolved to apologize to Miss Vandyke for my ill-natured behaviour towards her ever since she had been with us. As to my dreadful suspicion of her, I could never make up to her for that.

During the next few months we became very great friends indeed; and when she left us a year afterwards to be married, we parted from her with the most passionate sorrow, and our annual visits to her are now looked forward to with delight by Carrie and me.

BETTY'S LAST THEFT.

CHAPTER I.

BETTY WOODLARK betook herself to the district school every morning of her life, with a coarse brown sun-hat on her head, and a green baize bag in her hand, and accompanied by three little boys of the neighbourhood who were under her charge. Though eleven years old, Betty was not so large as a well grown child of eight, in consequence of which her youthful charges towered above her like young giants, giving her the appearance of a little hen with a small brood of young goslings, who, though they had long since outgrown their foster parent, had not the mother-wit to shift for themselves. Notwithstanding her insignificant appearance, Betty, to use an expression of one of her school-mates, was not to be "sneezed at." Numerous and varied were her accomplishments: she could knit and net, tat and crochet, do embroidery and wool work, hair pin work and various other kinds of work, with a neatness and rapidity wonderful to see. And if it were not for an unlawful hankering after other people's goods—which she not only coveted and desired but appropriated when she got the opportunity with a dexterity that would have shamed the Artful Dodger himself—she might have been a useful and respectable

member of society. As it was, she went by the name of "Cheap Bet," from the fact of her being the proprietress of what our cousins on the other side of the water would term a "notion" store, which she kept on one of the shelves of her desk, and at which she managed to do a comparatively thriving business.

Betty's father—who was a heavy-looking Englishman who always walked as if he carried weights on his feet—was in the employ of a Mr. Philo, a wealthy gentleman farmer, near whose house the Woodlark's lived in a picturesque little white cottage in the midst of a clump of pines that overhung a ravine, at the foot of which ran a brawling stream. The greater part of Betty's time when out of school was spent at the Philo's, where from long habit she was allowed to run in and out as she pleased—which accounted for the peculiarity of many of the articles that found their way to school through the medium of her green baize bag, and which she retailed from her desk at "ruinous prices."

One fine afternoon, as Betty was wending her way up the precipitous path that led to her home, her sharp ear caught the peculiar thudding sound produced by the Indians when beating the trees to remove the bark, of which they manufacture their baskets. "An Indian camp!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands with delight as she strained her eyes in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, and perceived a purple wreath of smoke curling up over the tree tops. In an incredibly short time her little sharp face might be seen peering through the rails of the fence at the edge of the woods, where there were eighteen or twenty Indians and squaws, young and old, brown and

dirty, lazy and happy, lounging about on the grass, which was strewn in all directions with long strips of smooth white bark, which some of the squaws were already weaving into baskets, while others employed themselves in an indolent sort of way with some cooking utensils about a fire built of sticks, over which a large iron pot was suspended. Having reconnoitered the camp, without, however, succeeding in attracting any person's attention, Betty retraced her steps homeward. Nothing daunted, she returned again after tea, bent on speculation, armed with a couple of loaves of bread and a little pail of milk, and accompanied by half a dozen children of the neighbourhood. She was soon striking a bargain for some baskets through the fence with some of the young squaws, who, to her astonishment, she found almost as sharp as herself, notwithstanding her dronish appearance.

"Don't you think you would like to buy some pin cushions?" asked the squaw after she had concluded her bargain, drawing a large basket towards her containing a number of pin cushions with stiff outlandish patterns on them worked in gaily tinted beads.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed Betty. "How much is this, and this, and this," she went on, turning them over the one after the other. "And, oh! how much is this?" she said, alighting on one about nine inches square, with, if possible, a stiffer and more outlandish pattern on it than the others, and worked in a greater variety of beads.

"That," said the squaw, "is two dollars."

"Two dollars?" said Betty; "that is a great deal of money. Don't you think you could give it to me for one dollar cash?"

"No, two dollars is the price," said the squaw decidedly.

"Isn't it lovely?" said Betty, taking it through the fence for the better inspection of the others, who were enthusiastic in their admiration. "Well, I will tell you what I will do about it," said Betty, handing it back to the squaw with a sigh, "If you keep it for me for a week, I will give you two dollars and ten cents for it."

"Very well," said the squaw, putting it back into its place, with the secret intention of disposing of it the first opportunity.

In the meantime the shades of night had been gathering about, and the silver moon was peeping over the distant woods. The fire, which the falling dews rendered grateful, blazed up gloriously, shedding a lurid glare over the scene, which presented a much livelier aspect than it had done a few hours previously. A young mother sang softly as she swung her little brown papoose back and forth in a little hammock that hung out of the trees; the rest of the squaws were working away at their baskets, laughing and chatting in the soft smooth tones peculiar to them; while the Indians lounged about with their pipes in their mouths, now and again putting in a remark or joining in the laugh that went merrily round. One of the young squaws, with a voice as soft as rippling water and as clear as a silver bell, was singing a mournful song about a young girl being deserted by her lover, as her little brown fingers flashed deftly in and out among the silvery strips of bark that lay across her lap. All at once it struck Betty that this song sounded very doleful, and that an old squaw who sat in the full glare of the

fire with a short black pipe in her mouth was very hideous, and that altogether there was something wild and frightful about the whole scene. The same idea appeared to have struck Betty's companions simultaneously, for the larger ones began to crowd round her, while the smaller ones began to whimper to go home.

"What is the matter with them?" asked the girl who had been trading with Betty—who indeed was the only one in the camp who had spoken to or taken the slightest notice of any of them.

"Oh, nothing, only they want to go home," said Betty, moving off.

"Annetta and me will go with you if you give us six eggs," she said, after addressing a few words in Indian to the girl who was singing, who immediately stopped her song and threw down her work and came over to the fence.

"Very well, come along," said Betty, afraid to refuse her offer, though not at all relishing the idea of their company.

The frightened children started off on a trot, Betty, like a skilful general, keeping in the rear, as she knew any manifestation of fear on her part would strike a panic through the whole party. The squaws had to walk very fast to keep up with them, and in spite of her better judgment, Betty could not help thinking they looked like two brown, ragged, smokey spirits chasing them through the woods. On coming to an open glade where they had to cross the creek on a little wooden bridge, Betty turned to the foremost of her dusky escorts and said, "It is a pity to take you and Annetta so far this time of the

evening. If Annetta will sing us that song she was singing just now, you can go back, and if you come to our house in the morning, I will give you the eggs."

After they had spoken a few words to each other in Indian, Annetta sat down on the bank of the creek, and with her dirty little brown feet dabbling in the water which now sparkled in the moonbeams, and with the tall green ferns sweeping over her head, she sung her doleful song, every note of which sank into Betty's heart like lead, and during which nothing but the dread of the squaws making after them kept the whole party from making off at full speed, which they did, however, as soon as the squaws' backs were turned.

Betty was full of news about the Indian camp the next morning when she went to school, and in consequence was the whole week executing commissions for little baskets, by which she realized considerable profit, as she generally managed to slip enough out of her mother's or the Philo's pantry to pay for them, and was thus enabled to appropriate the money she received for that purpose.

One evening as she was walking through the hall at the Philo's she espied a paper parcel on the table, which she slipped into her pocket as she passed out of the door, but which, to her disgust, on examination she found to contain nothing but black-lead.

On her way to school Betty had to pass a brown stone cottage which stood in the midst of a beautiful flower garden, out of which she was almost daily in the habit of helping herself to bouquets through the fence. But on this particular morning of which we write, she observed a pretty blue-eyed lady with great bunches of

auburn curls and a rosy complexion, walking in the garden, dressed in a white wrapper and carrying a green silk parasol in one hand and a fancy basket full of the most exquisite little bouquets in the other. This lady Betty knew to be Mrs. Bidwell, the resident of the cottage. And a white-haired gentleman with a fresh complexion and very handsome features, who was sitting at the window reading a newspaper, she knew to be Captain Bidwell, her husband.

"See, Ned, aren't they pretty?" said Mrs. Bidwell, holding up the flowers for her husband's inspection.

"Yes, dear, very pretty, very pretty indeed!" he said, glancing at them absently and then resuming his paper.

She was about to turn into the house, when observing Betty, she called out, "Little girl, don't you go past Mrs. Delong's?"

"Yes'm," said Betty, stopping.

"Well, if you will leave these flowers there, with Mrs. Bidwell's compliments, I will give you this," she said, taking a five cent piece out of a little jewelled purse which she took out of her pocket.

"Yes'm," said Betty again, taking the flowers, pocketing the five cent piece, and going on her way rejoicing.

The next house on Betty's route was much larger than the brown stone cottage, and had a broad sweep of green velvety lawn enclosed in trees in front of it, while the house was surrounded with flower beds, now gay with flowers—beds of tulips there were that were one mass of gorgeous colour, and mounds of golden and mountain moss on which the dew-drops still glinted in the sun. As she neared the house Betty stopped and waited for

her little charges, who generally loitered half a dozen yards behind, and the eldest of whom carried a little bunch of tiny squaw baskets tied together with a strip of bark, of which burden Betty relieved him as she addressed him in the following manner: "Now, Benny Tweed, don't you see that school-house?" she asked, pointing to the school-house, which was in sight though still some distance away, and which, let it be remarked, was situated on the outskirts of the flourishing little town of Willowbank in Western Ontario. On Benny Tweed replying in the affirmative, she continued, "Well, walk straight to it, and bring Bob and Dick with you, and mind you don't go tumbling into any ditches or running under any waggons. You are a stupid young blockhead, and if I was your mother I would whack you if I couldn't get sense into you any other way." With which complimentary observation she dismissed them, and, slackening her pace, she strolled along, peeping through the fence until she came into view of a large bay window which peeped picturesquely out from among the flowers and leafy boughs, and through which she could see a pretty little girl with bare neck and arms, and with long brown curls, seated at a piano, with a tall severe-looking lady standing behind her. Betty stopped and gave three little dry coughs and then walked briskly on, turning up at the bottom of the garden where there was a tall close fence, one of the boards of which Betty slipped aside, it being fastened at the top and loose at the bottom; and squeezing herself in among some bushes, she stood looking anxiously toward the house, which was almost obscured by the trees.

Though the little girl at the piano did not turn her head when she heard Betty's signal, the colour in her cheeks deepened, and she began to stumble over her notes; whereupon the lady behind her observed severely, "That will do. You ought to have a quarter of an hour longer, Miss Clara, but there is no use going on any longer in that style."

Miss Clara Benares was the daughter of a wealthy merchant with whom Betty had struck up a friendship through the fence, and for whom Betty had all the charm of novelty, her green baize bag being an unceasing source of interest to her. Betty's present business was to deliver some baskets which Clara had commissioned her to buy at the Indian camp.

"Here, Clara, I am in a hurry; I have got to go to Mrs. Delong's yet with these flowers for Mrs. Bidwell," said Betty, holding the baskets towards her as soon as she made her appearance.

"Oh yes, I suppose they are for the party; they are going to have a party there this evening," said Clara, taking the baskets and slipping something wrapped in brown paper into her hand, and then seizing her bag to see what it contained.

Betty unwrapped the brown paper parcel with a good deal of curiosity, and there flashed on her astonished vision a star-shaped brooch of such dazzling brilliancy that it startled her, but which she immediately wrapped up and thrust into her pocket.

"Why Betty, what is this?" said Clara opening and peeping into the parcel Betty had taken off the Philo's hall table the evening before.

"Oh, nothing but black-lead," said Betty carelessly.

"Black-lead! why, what is it for?"

"Why, for blacking stoves, you little noodle."

"Do you blacken stoves at school?" asked Clara in surprise.

"No, that is not mine; one of the girls put it into my bag for me to carry for her, and forgot it," said Betty, never at a loss for a fib.

Suddenly Clara's face, neck and arms became suffused with crimson, and her eyes flashed excitedly as she held the parcel towards Betty, exclaiming, "Here, Betty, take it for pity's sake; it will blow up and make a dreadful noise, and burn your face and hands and singe your hair, and make you all dreadful."

"Why, what is the matter with it?" asked Betty, drawing back in amazement.

"Why, it is gunpowder; and such a lot of it—there must be a whole pound; here, Betty, take it," she said, thrusting it towards her, and in her excitement spilling a considerable quantity of it over the bouquets.

"Oh, pshaw, is that all," said Betty; "you must be a little goose to suppose it could do any person any harm unless it caught fire."

But Clara had once seen one of her brothers receive a serious injury from gunpowder, and had ever since had a wholesome dread of the very name of it; and as soon as she got it out of her hands, she made her way back to the house as fast as her feet would carry her. Notwithstanding that Betty had made so light of the discovery, she resolved to rid herself of her supposed pound of black-lead as soon as possible; and accordingly, when she

got a few yards from the Benares' garden, she turned and flung it high up over the fence, and then thanked her stars that she was well rid of it. After delivering her bouquets at Mrs. Delong's, she tripped off to school with a light heart, little dreaming of the sore vexation of spirit that was in store for her on account of the morning's proceedings.

We will now have to shift our scene to Mrs. Delong's evening party. A tall slight young gentleman, and a young lady floating in a mist of white tarleton looped up here and there with sprays of golden wheat, that flashed in and out like fairy sunbeams, had taken their places for a quadrille beside a mantelpiece over which a candelabra now ablaze with wax-lights branched out.

"What pretty flowers," said the gentleman, looking admiringly at a bouquet the lady held in her hand.

"Yes; Mrs. Delong gave them to me," she said, holding them up for his admiration.

"I think you might give me just one, Miss Emma," he said, taking the flowers into his hand to admire them.

"Well, you may have one, only not the white moss rosebud," she said.

"And pray, why not the white moss rosebud?" he asked, tugging mischievously at it.

"Now, Mr. Newton, you are always teasing about something," she said, coquettishly holding up her hand for the bouquet; but he held it high above his head, where its instantaneous contact with one of the wax-lights was followed by a report that startled the whole room, and which was followed by a strong odour of gunpowder. The lady screamed, and the gentleman looked startled.

"A torpedo, a torpedo—some person has been putting a torpedo into the bouquet!" said several gentlemen who now crowded up; and as the music now commenced, the charred and torn bouquet was thrown aside, and the suggestion received with a general laugh as a satisfactory explanation.

A few hours after this occurrence half a dozen gentlemen were lounging about in the smoking room enjoying their cigars, when a gentleman entered with a bouquet in a tiny jewelled holder, dangling from his button-hole by a little gold chain. "Oh, by the way, I have got Miss Walton's bouquet," he said, stopping suddenly in the middle of the room and springing back towards the door, where he was met by a gentleman who informed him that he had just met Miss Walton going into the supper room. "All right, it will do when she comes out," he said, turning back into the room and helping himself to a cigar.

"I wonder who could have put that torpedo into Emma Wendell's bouquet," said one of the gentlemen puffing his cigar.

"Jack Somner says it was one of the Monto girls; they are Old Nick for mischief," said the new comer, brushing a couple of cinders off the end of his cigar, which in their downward course lit on the bouquet, which went off like a pistol, tearing itself to pieces and seriously burning one of his hands and scorching the lower part of his face.

"By Jove! some person has been putting powder into the bouquets," was the simultaneous exclamation, which was followed by the greatest excitement, which in a few

moments spread itself over the whole house. A doctor who happened to be in the house was summoned to dress the wounded hand, and Mr. Delong, master of the house, ordered all the bouquets to be gathered into a heap on the hall table and, assisted by some of the other gentlemen, proceeded to examine them. After several had been examined and thrown aside without any satisfactory result, one of the gentlemen lit on one from which he shook a sprinkling of gunpowder on the table. That was enough: the bouquets were all carried out into the back yard and saturated with water.

The party was broken up, and the next day quite an excitement prevailed in the town, where it was reported that several ladies and gentlemen had been seriously injured at Mrs. Delong's party from the blowing up of a large bouquet which some malicious person had filled with powder.

The next week's *Willowbank Chronicle* came out with an exaggerated account of the whole affair, headed "Fiendish," and concluding as follows:—"On the same evening, Mrs. John Gough Benares was robbed of a valuable diamond brooch, in the shape of a star, with the letter B and the figure of a hand grasping a viper engraved on the back of it. Any person giving any information likely to lead to its recovery will be largely rewarded."

On Betty, who alone was at the bottom of the secret, this had such a startling effect that she made a secret vow never to possess herself of anything dishonestly again as long as she lived. The diamond brooch hung so heavily on her conscience, that to rid herself of it she traded it

to the young squaw, on whom she enjoined the most profound secrecy regarding it, for the much coveted pin-cushion. Once in possession of the pin-cushion, it became a fresh source of uneasiness to her: what was she to do with such a great unwieldy thing? she could not keep it concealed from her mother, who would of course insist upon knowing how she came by it; and if she brought it to school, she could not dispose of it unless she sold it at a particularly "ruinous" price. The consequence of all this was, that when she came to the bridge that crossed the creek she took out her embroidering scissors, and cutting a slit in the side of the cushion, emptied the bran with which it was stuffed into the creek, and folding up the cover, she put it into her pocket—employing half the girls in school to rip the beads off it "on shares" the next day, and string them into rings and necklaces, with which the whole school was decorated for months afterwards.

CHAPTER II.

At the hour of eleven one moonlight night, a couple of months after the occurrence of the events recorded in the last chapter, in a comfortably furnished room over one of the largest stores in Willowbank, a dark-eyed youth lay on a crimson lounge buried in the mysteries of "Charles O'Malley." Suddenly the sound of voices and the trampling of feet springing up-stairs two steps at a time caused him to raise his eyes to the door, which was almost instantly burst open by two boys about his own age.

Before going any further, let it be observed that these youths were three dry goods clerks, whose names were

respectively Tom Walters, Jack Laurie and Charley Rivers, the two latter of whom had just returned from a meeting held by the clerks of the town on the early closing movement.

"Bother take your lazy bones, Tom; why didn't you come up?" exclaimed the foremost of the new comers.

"Couldn't do it, only just got out; making up the books, you know. How did you get on?" asked Tom, throwing down his book.

"Floored, by jingo; but we are going to have another meeting."

"Floored!" Tom exclaimed, straightening himself up; "I would have gone up there if I had expected that. John Gough Benares told me this morning that there was not a doubt of its being carried, or else I would have got out some way."

"Confound the old hypocrite, it was all his fault that it was not carried," said Jack Laurie, who was now filling a huge pipe.

"The old grind was bragging about his grapes this morning," said Tom Walters.

"Grapes! has he got grapes?" asked the other, as if struck with an idea.

"Yes; he has been cultivating them for three or four years, and he says he is going to have bushels this fall."

"I would like to ease him of a few of them," said Jack Laurie, striking a match with a thoughtful air.

The idea must have been seized with avidity by the other two, for a few hours afterwards the trio might be seen stealing silently out in their slippers, the back way, each with a bag under his arm. Having reached the

Benares' garden without adventure, they picked as many of the hard green grapes as they could conveniently carry, and then threw the bags over the fence, following them precipitately.

"Hold on, boys, I have lost my slipper," said Charley Rivers in a whisper.

"Oh, confound it, let it go," said the other two impatiently.

"No, sir! it has my name on it," he said, scrambling back over the fence. After searching about for a couple of minutes to no purpose, he struck a match, when he immediately perceived the toe of his slipper sticking out between a board and the shelf of an old flower stand. Throwing down the match, he snatched up the slipper and was over the fence in a twinkling. Shouldering their bags, they now all started off at full speed; but they had not proceeded many yards when their progress was arrested by an explosion that would have wakened the dead.

Charley Rivers had thrown the match with one end—fortunately for himself not the burning one—against Betty's powder, which, like his slipper, had been caught on the edge of the board underneath the flower stand, and then, as the board slanted backwards, it slipped underneath the shelf, where it had lain high and dry ever since the morning Betty threw it over the fence.

Our heroes stood transfixed with amazement for a few seconds: and then, throwing the grapes into the nearest ditch, started off for their lives, looking back from time to time at the fence, the flames from which were now spreading rapidly.

They had hitherto kept as much as possible in the shadow of the fences; but as they were about to cross an open common, they observed two men running towards the fire. "See here, boys," said Jack Laurie, "any fellows seeing us running in this direction will be after us. Let us turn round and go for the fire; we can say we were up late on account of the meeting, and heard the explosion from Tom's room."

"All right," said the other two, seeing the philosophy of the idea; and immediately wheeling about, they were soon standing before the burning fence, about which a crowd had already collected, the explosion having alarmed the whole neighbourhood. The fire was soon extinguished by dint of tearing down the fence, but not before considerable damage had been done to the garden.

The next week's *Chronicle* came out with a flaming article, headed "Another Mystery," in which it was graphically recorded how a diabolical attempt had been made to blow up the premises of their respected townsman, John Gough Benares, Esq., with gunpowder, by some person or persons unknown, who had evidently been frustrated in their design by some accident, as the fearful explosion, which was heard for miles, had taken place in or near the grapery, which could not have been the place designed by the perpetrators, as they had previously stolen the grapes,—several bushels of which had been found in some bags in a ditch near the premises,—in doing which they could only have been actuated by malice, as the grapes in their present green state could be put to no use. Among the persons (went on the article) to whom Mr. Benares is indebted for saving his place from

total destruction, by their timely assistance and active exertion, we are requested to mention the names of Mr. Charles Rivers, Mr. Thomas Walters and Mr. John Laurie.

The same week the following article appeared in the weekly paper of a neighbouring town:—"Yesterday an Indian woman, giving her name as Anna Eliza Birch-bark, was taken into custody for offering a valuable diamond brooch as bail for her husband, who was imprisoned for drunkenness. If we mistake not, it is the same brooch mentioned in the *Willowbank Chronicle* a couple of months ago as having been stolen from Mrs. John Gough Benares, it being star-shaped, with the letter B and the figure of a hand grasping a viper engraved on the back of it."

Having recovered the brooch after a good deal of trouble and expense, Mr. Benares stood at his garden gate with his little daughter beside him watching for Betty, to whom his portly figure was as familiar as one of her shoes, though he did not remember ever to have seen her in his life.

"Here she comes, papa," said Clara, beginning to cry as soon as Betty made her appearance.

Betty did not observe them until Mr. Benares stepped forward and, taking her by the hand, led her into the garden, saying, "Come here, little girl, I have something to say to you."

And the next moment she was brushing the dew-drops off the flowers with the skirt of her common little calico dress, on her way to the house. She spoke not a word, and her heart quaked within her as she glanced at Clara's

tearful countenance; but her quick wit came to her aid, and she resolved on the instant to deny everything, and stick to it through thick and thin. Accordingly, when Mr. Benares showed her the diamond brooch before his wife, she denied having ever seen it before in such a bold tone and with such an unabashed air that Clara stared at her in amazement. "Why, Betty, don't you remember me giving it to you for bringing me the little baskets from the Indian camp?" she said, having made a full confession the evening before.

"No, I never saw it before in my life," said Betty, coolly.

"Now, Betty, what is the use of saying that?" asked Clara, ready to cry. "Don't you remember, it was the morning you brought the bouquets to Mrs. Delong's; and oh, Betty! don't you remember," she said, as if suddenly struck with a remembrance, "how frightened I was of the gunpowder you brought to school in your bag?"

"I didn't bring it to school," said Betty quickly; "I threw it over the fence."

Mr. and Mrs. Benares glanced quickly at each other and then back at the children. Betty, seeing she had committed herself, began to cry; and supposing that Clara had divulged the whole secret of the powder, though she had not so much as thought of it before, she began to protest vehemently that it was not her fault it had done harm; it was Clara who spilt it over the bouquets; and it was those people who went to steal the grapes made it explode in the garden.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Benares could restrain their laughter at thus unexpectedly hearing the great mystery

that had agitated the town for months solved in such a simple manner. After a good deal of soothing and coaxing, Betty made a clean breast of the whole affair, telling how she had come by the powder, and how she had traded the brooch to the squaw for a pin cushion, &c. &c. After which she felt very much relieved.

Mr. Benares sat down to his writing desk, and, with Betty seated on a little stool beside him, wrote a plain unvarnished account of the whole affair for the *Willow-bank Chronicle*, which made its appearance in due ttme, to the no small amusement of the town.

Betty did not go to school that morning, but at the hour of noon might have been seen issuing out of the Benares' gate with a large slice of pound cake in her hand, which she was munching with the greatest satisfaction. She sold out her stock-in-trade that afternoon for a York shilling and forthwith retired from public life, to which she has never returned, promising fairly to grow up an upright woman.

It is again the hour of eleven and a bright moonlight night, and we take the liberty of again peeping into Mr. Tom Walter's room. He and his friends have just returned from the "early closing" meeting and are in high spirits, having carried the day.

"I wonder if there is anything in the *Chronicle*," said Charley Rivers, pulling that paper out of his pocket and unfolding it, while Tom Walters proceeded to clear off the table, on which he had already placed certain tin cans and other articles of a decidedly festive appearance.

"A modern gunpowder plot! Haloo, boys! here's fun," shouted Charley Rivers; and, amidst shouts of laughter

from his companions, he read Mr. Benares' account of the robbery and gunpowder mystery—the latter of which, for certain reasons known to the reader, had been a greater mystery to them than to any person else in the town.

Our young friends commence their supper in high good humour, and the curtain falls.

A NOVEL, BY POPPY BELL.

THE sun peeped in through the scarlet creepers that shaded Poppy Bell's bedroom window one fine morning in October, and played over the roses on the wall paper like a little shower of golden spray, as Poppy Bell lay fast asleep and dreaming, we must suppose, of some great literary success, for she exclaimed, "I believe I will write a novel!" That moment she awoke and drew one of her little white feet out from between the leaves of Webster's Dictionary, where it had reposed the greater part of the night—for Miss Bell was a young lady of literary tastes. "A novel, by Poppy Bell: that would look very well at the head of a review in the *Graphic* or advertised in the papers. I suppose it would have a cream-coloured cover like 'Lothair,' or 'Cometh up as a Flower;' and as it would be a Canadian novel, it would of course have a picture of a beaver chewing maple leaves on the back of it. But what will it be about?—that is the question," she said, throwing a couple of Faber's drawing pencils against the opposite wall with a good deal of acrimony, and then rubbing the back of her neck where they had imprinted life-like images of themselves during the night. "It would be a good idea to lay the scene at Rice Lake, and have a good deal about Indians in it." And then she remembered having once visited Rice Lake on a dark day

in November, when it lay like ink beneath the cloudy sky streaked with yellow rice beds, and with the trees on the islands that dotted it bristling up black and leafless against the sky, while now and again a water-bird heavily winged its way over it. "I remember going down to a little pier," she said, "that moved up and down like a pontoon bridge when we walked on it, and that had a lot of little boats moored about it. There were some decoy ducks lying among coils of rope and old rusty chains on the end of it, and there was a house on the shore with trees about it, and covered with vine tendrils that sprawled and clung over it, reminding me of the talons of some giant bird that were about to fasten themselves into it and tear it to pieces. Ugh! it was a dreary day that," she said with a little shudder, as she drew a volume of "Les Miserables" and a volume of "Macaulay's Miscellanies" out from underneath her pillow and threw them on a little table at the foot of her bed, and dragging "Jack Hinton" and "Little Women" out in the skirt of her night-dress as she stepped out of bed. "Bother the books," she said, giving them a kick as they fell to the floor; and then clapping her hands as a light broke over her face, she said, "I have got it—Wildwave."

It will of course be understood that Miss Poppy Bell was saying this to herself—or rather that it was passing through her mind without being said at all; and while she busies herself at her toilet, we will endeavour to explain her last idea. Wildwave was the name of a gentleman's beautiful place, picturesquely situated on Lake Ontario. This place had seen many vicissitudes, it having changed owners a dozen times, and Poppy's idea

was to take its history for the foundation of her projected novel. After being vacant for some months, it had suddenly become occupied by an English gentleman and his wife, who to all appearances had been lately married, and on whom Poppy had gazed with a good deal of curiosity the Sunday before in church. The gentleman, who was apparently about forty years old, was strikingly handsome, with a majestic figure and a fair Saxon complexion. He seemed wrapped up in his lovely young wife, whose face, as she clung to his arm and looked timidly about, called up to Poppy's mind the face of Namouna in "Lalla Rookh," in the picture where she is represented kneeling on the flower-strewn marble floor in the midst of a floating cloud of gauze, while Nourmahal spills a shower of dewy flowers into her lap, out of which she is supposed to weave the enchanted wreath of dreams.

Poppy's home—which went by the name of Firsthouse from the fact of its being the first house that had been built in that part of the country—was a picturesque and commodious, though odd and old-fashioned dwelling, which nestled like a bird's nest among the pine boughs on the hill side. Her father, who was an old navy officer, was wont to boast, as he stood at his door and looked down at the smoking chimney stacks and glittering church spires that reared themselves on the edge of the lake, and then at the broad sweep of fertile country that, dotted with comfortable homesteads, rolled away towards the lake—he was wont to boast that he could remember the time when he could stand on that spot and see nothing but tangled forest as far as the eye could reach. It was one of those balmy Indian summer days when the sun

shines through a golden mist, and when the world is aglow with the gorgeous tints of the leaves; and Poppy set out with the intention of visiting her bosom friend, Stella Wirt, who lived a couple of miles away, and to reach whose home she would have to pass Wildwave. She walked along through the sweet-scented woods underneath the rain of falling leaves, listening to the screeching and tapping of the woodpeckers, and watching the bright shafts of sunlight that crept in through the boughs and flashed over the green velvety moss, now strewn with bright leaves, till she came to a little thicket of cedar and hemlock, into which she turned, starting the chickadees, who fluttered out of their cool retreat into the scarlet cloud of maple boughs overhead. Before she had gone many yards, a dark face with lanky black hair streaming about it peered curiously out through the green boughs at her.

"Good morning, Mattie," called out Poppy.

The face brightened on recognising her, but disappeared instantly without taking any notice of her salutation. In a few moments she found herself in a little opening where a fire built of logs was burning before a little wigwam built of cedar boughs, beside which an Indian girl was seated scraping a strip of bark with a glittering knife.

"Mattie, mamma told me to tell you that you could have some meat if you went up to the house; they have been killing lambs," said Poppy.

"Yes, ma'am," murmured Mattie, gathering her dark locks into a net in honour of her visitor and throwing a coil of silvery birch bark on the fire, which sent up a

wreath of black smoke and then a crimson blaze, filling the air with an aromatic odour.

I don't think Mattie would make a very romantic character for my novel, thought Poppy, as she sat on a moss-grown log regarding her, as she squatted in the midst of her basket-making materials in her old soiled dress and with a couple of great brass rings in her ears and a couple more on her dirty little brown fingers, and with a pot lying on one side of her and a saucepan on the other, and with an old clay pipe stuck over the door of her wigwam. Indian girls in novels are always graceful creatures, who fly about the country on horseback dressed up in tassels and with their hair streaming in the wind. A pretty figure Mattie would make on horseback—I would as soon see a bag of flour stuck on a horse as far as gracefulness is concerned, she thought, laughing to herself at the idea.

"Do you like to live in the woods, Mattie?" asked Poppy, for lack of something else to say.

"Yes; I would rather live in the woods and make baskets than scrub for white folks," said the girl.

"Ain't you afraid?"

"No; I am not afraid of any one so long as I have my knife and my hatchet," she answered, with a gleam in her downcast eye.

And then Poppy's face softened as she looked at the poor outcast creature, who, the last of her tribe, was in the habit of coming out from the back country every summer and taking up her solitary abode in the woods, where she spent the livelong summer making baskets for the neighbouring farmers.

"Good bye, Mattie; be sure and go for the meat," said Poppy with a sigh, as she went on her way.

"Yes, ma'am," said Mattie, muttering an imprecation in Indian the next moment, and throwing a stick after a couple of chipmunks that now came scampering through her premises.

Poppy had got some distance from the woods, and was sauntering along listening dreamily to the crickets chirping in the dried grass, when she came to a creek that wound through a thicket of willows that glittered golden in the mellow sunlight, and through which the clinging vines of the Virginia creeper turned in and out, now hanging in festoons and now falling in a shimmering crimson shower through which the blue-birds flashed in and out. She was about to spring across the creek, when a little wiry old woman, with her brown weather-beaten face all wrinkled and gathered up like a monkey's, and with an old straw hat stuck on the back of her head, started up out of the long grass almost at her feet, laughing merrily as she started back with a scream.

"Why, Nannie, how you frightened me," said Poppy.

"And you frightened me nearly as much, Miss Poppy," said Nannie, stuffing a handful of some sort of herbs, which she had been gathering on the bank of the creek for winter use, into one of the great slouched pockets of an old brown coat she had on.

"It is wery warm to-day, Miss," said Nannie, who spoke in a quaint old dialect that always reminded Poppy of Chaucer's poems—for Nannie, like many another oddity as well as many a very ordinary individual, had crossed the wild waves of the Atlantic in search of a home in the New World.

"Yes, it must be warm gathering those herbs," said Poppy, looking down at the sheaf of herbs that lay among the grass mingled with blue forget-me-nots.

"Yes, love, it is wery warm," said Nannie again, brushing the back of her old wrinkled hand across her forehead; and then, gathering up her herbs, she started off towards her home, chattering to Poppy as she went, whose way lay in the same direction.

"Do you work for the new people at Wildwave?" asked Poppy.

"Yes, Miss, I washed there yesterday," answered Nannie, who was the soul of a gossip; "and Jane, the housemaid, she got herself into such a scrape. You see, Miss, she a-doin' up the master's dressin' room, and she laid his writin' desk on the window, and it fell out on a stone and smashed all abroad; and before she could get down to gather up the paper and things, the master's young 'Bozer' dog came running up and snatched up one of the master's writin' books and made off with it as hard as he could tear. It was some book that the master laid great store by, and he made such ado about it, and set us all a sachin', for o' course the dog had been and gone and hid it, but nobody didn't find it, and it ain't found yet." After retailing several other bits of gossip, Nannie arrived at her own gate, when she wished Poppy good morning.

The lake now lay "a silver flood" before Poppy; and having walked to the edge of the bank, she swung herself down to the beach by the aid of some bushes that grew out of the bank. As she walked along, the bank grew higher and steeper and the beach grew narrower and narrower, till she was left with scarcely room to walk

without stepping into the water. The gulls were disporting themselves over the silvery waves, and the swallows were skimming along the shore, sometimes almost brushing her face with their wings, and fluttering in and out of their nests which perforated the overhanging bank like little gun holes. The beach widened and the bank diminished in height until it became level with the beach as she neared Wildwave, of which she could now catch a glimpse through the trees. As she sat down on a large flat rock to rest she was startled to see a large dog, which on nearer approach she perceived to be a young Newfoundland, running towards her. It stopped, however, when about half a dozen yards from where she sat, and began to paw furiously in the sand. Nannie's story flashed in her mind like lightning, and she sprang towards it shouting, "Be off, sir! go home!" when it started towards Wildwave at full speed; and putting her hand down into the hole in the sand, she pulled out a book in manuscript, the leather covers of which had been chewed into a ball by the dog. As she glanced through it her heart jumped, and her cheeks flushed scarlet. It was evidently a history of the new proprietor of Wildwave. What luck for it to fall into her hands! Providence had surely directed her to it. Stuffing it into her pocket, she scarcely drew breath till she found herself in the arms of Stella Wirt, whose patience was almost worn out waiting for her.

On telling her story and producing the manuscript, Poppy was surprised to find that her friend, who was a few years older than herself, took a very different view of the matter from what she did. "Why, Poppy," she

said, almost in a whisper, "you ought to have gone straight to Wildwave with it when you found out what it was; it would be a dreadful thing if they were to find out you had it. But come down and have some dinner; I waited purposely for you; you must be almost starved. Such a funny littte thing as you are, Poppy, wandering through all the woods and fields in the country, and talking to every old squaw and old thing you meet; I wonder you are not afraid. Why, that old Nannie looks like a witch; I would not speak to her for the world."

After dinner the two friends returned to Stella's room, and the manuscript was again produced. "Poppy, you can't go home to-night, that is settled," said Stella decidedly. "This manuscript has got to go back to Wildwave some way without their knowing who brought it back; and I know no way of its doing so except by you and I going after dark and leaving it at the door."

"Very well, I don't care what you do with it," said Poppy, throwing herself down on the bed.

After glancing over the manuscript a couple of times, Stella's woman's curiosity overcame every other feeling, and she said, "Well, Poppy, as we have got it, I suppose there will be no harm in reading it, but of course we must never say anything about it."

"No," said Poppy, looking curiously at the manuscript, while Stella began:—

"Though cast on the world, an orphan and penniless, at an early age, I belong to an old and honourable English family. I was born at Stowell, a grand old hall in Cornwall, which, together with its broad lands, passed out of my parents' hands in my infancy through various reverses

of fortune which it would be tedious for me to relate. To redeem my family estate—to stand in the halls of my ancestors and say, 'This, too, is my home'—had been the dream of my childhood, youth and early manhood. Like most persons that start out in life with a determination to gain an object, I gained mine. I found myself, at the age of forty, in full possession of Stowell—my wildest dream was realised; but, alas for human ambition! I was not content. The pursuit of gain, in which I had hitherto been so successful, now became an unconquerable passion with me. The heaping up of riches for their own sake became the grand object of my existence.

I had been in possession of Stowell about two years, when I met with a serious pecuniary loss through the treachery of an agent in whom I had placed the most implicit confidence for years—a loss that threatened to dispossess me of my beloved Stowell, and indeed would have done so had I not retrieved my fortunes at the eleventh hour by marrying a wealthy young Jewess, with whom, or rather with whose fortune I had become acquainted through business transactions with her father. Though Leah Isaacs, on whom I had now bestowed the proud name of Stowell, was as beautiful as a dream in the peculiar style of her countrywomen, such a thing as loving her had never entered my head. I looked upon my marriage merely in the light of a sacrifice to that money-god, the bowing down to which had become second nature to me. Leah, with her great passionate eyes and her long lanky hair, and her queer Old Bible name, was very different from the mistress I had designed for

Stowell; for though I had never known the passion of love, I had had my dreams of ingrafting the old family tree with a name as proud as its own, and of becoming the founder of a new race of Stowells; for being the only son of an only son, the race had become almost extinct.

That my wife had abjured her faith for me without a murmur—that she had given her entire fortune into my hands on her wedding day—that she was content to live in almost total seclusion at Stowell for my sake, (for I had forbidden her to return the visits of the country families), were facts that had never cost me a thought.

Leah sometimes amused me by her description of her life at Venice and Florence, where she had resided with her father before coming to England, but generally I was glad to escape from what I looked upon as her childish devotion. She anticipated all my wants, and waited upon me and followed me about in a manner that I found particularly irksome, accustomed as I had been to such perfect liberty all my life. Another source of annoyance to me when I was at home, which was not very often as my business called me away a great deal, was the presence of Leah's old nurse, a gaunt, harsh-featured, Jewish woman, whose devotion to her mistress I could only compare to that of a faithful dog to his master. The retention of this old woman, whom she called Hagar, in her service was all Leah had asked after all she had given, and I granted her request with a grudge.

'Oh, Stuart, who do you think I saw down in the village to-day but old Lucio,' said Leah one evening as she took her place at my feet when I sat down to write some business letters.

'Old Lucio! who is that?' I said as I scribbled away, scarcely noticing what she said.

'Why, old Lucio, my old Italian drawing-master that used to give me lessons at London. Don't you remember me telling you about him?'

'I think I do,' I said again.

'He has been travelling through the country taking views, but he will have to stay in the village for a few months to finish up some pictures; and Stuart, he says he would not mind coming to Stowell a couple of times a week to give me lessons, if you would not mind,' she said, putting her arms about me in her caressing way. 'It would be so nice for me to have something to do when you are away so much, and you know I always loved my drawing lessons so.'

'Come, come, Leah, don't be so childish, you hinder me from writing,' I said, impatiently, putting her arms away from me.

And then she said, as she always did when the coldness of my heart towards her manifested itself in my manner, 'You English are so queer,' as she shook her head and looked at me with a half wistful and half incredulous expression in her great eyes—a look I did not care to call up, as notwithstanding my indifference towards her, it haunted me unpleasantly sometimes when I was far away from her.

'Well, well, Leah,' I said in a conciliatory tone, 'you can make as many woolly pictures as you like, only don't bring any of your musty old drawing-masters near me.'

One night, a couple of weeks after this, I became excessively annoyed at Leah for sitting up till a very late

hour awaiting my return, after a few days' absence. She sprang to the door to meet me, but I held her off, saying coldly, 'It is very silly for you to sit up here for nothing, Leah; you ought to be in bed.'

'I did not sit up for nothing—I sat up to see you,' she said in a joyous tone, still trying to cling to me, and holding up her face for a kiss; but I did not choose to see it, and still held her off, saying harshly, 'Leah, if you knew how it annoys me to see my wife acting like a silly girl, you would try to be more womanly. I never had any nonsense about me; but if I had, I am old enough to have got over it by this time.'

She looked mystified at the commencement of this observation, but as I concluded she turned deadly white, and there flashed into her eyes a look of wild dismay as she shrank away, saying, 'I am sorry I annoyed you, Stuart; I will not do it again.' Leah thrust neither her caresses nor her company on me from that time, and the consequence was, I saw very little of her for some months.

Once on returning home in the middle of the night, after being absent for a longer period than usual—for my business engrossed me more than ever—I was surprised to find a light in the drawing-room, and Leah lying fast asleep on the sofa. As she lay wrapped in a scarlet shawl, and with her face pressed against the crimson velvet sofa pillow, it struck me that she looked pale and wasted, an idea that had occurred to me in a transitory way some time before, but I had never given it a second thought. 'Mrs. Stowell got nervous and could not sleep and came out here to try and get a little rest,' said Hagar

who was never very far away from her mistress, and who now came and stood at the foot of the sofa.

'Is she ill?' I asked.

'No,' she said sullenly, 'she is as well as she ever is now.' And then turning on me savagely, she said, 'You are killing that child with your coldness and neglect; she is fading away like her mother, and you will have her death at your door.'

I thought for a moment the woman had gone mad, and was about to make her some reply, when Leah awoke with a start. Hagar was at her side in an instant, and she clutched hold of her, saying, 'Oh, Hagar! you frightened me so. I thought you were talking to Stuart;' and then perceiving me, the old joyous light flashed into her eyes, but died out almost instantly as she said, 'We were not expecting you home to-night, Stuart. Indeed we were not. Were we, Hagar?"

The old woman answered her by giving me a look of the blackest scorn.

'Leah, if you have been ill, I ought to have known it,' I said seriously.

'I am not ill, I am very well,' she said hurriedly as she shrank away, clinging to Hagar as she left the room.

'It is a pity I ever had anything to do with women, I soliloquized. 'I can never understand them. If you don't take any notice of them, they say you are neglecting them; and if you do take notice of them, they act as if you were going to do them some bodily injury, or as if you were a wild beast.' Notwithstanding the sanguine manner in which I justified my conduct, Hagar's words

rang in my ears even after I went to sleep, which I did not do till the east was streaked with purple.

Having occasion the next day to drive into the country, I stopped at a wayside inn to wait for a gentleman with whom I had made an appointment on business. In the room next to the one occupied by me was a party of young men, whom I at first took to be young students out on a holiday frolic, but who, from their conversation, I discovered to be a party of travelling artists. They interested me very little, however, and I was about to stroll out into the yard when my attention was riveted by the following conversation:

'When did you hear from old Lucio, Jack?'

'Oh! not for months. He could not come down to such an earthly thing as writing a letter, unless it was to the object of his adoration, I suppose.'

'Stowell must be a fool,' said the first speaker.

'No, there is not much foolishness about him, as he showed when he married the "ace of diamonds," as we used to call her. But I don't suppose he suspects anything. He will wake up one of these days though.'

'What about old Lucio?' asked another of the party, looking up from a book he had been reading.

'Why, don't you remember Leah Isaacs that he used to be so frantic about. Well, she married a regular swell, one of the Stowell's of Stowell Hall—married her for her money, you know. I thought Lucio had got over it; but when he came up here a few months ago with Charley and me, we could not get him an inch past the little village near Stowell, and he has stayed there ever since; and I heard the other day that he has been going

to Stowell twice a week all this time to give her drawing lessons.'

'Oh! but that is awful, you know,' said the young fellow he was addressing, bursting into a laugh in which the whole party joined.

I waited to hear no more, but started out half stupified to order my horse for the purpose of returning immediately to Stowell. Here, then, was an explanation of Leah's conduct the evening before, as well as an explanation of many things that had hitherto been a puzzle to me. The old family pride rose like a lion within me as I drove along the road, and my blood boiled as I thought of being made a dupe and a laughing stock of by the daughter of an old usurer and a drawing-master whom I looked upon as little better than a mountebank.

It was late in the afternoon when I stepped into the hall door at Stowell. I was about to proceed straight to my wife's apartment when the sound of her voice, mingled with another voice scarcely less soft, caught my ear. Walking down to the end of the hall I entered a passage, at the end of which was a window belonging to a deep alcove in a room that Leah had fitted up as a sort of library, it being a favourite room of hers on account of the beauty of the view from the windows. It was from this room the sounds were proceeding, and going to the end of the passage I pulled open the window, which was partly shaded by a large picture that hung on the wall, but from which I had a full view of the room within. Leah was standing at a table strewn with drawing materials, looking intently at a picture which she held in her hand, while the Italian stood at the other side of the table with his back to her, sharpening a pencil.

'There is really no fault to find with this picture, Lucio,' she said. 'It is the first one I have ever been satisfied with. I am sure I don't know how to thank you.'

'I am glad you like it,' he said in a graceless tone, and with a slightly foreign accent, as he wheeled about and threw the pencil on the table.

The first thing that struck me was the extreme youth of the man I had always imagined old enough to be Leah's father—an idea I now chose to think Leah had purposely given me by calling him 'old Lucio,' forgetting that his young artist friends had done the same, and that I had had dozens of opportunities of seeing him before, but always avoided doing so. He could not have been more than twenty-three, and looked boyish for that age.

'You can see him whenever you like now, and even speak to him without being snubbed,' he said in a sneering tone, as she passed her fingers lovingly over the picture, which, to my astonishment as she turned it towards me, I discovered to be a very beautifully coloured portrait of myself.

'He cannot be always at home, and I am sure he does not snub me. You have picked up all those horrid English words, Lucio,' she said in a fretful tone as she laid down the picture.

'Why don't you kiss it—it's more than you dare do to the original,' he said, shoving it towards her so roughly that it fell on the floor.

'How excessively rude you are to-day,' said Leah, her face flushing with anger as she stooped to pick it up.

'There won't be anything done to-day if you don't commence,' he said, without taking any notice of this observation.

'I am not going to do anything to-day,' she said coldly; 'you may go away now, and you may as well take all your copies, for I do not wish you to come back any more.'

'If I have offended you, Miss Leah,—Mrs. Stowell, I am very sorry,' he said humbly, 'but I cannot stand being always treated like a dog.'

'Treated like a dog!' said Leah in astonishment, 'Why you must be crazy. I never could understand you, Lucio, and you have got worse than ever lately.'

'Well, you will be rid of me soon; I—I am going to start for Italy, to-morrow,' he stammered without raising his eyes.

'For Italy,' she said joyfully; 'and you never told me, Lucio.'

'I did not know how rejoiced you would be, or else I might have told you a month ago,' he said in a cold mocking tone.

'Why, don't you remember how joyfully you used to look forward to the time when you would go back to Italy?'

'Yes, I remember,' he said, as if speaking in a dream.

'And don't you remember,' she said, 'how I used to put so much of my pocket money every week into the old green silk purse, to give you when you went away to help you to be a great artist? That was when papa used to have to send Hagar in two or three times while I was at my drawing lesson to tell me to stop chattering.'

'There is no danger of any person having to check the exuberance of your spirits while you are at your drawing lessons now-a-days.'

'Oh, people always get different when they get married.'

'Yes, particularly when they are happily married, like you.'

Without taking any notice of this remark, she unlocked a little cabinet that stood behind her, from whence she took a faded green purse, out of which she emptied a little heap of small silver coins, to which she added a couple of bright sovereigns from her own purse, saying, 'Really, Lucio, you must take this for old times sake.'

'How delighted you are to get rid of me,' he said, without looking at the money.

'No, Lucio,' she said in a low sorrowful tone, 'I was only glad because I thought you would be; I will have no person at all to speak to when you are gone, and I don't care for my drawing when I have no person to show it to.'

'I am better than no person.'

'Yes,' she said, without appearing to notice the bitterness of his tone.

'I will take this, and carry it next my heart till the day I die,' he said in a low smothered tone, as he put the silver pieces into the purse and put it into his pocket. 'But this,' he said fiercely, 'is part of the money that bought him!—curse him!' and he threw it with all his strength against the opposite wall.

Leah's eyes dilated with amazement as she regarded him for a moment, and then moved towards the door.

'You need not run away, I am not mad! but you will have to hear me now,' he said, stepping between her and the door; and then his face became radiant with a great hope, and his voice softened to a tone I have since been reminded of on hearing the distant murmuring of music floating over rippling moonlit waves, as he said, 'Come with me to sunny Italy, my Leah! and we will study our art together. Leave your cold, hard, selfish husband, who values your happiness not half so much as that of one of his dogs, for one who would die to save you one hour's pain.'

He attempted to take her hand, but she waved him off, saying in an icy tone, 'If you touch me I will scream for help.'

And then his face darkened again and his eyes grew fierce, and he said, 'Why did you make me love you the first day? why did you encourage me to come here?'

'I did not know—I did not think ——'

'Oh no, I know you never thought anything at all about it—I was nothing but a boy—a baby to be petted or thrown aside at your pleasure! But I have been a fool. I might have known if your heart had not been as cold as ice towards me, you would have seen how madly I loved you. I could have borne it all if I had found you a happy cherished wife; but it was too much for me when I found you neglected and pining your life away for one who never loved you. Yes,' he repeated, as she gave a little start, 'for one who is too selfish to know the meaning of the word love.'

'Why did he marry me if he did not love me? he had riches enough without mine,' she said with a little gasp.

'Riches enough,' he repeated scornfully; 'did you never find out, poor fool, what the whole country knew, that he met with a heavy loss just before he married you, and that he only saved his place by his marriage?'

'No,' she gasped, clutching the black velvet tablecover with her little wasted hand.

The light came back into his face and the soft music to his voice as he murmured again, trying to take her hand, 'Think of the emptiness of your life with such a man.'

'Do not dare to touch me,' she said in an agonized voice; 'whatever he married me for, he will at least protect me from insult. Go away, do go away; have you not tortured me enough—have I not enough to bear?'

He snatched up his portfolio while she spoke, and without uttering another word disappeared out of the window.

It would be difficult to describe my feelings as I made my way to where Leah sat, so pale and still, with her handkerchief pressed against her lips. I felt as if my senses had all my life been wrapped in a veil which had been suddenly torn away by the passionate young Italian.

'I am come to be forgiven, Leah,' I said, kneeling beside her and taking her hand in mine. She started and looked wildly at me, and then I perceived that the handkerchief was saturated with blood. 'My poor darling, I have killed you,' I said, frantically snatching her up in my arms.

'Leave her to me and send for a doctor,' said Hagar, who had just returned from a message to the village, and who was perfectly calm, though her face was almost as pale as that of her mistress.

I carried Leah to bed, and then rushed down to the village for a doctor. I could not bear the agony of suspense while I sent a messenger.

The doctor looked keenly at me when he returned from my wife's room with the report that 'Mrs. Stowell had burst a small blood-vessel from the effects of some great mental shock.'

Would she die? I dare not ask, but he evidently saw the question in my face, for he immediately added, 'Everything depends upon perfect quiet; the least excitement might prove fatal. I think Mrs. Stowell had better be left entirely to the care of her old nurse for the present.'

A hint for me not to go near her. The doctor evidently suspected some domestic row. I paced the library till midnight, pursued by a terrible contrition that seemed to crush me to the very earth.

As I stole up to my own room I found Leah's door open; the curtains of the window opposite her bed were looped up, admitting a broad silvery moonbeam that lay across the bed and wreathed it about with the shadows of the ivy that trailed over the window. I stopped for a moment to try to attract Hagar's attention, but she was arranging Leah's pillows, and stood with her back towards me.'

'Am I dying, Hagar?' said Leah, drawing her arm feebly about the old woman's neck.

'Heaven knows, my darling,' said Hagar, fervently; 'but the doctor says you must be very quiet.'

'If I die, don't let them take me away from Stowell, Hagar,' she said again. 'Tell them I wished to be buried

under the lilacs in the front lawn. I could not bear to be put away some place where no one would ever come near me, excepting you, Hagar. I know you would come,' she said, kissing Hagar's hard brown cheek.

'Yes, yes, everything will be done as you say, if you will only be quiet and not talk any more,' said Hagar in a hoarse voice. I wandered about from room to room for days, with the hourly dread of hearing that Leah's spirit had flown—that she had gone to another world and left me to carry the mark of Cain through the rest of my miserable existence, for I considered myself as truly her murderer as if I had pierced her heart with a dagger. But she did not die. The Great God was more merciful to me than I deserved.

As she grew better they let me see her, and it is needless to tell how passionately I devoted myself to her, or how unspeakably precious she became to me in those weeks that her life hung by a thread. In the gratitude of my heart for her recovery, I gave thousands to feed the hungry and shelter the houseless; and as the doctors recommended change of air, I sold Stowell, which had never been anything but a dreary prison to her, and took her across the blue sea to Canada, where, with Hagar, who has long since relented towards me, we have found a home on the banks of the beautiful Lake Ontario."

It was almost dark when Stella finished the manuscript; and, unheeding the tea bell, she and Poppy started over to Wildwave with it. They went round by the lake shore to avoid observation, but what was their surprise on coming suddenly on Mrs. Stowell and a tall Jewish-looking woman, whom they now knew to be Hagar,

strolling along the beach. Mrs. Stowell was singing softly to herself as she picked up the pebbles and threw them into the dark waves that washed in over the flat rocks. They started back without attracting observation, and as they went towards the house in another direction, they saw Mr. Stowell going towards his wife with a shawl over his arm, which he wrapped lovingly about her, and drawing her hand through his arm, he led her slowly towards the house.

"Now is your time," said Stella, starting in through the trees and giving a furious double knock at the hall door, which was answered immediately. "Here is something that was picked up on the shore and I think it belongs here," said Stella, thrusting the manuscript into the servant's hand; and the next moment the two were walking quickly away from Wildwave in the shadow of the trees. Poppy looked with redoubled interest at the Stowells the next Sunday in church, but has not yet commenced her novel.

A CATCH, BY NELL GWYNNE.

"TRA-LA-LA, TRA-LA LA-LA!" hummed Mr. Tom Wakefield one frosty evening in January, as he kicked the ice off his heels on the door-scraper of a handsome little house in the suburbs of the town of Shoreton, Ontario, preparatory to making an evening call on Miss Cora Ruyter, who had the reputation of being the prettiest girl in Shoreton. He found her looking her lovliest, as she stood before the grate in a shimmering silk dress of a soft silvery hue, white kid gloves, and a white opera cloak, the hood of which was drawn partly over her graceful little head, and fastened with a spray of silver leaves, which had such a picturesque effect, that he could not choose but stand and admire it.

Miss Ruyter was very sorry indeed, but she had made an engagement to attend a concert with Mr. Beverly, whom she was expecting every moment. Would Mr. Wakefield be so very kind as to excuse her?

Oh, certainly; nothing would give him more pleasure, particularly as he had only intended making a short call. And in a few moments he took himself off, jostling against Mr. Beverly in the snow box, and walking very fast for some moments after he left the house.

Mr. Wakefield was the most eligible match in Shoreton

—the only independent young gentleman about town, in fact—and he had been showing rather marked attention to Miss Cora Ruyter for the last six months; but finding that his affections were becoming irretrievably entangled, he said to himself one fine morning, "It would be a catch for Cora, poor little thing, and I daresay she will feel dreadfully about it; but it would never do for you, Tom, my boy—never," he repeated, apostrophizing the reflection of his handsome face in the looking-glass, and giving an extra twirl to his moustache.

It happened on this particular morning that Mr. Wakefield met Cora's father, who was a thriving merchant, and who for some, to him, unaccountable reason had always treated him coolly; now, however, he gave him a friendly smile and a nod. Mr. Wakefield took the alarm at once. "Old fellow thinks I am hooked, by Jingo; but he will wake up to his mistake one of these days," he said complacently as he buttoned his overcoat under his chin. And without more ado he, as he expressed it, "shut down" on the Ruyters; but as Cora did not, as he had expected, send him a little pink note begging to know how she had offended him, or as she did not take her constitutional walks in a direction she would meet him—quite by accident, of course—he had strolled up on this evening, which was about three weeks after the "shutting down" had taken place, just to see how she bore it; but instead of finding her, as he had expected, sitting in a half-darkened room looking pale and dejected, he found her looking more lovely than he had ever seen her—waiting for that young pup Beverly to bring her to a concert.

Mr. Wakefield retraced his steps down into the business part of the town, slackening his pace as he neared the brilliantly lighted window of Miss Monton's millinery establishment, into which he peered curiously as he passed; and after walking on a few paces, he wheeled about and entered the shop.

"Such a man as you are, Mr. Wakefield; you are always frightening me half to death," called out a sweet laughing voice from the midst of a shower of gay ribbons and flowers, where Miss Arabella Linnet was seated deftly weaving a wreath out of artificial roses. Miss Linnet was a pretty, lively girl, full of coquettish airs and graces, who pleased Mr. Wakefield's fancy, and who in her turn felt gratified to have the wealthy Mr. Wakefield watching his opportunity, while Miss Monton was gone to tea, to pop in and chat with her two or three times a week, though she knew he only did it for amusement.

After leaving Miss Monton's, Mr. Wakefield bent his steps towards the opposite suburb of the town to that in which the Ruyters lived, walking quickly along till he came to a low stone cottage separated from the street by half a dozen yards of garden and a low paling, and which was the abode of Mrs. Weston, a widow lady, and her daughter Maggie, who was a music teacher, and who was considered by many to be prettier than Miss Ruyter. Mr. Wakefield had shown a great deal of attention to Miss Weston since he had "shut down" on the Ruyters; in consequence of which her head had become a little turned, and she had shown the cold shoulder to young Frank Bevan, who was a clever young lawyer, and who

everybody knew was desperately in love with her. He was about to knock at the door, when perceiving that there were no lights in any of the windows, he turned away, observing to himself, "I suppose they have all gone to the concert."

Finding himself again on the street, he seemed for a moment uncertain which way to turn, but finally walked on up the street till he came to a large stone mansion, which was the last house visible on the street, and which was the residence of Judge Blair, into which he turned; and in a few minutes he was shaking hands with Miss Loo Blair, who was a tall, stylish girl with a quantity of waving yellow hair and with rather sharp features, and who received him very graciously indeed. Miss Blair chatted so agreeably and sang his favourite songs so charmingly, that he scarcely knew where he was till he heard the hall clock strike eleven. "Really I must be going; I had no idea it was so late," he said, starting up.

"Why, it is not so very late," said Miss Blair, drawing aside the heavy window curtain to look out at the night; when she uttered an exclamation of surprise that brought him to her side in an instant. The snow was coming down in a sheet, and it was blowing furiously. "You can't possibly go home through that, Mr. Wakefield; you will have to stay all night," she said decidedly.

"Pooh! I am not made of sugar," he said, stepping out into the hall to put on his coat; but in the meantime Miss Blair stepped out of the room, reappearing in a few moments with her respectable papa, who decided the question by saying, "Nonsense, Wakefield, it would be madness for you to go out in such a storm; you will have to stay all night."

And this was how it happened that as Maggie Weston stood in the sunlight next morning, looking ruefully out at a huge bank of snow that blocked up the way between the door and the gate, the Blairs' sleigh came dashing up with a flashing of gay rugs and a chiming of silver bells, and Mr. Wakefield sprang out and lifted out little Maud Blair, who was one of Maggie's music pupils. Mr. Wakefield lifted his hat to Maggie just as a chickadee, that was pecking at the vine tendrils that hung over her head, sent a little shower of snow down among the shining waves of her hair.

Miss Blair called out from underneath the waves of white robes that foamed up about her "that it was very snowy." And then they all agreed that it was very snowy, and that it had been fearfully stormy the night before. Miss Blair asked Maggie if she had noticed what a number of snow-birds there had been about for the last few days, and Maggie said she had. After jumping Maud Blair over the snow bank, Mr. Wakefield again lifted his hat to Maggie, and then sprang back into the sleigh, which dashed off down the street, skimming like lightning past the now glittering snow banks that were piled up on each side of the way.

"Did you pick Mr. Wakefield up on the street, Maud?" asked Maggie, as she helped the little girl off with her scarlet cloth coat.

"Oh, no; he had to stay at our house all night, because it was so stormy. He comes to see Looy, but she doesn't like him, though," said Maud, who was a notorious little chatterbox.

"Doesn't she?" said Maggie, a good deal amused.

"No; I heard her tell Susie Bosco he was a conceited pig."

"A what, dear?"

"A conceited pr—?"

"Prig."

"Prig—oh, yes! that was it; a conceited prig: and she said she would like to serve him out. He goes to see Miss Ruyter ever so much, and I heard Miss Snipps telling Looy, when she was fitting her dress, that he goes to see Miss Linnet, the milliner, every evening; and, you know, he used to go to see Susie Bosco, and ever so many others. Looy said it was a shame about Susie Bosco, because, you know, he went to see her more than anybody. Looy wouldn't like him, any way, because she likes Mr. Rollo. She has got him in a locket, and she gets letters from him," she said, settling herself on the piano stool.

That evening Frank Bevan entered the Westons' little parlour looking dull and dejected, but he went out of it the happiest man in the Dominion, for Maggie had lovingly promised to become his wife in six months. Mr. Wakefield spent almost every evening for the next two weeks at the Ruyters, and he was always stumbling on young Beverly, who aggravated him exceedingly by calling Miss Ruyter "Cora" and by not being in the least jealous of him, and also by invariably out-staying him, no matter to what hour he prolonged his visit. He was several times on the point of proposing to Cora, "just to rid her of that intolerable nuisance, Beverly," and would in all probability have ended in doing so had her father not kindly helped him on with his coat one even-

ing, and shaken him warmly by the hand when he took his departure.

Mr. Wakefield took the alarm for the second time. "I know what they are up to," he said, as he walked away from the house, "they have got Beverly there just for a decoy, but they will find I am too sharp to fall into the trap." And for the second, and, as it proved, the last time, he "shut down" on the Ruyters.

He did not see Cora again for three weeks, when, happening to be at the railway station one morning, he came on her quite unexpectedly, standing alone on the platform, looking very blushingly and lovely in a white lama coat and an ermine cap and muff. He was about to speak to her after she had smilingly returned his bow, when young Beverly rushed up, and saying, "Come, Cora, dear; we have no time to lose," he put his arms about her and lifted her up on to the steps of the last Pullman car of the up express, and sprang up after her as the train glided slowly out of the station.

"Hallo, Tom! been congratulating the bride?" called out his friend Ned Maxwell, who now came rushing by.

"Ye-es," said he instinctively; and the earth went up and the sky came down, and they knocked together with a flash before his eyes. Then he became conscious of seeing and hearing everything that was going on about him more distinctly than he had ever done before. He walked on and on, without looking either to the right or left till he came to broad white fields with rolling white hills, and dark, wintry woods in the distance. Some sleighs loaded with wood came along, and he had to step out into the deep snow before a little whitewashed house

on the side of the road, to let them pass. The door of the house was open, and as he looked in he saw a woman standing over a steaming tub washing, with her arms going up and down like a machine, while a very smal child sat near by rocking an infant which was wailing piteously in a cradle, while a yet smaller child than the first clung to her skirts and screamed with all its might.

"Good heavens! I wonder that woman does not go mad!" he thought; when, snatching her arms out of the suds, she took up a pail, and, running down to a hole in the ice a short distance from the house, dipped up a pail of water and was back in a twinkling.

"What hard lines some people have!" he thought again, perceiving that she was very young and fair, and that her round white arm quivered as she set down the pail. And he turned about and walked back to town.

The twinkling stars found him wending his way towards the Blair's, while the following thoughts chased each other through his mind. "It will be a catch for Loo. Ned Maxwell says Old Blair's affairs are not in a very flourishing condition, for all they keep up so much style. Loo has been very good-natured, I am sure; she never gets sulky like some girls, no matter how many other girls you go to see. And this thing of marrying beneath a fellow is not the thing, after all." This last remark was generated by the fact that the Blairs did not associate with the Ruyters, Miss Blair being in the habit of speaking condescendingly of Cora as "that pretty Miss Ruyter."

He found Miss Blair alone in the drawing-room, and

rather precipitately—which may have been on account of being uncertain as to how long she might remain alone—made her a formal offer of his hand and fortune, which she, to his utter amazement, very coolly and politely refused. She had been engaged for two years to Charley Rollo, who was at present at Montreal, but whom she expected at Shoreton before very long. Touching the spring of a little gold locket that hung about her neck, she held it proudly up, and he saw a frank, handsome face looking laughingly out at him.

"It is a great pity, Mr. Wakefield," said Miss Blair, "that you did not marry Susie Bosco, and then you would not have left it in the power of any shopkeeper's daughter to jilt you."

"Now, that was spiteful of Loo," he thought as he walked away from the house a few moments afterwards, feeling crushed and humiliated; "but those yellow-haired girls always were spiteful; he had noticed that." And then his mind reverted to a gentle, dewy-eyed girl, whom to give up a year ago he had had to fight a hard battle with himself; but he had said, as he had done in the case of Cora Ruyter, "It would be a catch for Susie, but it would never do for you, Tom, my boy," and had never gone near her from that day to this. As these thoughts passed through his mind he turned about, and, after walking back for a considerable distance past the Blairs, he entered a large iron gate, which led into a broad, snowy walk, which wound in and out through clumps of snow-laden evergreeens till it arrived at a broad, low house with two large bay windows in the front of it, and which was illuminated like a palace in a fairy tale.

"There must be something up," he said, pausing, and looking up at it, when his ear caught the sound of the merry laughing voices of a crowd of people that were now entering the gate, and he sprang into a clump of trees to avoid observation. After these people had been admitted into the house, he heard the door of some back region open, and two girls came out. One of them had a shawl over her head and a pitcher in her hand, and she said to the other one, "When is Miss Bosco to be married?"

And the other one answered, "At nine o'clock, and they are going away on the ten o'clock train. Such lovely presents as Mr. West has brought her you never saw. You know they are going to live in Toronto."

He waited to hear no more, but rushed out of his hiding place, never lifting his head and scarcely drawing his breath till he got out of sight of the house. "This was the girl he was going to take pity on!"

He did not slacken his pace until he found himself opening the little wicket that led into Mrs. Weston's cottage.

"It will be a ca——, poor Maggie has to work pretty hard for her living," he thought as he knocked at the door.

He found Maggie alone, and for a moment had an uncomfortable feeling that she was disappointed because he was not some person else.

"Well, Maggie, you will be married in three months," he said, seating himself on the sofa beside her.

"Now, Mr. Wakefield, how did you find it out?" she said, looking blushingly up at him. "It will not be for

six months either ——. Oh yes, five months now," she said, counting her little white fingers; "I told Frank I did not want to have anything said about it yet, but he is such a goose."

A knock at the door here caused her to catch nervously at a locket that hung from her neck. She had had him in that locket, he knew she had.

The entrance of Mr. Frank Bevan was a signal for the departure of Mr. Wakefield.

"I wonder why no girl ever called me Tom, and carried me about her neck in a locket," he thought as he shut the gate after him with a whack.

"He knew what he would do—he was a desperate man—he would marry Arabella Linnet. It ——"

What he was about to remark, and why he did not remark it, we will leave to the imagination of our reader.

Though it was long past Miss Monton's tea hour, he was fortunate enough to find Arabella alone. She was seated in her usual place, fastening little clusters of snow-white daisies in among foaming fluffs of white net.

"Well, Arabella, I suppose you will be getting married one of these days?" he said, with a "You too, Brutus" air, as he took up one of the daisies and flipped it against her round, rosy cheek.

"Oh, no! not for two months yet," said Arabella, composedly, "everybody thinks I am going to be married every time Joe comes down. We were to have been married a month ago, you know, but Joe could not settle about a house or something; but we have been engaged for such a long time now that a few months does not seem to make much difference. Come in, Joe," she called

out, as some person opened the door and then started back as if to go out again, "it's no person but Mr. Wakefield; he goes to see all the girls—don't you, Mr. Wakefield?"

Mr. Wakefield did not answer her, nor he never could remember how he got out of that shop, but some way he found himself standing on the street, with the lights, as he imagined, blinking spitefully at him.

"How strangely Mr. Wakefield acts to-night; I wonder if he drinks," said Arabella to her *fiancé*.

"Very likely," said that young gentleman, coolly seating himself on a five dollar spray of scarlet and purple fuschias, to Arabella's horror.

Mr. Wakefield walked on, possessed by a wild desire to get away—to be alone with the starry night. As he rushed along, his attention became attracted by a rushing jingling noise behind him, and as he was about to turn around he received a blow which threw him forward in the snow, and he knew no more till he found himself lying on a bed in a very small room, in the middle of broad day, with a sharp pain in his head.

"What the dooce has happened—or, where have I got to?" he said, putting his hand up to his head, which he found was bandaged, and so stiff and sore that it was painful for him to move it.

As his eyes wandered about the room, they fell on a little black stool which was ornamented with two immense brick-coloured hearts, which reminded him of beeves' hearts, and through which were thrust two yellow darts with orange barbs.

"Now," he said, "if that is not one of the most infernal—" Here a twinge in his head caused him to groan aloud.

His eyes next fell on a mat on which was embroidered an animal with a fiendish grin on its face, and whose tail trailed on the ground for half-a-yard after it. It might have been intended for a cat, but it looked like a jackal out on the loose in search of prey. "If I only had a boot-jack, I could throw it—"

His remark was interrupted for the second time by a second twinge in his head, which caused him to groan and close his eyes.

Standing at the foot of the bed was a table, on which was a round basket which was ornamented with little bunches of white and straw-coloured crimped tissue paper, which were fastened at intervals all around it. As he looked at these they reminded him of bridesmaids as he had seen them kneeling about the altar rails. "Now I know what they have done," he said, "they have got all these things and stuck them up before me, just out of pure—"

Here Mark Twain's elegant remark, "Just out of pure cussedness," recurred to him, and he laughed till his head twinged again. A little stream of blood trickled down over his face, and he again became insensible.

Whom he was accusing of this piece of malignity he had not the most remote idea.

When he returned to consciousness he found a doctor standing beside his bed, and a very small lady, who had a pair of scissors hanging from her waist by a black ribbon, and whom he recognized after a few moments as Miss Snipps, the dressmaker. His situation was soon explained. When passing Miss Snipps' the evening before he had been knocked down by a runaway horse

and cutter, his head striking against the iron ring of a hitching post at her gate.

At his earnest solicitation the doctor allowed him to be conveyed home in a cab that afternoon.

"Miss Blair has just been inquiring for you; if I kept you here much longer, I suppose I would have all the young ladies up here; such a gentleman as you are for the ladies, Mr. Wakefield," said Miss Snipps.

"Oh, da——, they are very kind, I am sure," he said, checking himself in whatever profane remark he was about to make use of. "Very kind indeed!" he repeated savagely.

Mr. Wakefield's accident created quite a sensation in town. It was all the fashion for everybody to be asking everybody else how he was, and for his bachelor friends to be running up to see him every little while. Miss Snipps was particularly kind and attentive to him, sending a messenger daily to inquire how he was and sending him tumblers of jelly, for which he thanked her very cordially and then threw them out of the window. But he showed his gratitude by calling on her as soon as he was able. Indeed, he manifested such a grateful spirit towards her, in various ways, that her "young man," who was in a clothing store down town, took the alarm and married her off hand; which was how it happened that one morning, as Mr. Wakefield was strolling down town, he met a wedding party coming out of a church—he stared—his eyes did not deceive him—it was Miss Snipps. Rushing home by the back streets, he threw his clothes into his trunk, and left for New York on the next train; from whence he returned in six weeks, a

wiser if not a better man. Poor Miss Snipps never dreamt of his having had any serious intentions towards her.

Mr. Wakefield did not make another venture in the matrimonial market for fifteen years, when he married his housekeeper, who would have made him a most excellent wife if she had not been a termagant, and had not got tipsy by times.