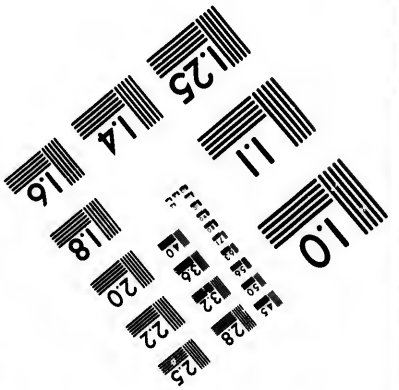
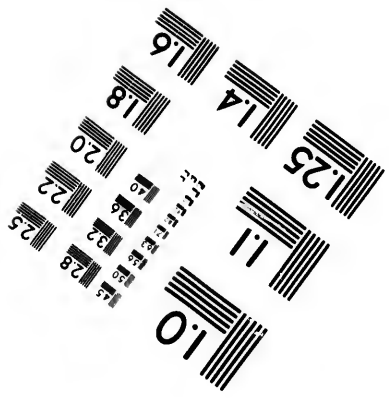
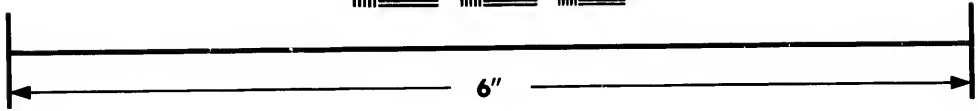
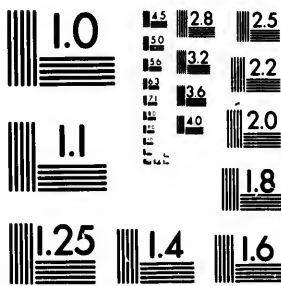


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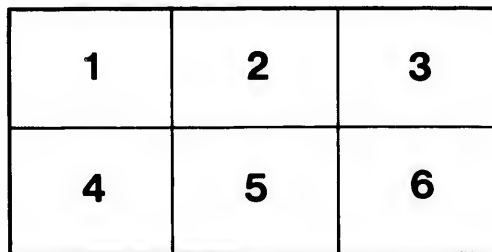
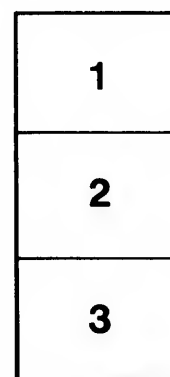
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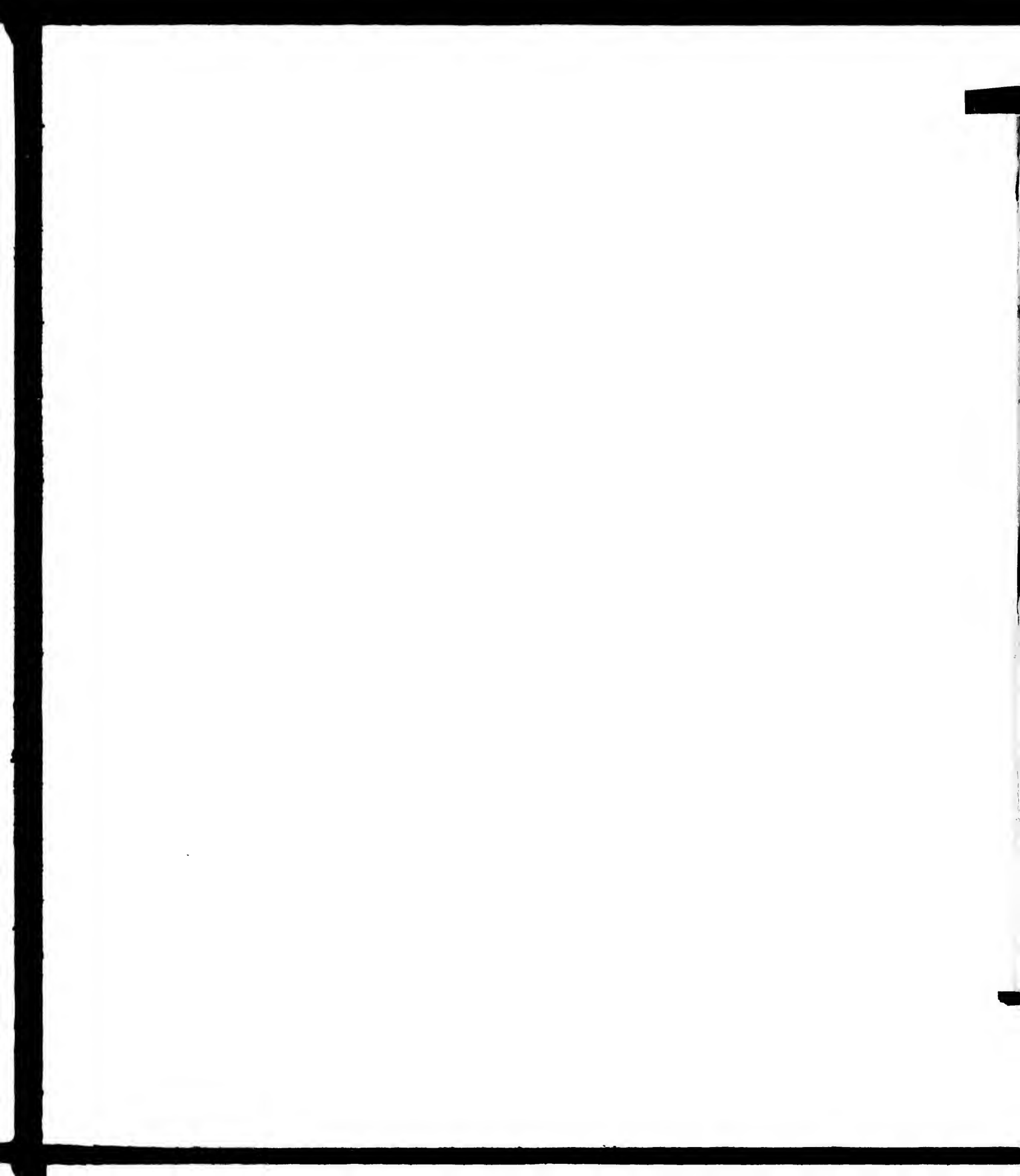
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Ropes of Sand.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"WOVEN OF MANY THREADS," "A CROWN FROM THE SPEAR."



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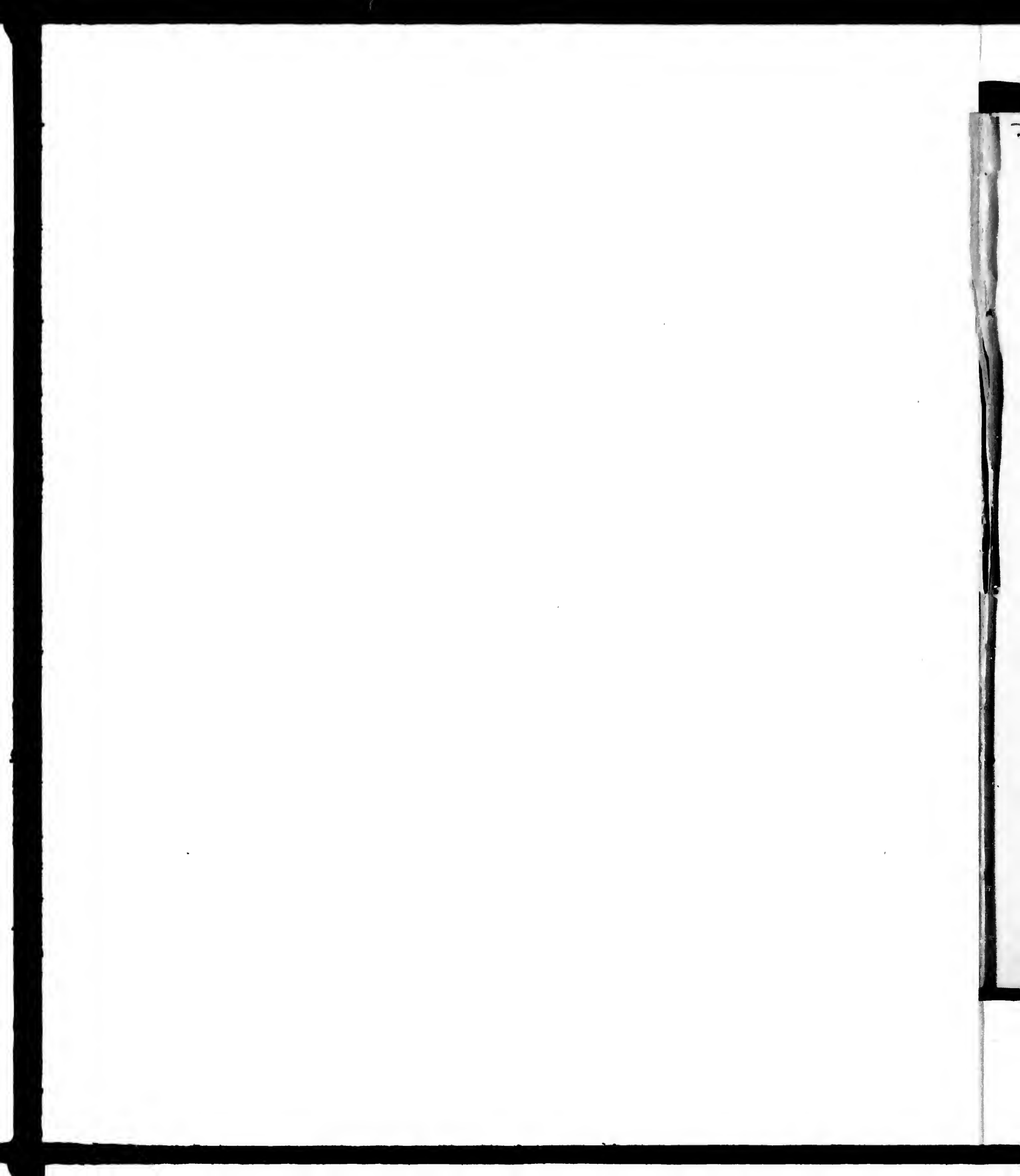
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ROPES OF SAND:

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"WOVEN OF MANY THREADS," "A CROWN FROM THE SPEAR."

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-Edit^d Ticknor (Oaken)

Jamison

"Then in Life's goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness ;
Nor prize the colored waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress
New light and strength they give."

LONGFELLOW.
*



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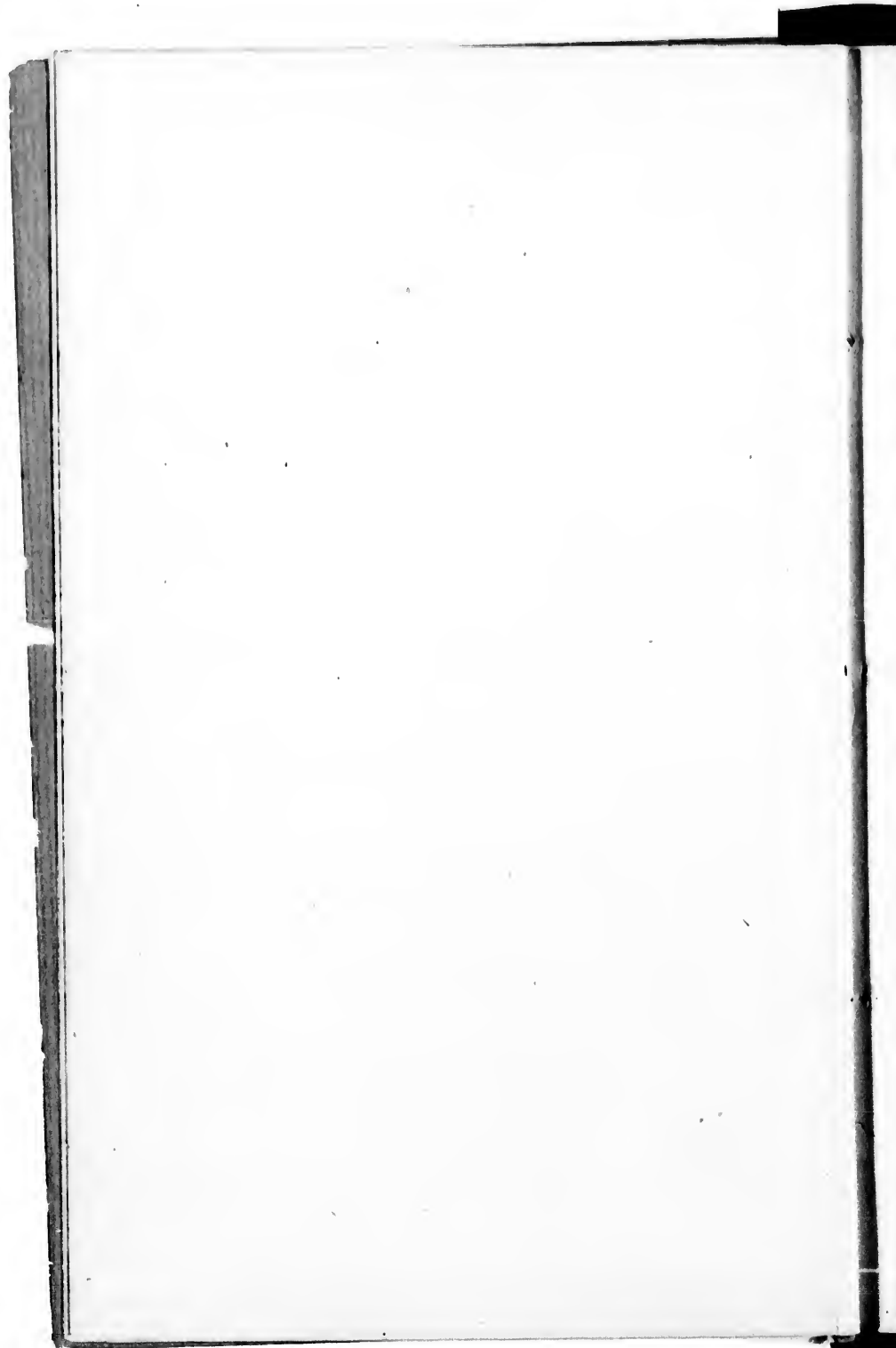
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ROPES OF SAND.

CHAPTER I.

DRIFTED ASHORE.

BETWEEN Houndsditch and Fenchurch Streets is a narrow, dingy alley, known to the inhabitants of that part of London as Black-cat Lane. The rear walls of the great warehouses on Fenchurch Street make a dismal blank of one side, shutting out every thing but a narrow strip of sky from those who grovel in squalor below. A number of tumble-down sheds cling to these windowless walls, like parasites to the stately trunk of an oak; their poverty and decay forming a pitiful contrast to the massive and indestructible blocks of stone against which they lean. On the other side, rows of dilapidated tenement-houses, pressing one against the other like a file of tipsy soldiers, present their forbidding fronts, their broken windows stuffed with rags and old hats, or roughly repaired with strips of tin, leather, and oil-cloth, to keep out the cold in winter, and the impure air in summer. Dozens of half-naked children wallow like pigs in the drains choked with all kinds of refuse, or play with the happy indifference of childhood on the broken and sloppy paving, where a ray of sunlight scarce ever falls; while haggard and untidy women hang about the doors, smoking and gossiping with their equally haggard and untidy neighbors. Though the pure air and the life-giving sun seldom visit this squalid sink

of the great city, these poor little weeds of humanity seem to grow and flourish in this rank soil more abundantly than in healthlier localities: they run and laugh and shout, in their blissful ignorance, as merrily as though they were never dirty, cold, or hungry; as though there were no gripping want, no pain, no sin, no sorrow, among this struggling, suffering community. They are born and live and die in this foul atmosphere, never knowing, that within the distance of a mile is another existence, another class of beings, another world, better and happier than theirs. Year after year, generation after generation, these poor weeds spring into life, flourish for a brief day, fade and die, and are plucked up by the hand of God to leave room for another growth. The most of them are poor, deserted waifs, who never know to whom they owe their existence. Chance affixes some name to them by which they are called during their lives: when they die, it dies with them, and they are remembered no more on earth.

One dreary night in November, how many years ago it matters not, an old man sat alone before his little fire in the cellar of one of the most respectable of these tenements, diligently repairing a much-worn waistcoat by the feeble light of a tin lamp that hung from a hook in the smoky jamb of the fireplace. He was a most singular little figure, being scarce five feet tall, while his head was unusually large, and covered

with coarse, thick hair as white as snow; his eyes, very small and close together, peered out from under a pair of sbaggy brows with an expression of mingled cunning and good nature; his face, destitute of beard save a few straggling hairs under his chin, was covered with fine, deep lines that crossed each other at every angle, making his skin appear like closely quilted parchment. Although his clothes denoted extreme poverty, they were scrupulously clean, and had been patched and repatched with the utmost care, showing as many colors as did Joseph's coat. Every thing in the miserable room was pitifully poor, yet as neat and orderly as though some thrifty housewife had just finished her day's cleaning. The tin lamp, that threw its flickering blaze over his bent head and large rough hands, shone like polished silver; the deal table and broken floor were scoured to a remarkable whiteness; and the miserable bed against the wall was neatly made, and covered with a much-worn but clean coverlet. There was nothing in the room but the table, bed, and three-legged stool on which he sat, besides a little common crockery on a shelf, some tin measures scoured to the same brightness as the lamp, a few pails and baskets, and in one corner a heap of clean white sand.

The fire blazed cheerily, the flame of the lamp flickered over the little old man, who stitched away industriously, his feet on the high fender, and his nose almost touching his knees. From time to time he straightened himself, pushed up his spectacles, and very deliberately took a large brass pin from the lining of his jacket, with which he knocked off the black cap that had gathered on the wick, and picked it up to a brighter blaze; then he wiped the pin carefully on a bunch of wool that hung under the lamp, quilted it again into his jacket, and returned to his work as though there had been no interruption. At last, when the blue patch was placed upon the brown garment to his entire satisfaction, he held it up admiringly, and said to himself in a cheery, chirping voice, "It's good, as

good as new; an' I only paid a shillin' for it. It was so dirty when I bought it, that I thought it was black: now I've washed it, it's a fine brown; an' this bit o' blue cloth covers the holes uncommon well. It's a' excellent thing that you're handy with your needle, Top, so that you can go well dressed, while your neighbors are in rags." Then he smoothed it out over his knees, clipped off some little frayed threads around the edges, and folded it carefully, patting it with a loving hand, while he smiled fondly as though it were a living thing he caressed; after which he stood up, straightened himself out of his cramped position, and held it at arms' length, looking at it once more approvingly before he laid it on a shelf over the fireplace, and covered it with a paper to protect it from the dust. "Now, Top, make your tea," he continued, addressing himself in the same cheerful tone; for, having been alone all his life, he made a companion of himself by fancying that he was another person, and, under this happy delusion, he carried on long dialogues, personating two voices, so that any one listening would certainly have said that another besides himself was talking in the little cellar. "Where's the tea?" he questioned, bustling around, and setting a bright kettle on the hob. "Why, there's a pen'orth o' the best quality in a paper bag in the table drawer. Top, you're stupid to-night."—"Yes: I'm stupid, 'cause I'm tired. It's hard work to lug sand all day in two pails, an' stop here an' there, at everybody's call, to measure out a ha'pen'orth; besides, I've sanded the floor o' the Blue Dragon. It's the first time in my life that ever I was asked to sand the floor o' the Blue Dragon. I've supplied that inn with sand for more 'an fifty years, every day, and al'ays left my measure at the door o' the bar-room without bein' asked to sift it over the floor."—"Who told you to do it to-day, Top?"—"Why, the new bar-maid. Says she, as pert as could be, 'Mr. Top, just take that sifter an' give it a fling 'round: your arms is longer an' stronger 'an mine, an' you ain't 'alf as much to do as I 'ave.' Well, I did it;

though mighty unwillin', an' all the while she asked me questions as sa'cy as any wench you ever see. Says she, 'What's your name 'sides Top?' Says I, 'I've got no other name that I knows of.' 'Well,' says she, 'how did you get that? did your daddy an' your mammy give it to you?' Says I, 'I never had any daddy an' mammy as I can remember. A' old woman as lives in the next cellar, told me, that when I was a wee thing, a toddlin' 'round, some one said, 'He's no bigger 'an a top; ' an' so they al'ays called me Little Top; now they call me Old Top.' Then she laughs, an' says, 'It's a good name for you; an' I'll make you spin 'round, an' sand the floor for me every day.' Don't you call that too bad? Here I've lived more 'an sixty years, an' never been out o' sound o' Bow Bells, never left off one day carryin' sand with not a pebble nor stick in it, an' al'ays heaped the measure at the Blue Dragon extra high in the middle; now I say it's too bad, at my time o' life, to be drove by that sa'cy new bar-maid to sift it over the floor. Don't you say it's too bad?' — "Yes, I do: I wouldn't do it, Top, I wouldn't do it." — "But if I refuse I'll lose their custom, an' there's a penny ha'penny a day gone. Hark! what's that? Did some one knock?" — "Yes: some one knocked;" and, as he answered himself, he replaced the hissing kettle on the hob, from whence he had taken it, and turned toward the rickety door, which was fastened with two stout boards, propped slanting, and secured by iron spikes driven into the floor. "Who's there?" he shouted, hollowing his hands behind each ear, the better to hear the answer. But there was no answer, only a slight rustling and sobbing which sounded like the wind driving the black fog before it. "I don't believe it's any one at all. Do you, Top?" — "No, I don't." — "It's a nasty gusty night as makes one's bones creep in his body, an' the door rattles itself; or may be it's a dog, or a child, or a — woman an' a babby," he added, with sudden animation, as a faint wail fell on his ear, mingled with a pitiful, broken voice that entreated, "Let me in! let me in, for the love of God!"

"She's not the first poor cretur' you've sheltered from the wind and rain; is she, Top?" he questioned as he removed the boards briskly, and threw open the creaking door, before which stood the figure of a woman, in strong relief against the darkness and dense vapors of the November night. She looked more like a corpse than a living thing, with her shrunk, hollow face, long, dank hair, and naked, skeleton arms, from which the tatters of a shawl had fallen, revealing a babe a few weeks' old pressed convulsively to her breast.

"Lord love you! how dreadful you do look! But Top nin't afraid of you; are you, Top? Get in out o' the wind an' rain; an' don't stand there, starin' like a spirit come to give a man his warnin'."

The miserable creature said nothing, but tottered over the threshold, looking around with a bewildered stare, while Top secured the door carefully. Her great hollow eyes rested on the fire for a moment, and then wandered about the room as though seeking for some place of rest. Suddenly uttering a sharp cry, she staggered forward, and fell in a heap on the pile of sand, clutching it with her hands, while she gasped in broken tones, "Sand! dry, warm sand! Ah, what a welcome bed for me!"

"She needn't fall down there all in a heap, need she, when there's my bed?" said Top, drawing near her, and looking at her pitifully. "Come, come, mistress, raise up, an' give me the babby; give old Top the little one; he'll warm it, an' feed it with some good milk, while you take a nice strong cup o' tea that'll set you up in a minit. There's nothin' like a cup o' tea to chirk a body up when they're weak like, an' down t' the heel. It's all hot. It's just ready. Give us your hand, mistress, and I'll help you up."

"No, no!" she sobbed out with passionate tears drenching her haggard checks. "No: let me be here. It's better 'an London mud. I don't want no tea; I don't want nothin' now only to lay still on this sand an' die."

"Nonsense, nonsense, mistress! the like o' you don't die so easy; do they, Top?"

'Sides, that sand-heap's no place to die on, when there's a bed which is fitter for a human bein'."

"It's a good enough bed for me. It's a better than I've had for many a day. The smell o' the sand does me good. When I was a' innocent child I played in the sand away off on the downs. I made palaces, an' gardens, an' caves, an' mountains of it; an' all the while I heard the sea roarin' an' breakin' on the shore miles an' miles below. I hear it now!" she cried, starting up wildly, "I hear it now! an' there's father's boat a comin' in on the top o' that big wave."

"What's she talkin' of, Top? Does she know what she says? I tell you, mistress, there's no sea here, nor no downs, nor no waves, nor no boat. You're in Black-cat Lane, huddled up on a heap o' sand in old Top's cellar. Come, cheer up a bit! take a drop o' tea, an' you'll know where you are d'rectly," said the old man encouragingly, forgetting for a moment to address his other self, now that he had an actual body to talk to, while he bent over her, and tried to raise her head, with its tangled mass of hair, from the clinging sand.

"It's no use. I can't move, an' I won't move! Leave me here: I want to die here!" she cried, obstinately repulsing Top with what little strength remained to her.

With a puzzled, worried expression, the old man let the heavy head settle back again on its shifting pillow, while he shook the sand from the long hair that hung over his arm. He did not know what to do with this evidently starving creature, who refused food and drink; so he only knelt by her, looking at her stupidly, while she muttered incoherent sentences of which he occasionally caught the words, "Downs, boats, and sea." At last the poor baby struggled in its mother's close embrace, and cried feebly. Top attempted to take it; but she only clasped it more tightly, and glared at him so wildly, that, half afraid, he retreated to the other side of the room. "What will you do, Top? what will you do with this cretur' an' her babby?" he questioned, scratching his head violently with a comical expression

of bewilderment on his broad face. "You're not the man to turn her out o' door, are you? No: I'm not the man to turn her out o' door, nor to let her die on a heap o' sand neither; but she won't move, nor won't let me give the poor starvin' mite nothin'; an' I b'lieve they'll both die, if they don't have a snift o' somethin'." Then a sudden inspiration seemed to take possession of his puzzled brain; for he turned nimbly toward the fire, and, taking a little sauc-pan from a shelf, he poured some milk into it which he warmed, and then sweetened. When it was prepared to his taste, he crept softly toward the woman, knelt down by her side, and with a small, wooden spoon put some of the sweet, warm milk to the lips of the baby. The little creature swallowed it eagerly, all the time struggling to free itself from its mother's close embrace! but the wretched woman only clasped it closer, muttering her broken sentences, while she gazed into vacancy with fixed, glassy eyes. When the child had satisfied its hunger, Top tried the same experiment with the mother; but she set her teeth firmly, and refused to swallow a drop.

"It's no use," he said grimly; "the cretur's determined to starve herself; an' I can't help it. So I'll jest let her have her way, as is mostly best with winmin; an' I shouldn't wonder, when she rests a bit, if she'd come to her appetite." With this conclusion he took the coverlet from his bed, and spread it gently over the mother and child. Then he stood with his hands on his hips, watching both with an expression of mingled pity and curiosity, until the baby slept, and the woman fell into a heavy stupor.

"They'll wake up all right; don't you think they will, Top?" he muttered softly, as he crept back to his seat on the three-legged stool. The lamp burned dimly: he picked up the wick, knocked off the black cap dexterously, and stirred the fire to a bright blaze. Then he poured out a mug of tea; and, taking a penny roll and a scrap of cheese from the drawer of the table, he munched them with evident relish, sipping

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now and then, from the mug, as he glanced over his shoulder at the quiet heap on the sand. After he had finished his humble meal, he moved about softly, making every thing tidy, with the neatness and skill of a woman. When the troublesome lamp was trimmed again, the fire stirred up, and the broken hearth swept, he took a pair of coarse stockings from the table drawer which seemed to contain all his worldly goods, dove his hands into the capacious pockets of his patched trousers, and fished out a ball of blue yarn, then a needle-ease made of the leg-bone of a goose, and closed with a small wooden plug. From this he selected a large darning-needle, and proceeded to darn his well-worn stockings, while he carried on his usual dialogue in a half-whisper, glancing from time to time at the sleepers on the sand.

Just as Top was in the midst of a very animated discussion with himself in regard to the history of the miserable woman whom he thought to be sleeping peacefully, she started up wildly, and cried out in ringing tones, —

"I see father's boat a comin'; the sails is white in the sunlight, an' the sea is blue like the sky; an' he's standin' on the bow, a holdin' out his hands, an' he looks at me kind and pitiful. He was a good man — do you hear? — he was a good man; an' he told me that my evil ways would lead to ruin. He said that I was twistin' ropes o' sand, that would break, an' leave me a wreck on the shore. An' he was right; for he was a good man. His name was Abel Winter. I've named my baby for him: perhaps the name may save him from sin and sorrow. Poor little thing! I've never loved him till now, when I can't hold him no longer. I hope the world'll be better to him than it's been to me. Something's gnawed at my heart for many a month. It's been more 'an I could bear; an' it's never been easy, day nor night; but now it seems to die away; an' I b'lieve I'm cured, 'cause father's comin' for me." Then she sank back, and

hid her face on the shifting sands that still smelt of the salt sea and the sunny downs.

After that she was silent; and old Top, who had turned on his stool, pushed up his spectacles, and wiped away a tear with the toe of the stocking that he held on his hand, saying, "Poor cretur', she's dreamin', an' talkin' in her sleep."

When Bow Bells sounded the hour of nine, the old man always covered his dying fire, put out his little lamp, and crept to his bed; but to-night what could he do? The wretched woman still slept, and showed no signs of waking. At last, overcome by weariness, and before he was aware of it, his head sank upon his breast, and he slumbered peacefully, sitting upon his three-legged stool. When he awoke, his fire was nearly out, and his lamp burned very dimly.

"Why, Top, you almost lost yourself, didn't you?" he said, stretching and blinking like a toad suddenly exposed to sunlight. "It must be late, awful late; an' you might as well go to bed, an' sleep like a Christian, as to sit here all cramped up, watchin' that poor cretur' that's sound as a roach, an' won't talk any more in her dreams." So, with the intention of retiring for the night, he covered the few embers carefully, pulled off his heavy shoes, and drew a red night-cap over his ears. Then, before extinguishing the light, he crept softly toward the sand-heap to see if all was well with the sleepers; but the child was wide awake. Its great dark eyes shone like stars out of the heavy shadow of the mother's hair: its lips were parted in a warm smile; and, with one little finger, it followed the track of a tear that rolled like a pearl down the pale cheek of the woman.

"God bless the little angel!" said Top, bending lower to smile on the child. Something in the mother's face startled him; and he took up one hand that lay loosely enough now over the baby's neck. It was cold and rigid. She was dead!

CHAPTER II.

TOP'S BABY.

THE next morning, when the parish undertaker, with his assistant, came to take away the body of the unknown woman, they found Top sitting before the fire with his feet on the fender, and the baby, wrapped in one of his clean, well-patched waistcoats, lying across his knees, cooing and laughing, all unconscious that its mother lay dead upon the bed, with her hands folded peacefully, and the penitential tears wiped away from her eyes forever.

"What you goin' to do with the child?" questioned the undertaker, who stood looking with stony indifference upon the ghastly face of the mother.

"Why, keep it, to be sure. You're goin' to keep it; ain't you, Top?" he said with decision, as he pressed it close to his heart. "It's a little angel, a blessed little angel; an' I wouldn't send it away for the whole world!"

"But what can you do with it? A young one o' that age needs a deal o' care: an' you've no woman about, have you?"

"I don't need no woman to take care of it: I'm woman enough myself. I can wash an' mend an' cook, an' that's all a mistress does; an' some of 'em don't do that. Now, mind you, Mr. Undertaker, give her a kind o' decent burial; an' I'll look out for the child, and bring it up like a Christian."

"Know the party?" asked the assistant, twirling the screws out of the cover of the pine-box that they had placed near the bed.

"No," replied Top laconically: "never saw her till she came here to die."

"Drunk, wasn't she?" questioned the undertaker.

"No," returned Top indignantly, "no more drunk an' you are this blessed minit; but all worn out, like a' old garment that can't hold itself together. The doctor said she died o' weakness an' starvation: but Lord knows she needn't; for I tried hard enough to have her eat, an' she wouldn't swallow a

mouthful. It's my 'pinion as how she was kind o' tired like o' livin', an' didn't want to have the life kept in her."

"Likely; they often do get tired, that sort; an' I 'magine she was a precious had lot. Didn't tell you her name nor nothin'?" continued the undertaker, as he lifted the heavy head with its mass of black hair. "Young, shouldn't you say? Not a day over twenty. Lord! what fools these creatur's are to throw themselves away like that!"

Top covered the baby's face, and turned his back, while they laid the hapless woman in her rude coffin, and carried her away as indifferently as though their burden were but a dumb animal, instead of a human being who had sinned, and suffered, and died with a tear of penitence on her cheek.

After they had gone with their sad burden, Top laid the child gently upon the pile of sand, while he arranged the bed from which they had removed the body of the mother. He shook up the straw pallet to a soft bundle, spread out the coverlet so that there was no crease nor wrinkle, and then lifted the baby on the palms of his hands as carefully as though it were the most delicate spun glass, and deposited it with a sigh of happiness in the middle of the bed, saying, with a lively chirp, "There, there, chickey! ain't that nice an' soft? It's Top's bed, where he sleeps every night. It's clean enough for a king; an' you sha'n't sleep no more on mud nor sand, but on sweet, fresh straw, with a good warm rug over you."

The child looked at him intelligently, with great, serious eyes, and cooed and nestled, as though it were thoroughly contented, and fully appreciated the comfortable condition into which it had so suddenly fallen. Then he bustled about, opening the drawer, and searching for something, with an anxious expression on his comical old face. "I thought I had a little bit somewhere. Top, don't you remember you washed it the other day, and put it away to mend your shirt with? Ah! here it is,"

and he drew out from the bottom of the drawer a small piece of old linen, from which he cut a scrap carefully; then he proceeded to put a spoonful of rather sandy sugar in the centre of it; after which he gathered it up into a little ball, and tied a thread tightly around it. "There's a sugar-teat for you," he said with great satisfaction, as he introduced it into the rosy mouth of the child, who tugged at it vigorously.

Top stood watching this process of nourishment, perfectly enchanted, his hands on his hips, and his whole little body convulsed with a chuckle of delight, when the door opened, and an old woman entered unceremoniously. So absorbed was he, that he did not hear her until she slapped him smartly on the shoulder, and shouted in a shrill voice,—for she was deaf, and so thought every one else was,—“Top, Top, what 'ave you got there?”

The old man started, and looked around crossly, then burst into a hearty laugh when he saw who it was. “Ha! ha! It's you, is it, Mother Birch? so you've come to see Top's baby. Well, now look! ain't it a beauty?”

“That it is,” piped the old woman; “but where's the poor cretur? Have they took her away a'ready?”

“Yes,” replied Top: “she's gone to her long home; an' it's the best place for one o' them poor, sinnin', sufferin' souls. But, thank God! Top's got the baby safe: an' you mean to keep it; don't you, Top?”

“You mean to keep it!” cried the old woman in surprise. “Why, good Lord! man, you must be crazy. You don't know what a trouble it'll be.”

“A trouble! not a bit of a trouble, if I can only get bread an' milk for it,” replied Top with a cunning glance at his visitor.

“Perhaps you'll find that harder 'an you think; for these little cretur's do eat a deal.”

“Well, then, I'll go without my own crust for it, if there's need. But, stars o' light! Mother Birch, there's nine o'clock struck, an' I ain't been out with my sand; an' I can't

leave this little thing alone, can I, now?” said Top, looking at the baby fondly, but with a puzzled and anxious expression on his poor old face. “Sides, it's got to have a froek, an' somethin' to be comfortable in. I've saved a few shillin's, I have; an' I'll go to the Jews in Houndsditch, an' hunt up some little duds, if you'll stay an' watch it while I'm gone.”

“Oh! I'll do that for once in a way,” piped the old woman; “but you know I've got my own livin' to earn; an' I can't give my time to you an' your baby for long. There's a great heap o' rags a waitin' to be picked over now.”

Top scratched his head reflectively for a few moments, and then looked up brightly as a happy idea struck him. “I'll tell you what I'll do, Mother Birch; I've saved a few shillin's, I have; an' I'll give you one an' sixpence a week, if you'll stay here an' mind the baby when I'm out, which isn't all day, you know; an' you can bring your rags here to sort, an' won't make no more mess 'an you can help, or won't let the child touch 'em, cause they're mostly nasty. So you can't lose a deal o' time, an' you'll get somethin' into the bargain.”

“I'll do it; I'll do it willin'ly,” returned the old woman, her eyes brightening, and her whole face expressing her full approval of the arrangement.

Top bustled about, filled his pails with sand, put on his patched jacket and oil-cloth cap, and then lingered a moment to look at the child, who had fallen asleep with the collapsed sugar-teat hanging from one corner of its little mouth. “Isn't it lovely? Isn't it sweet?” he murmured, bending over it, and brushing its soft cheek with his wrinkled old face. “Mind, now, Mother Birch, an' don't let it be hungry; for there's plenty o' milk, an' a fire to warm it, an' sugar to sweeten it; an' don't let a body 'sides yourself put a finger on it, now mind you! If you do, I'll bury you 'live in that sand-heap, as sure's my name's Top!” and with this awful threat he hobbled off, looking back with an expression of mingled love and anxiety at the sleeping child.

Long before Mother Birch expected him, Top re-appeared, hurried and eager, his pails empty of sand, and filled instead with 'red flannel and dingy linen. "How is the little cretur'?" he cried before he had fairly closed the door. "What I slept all the time? You don't say that it's never woke!"

"Not much to speak of," returned Mother Birch with a satisfied chuckle. "It nestled a little once, an' I fed it with some milk, an' turned it over. Then it went right off asleep d'rectly, an' ain't moved since. You see, Top, the poor mite's been dragged about, an' been hungry an' cold likely, ever since it was born; now it's warm an' comfortable, it wants to sleep a deal, which is best for such wee things."

Top assented with a good-natured, "Yes, yes: you're right; no doubt, you're right. But look a here, Mother Birch, an' see what I've got." Then he emptied the contents of the pails on the table. Two red flannel petticoats, a frock, two little caps, and a pair of tiny socks, with some coarse much-worn baby-linen, comprised his purchases. "Now, ain't these here little duds good enough for the Prince o' Wales; now ain't they?" he questioned earnestly.

Mother Birch assured him that they were good enough for any of the royal family, adding, with a toothless grin of delight, that "nothing was too good for such a dear little thing, as slept all the time, and wasn't no trouble to nobody."

"An' I got 'em for 'most nothin': three shillin's for all. It's true, they're worn a little; but then, they'll last a while, for all o' that," said Top, selecting a complete outfit, and fidgeting back and forth between the table and the bed, comparing the size of the clothes with the diminutive thing wrapped in his old jacket.

At last the bundle stirred. Two little pink hands struggled out from among the blue and brown patches, and a sound, that was as much a grunt of contentment as a cry, proclaimed the baby to be awake.

"I'll dress it, Top," said Mother Birch, officiously seating herself, and turning her apron the clean side out.

"No, no! that you don't, mistress," returned Top, with an air of entire proprietorship: "it's my baby; an' I'm a goin' to dress it the first time myself; an' you needn't be so busy an' useful when there's no need."

"But a woman's more handier, you know," suggested Mother Birch humbly, her shrill voice wonderfully soft and complacent, in spite of Top's snubbing.

"I'm handy enough. I don't want to be no handier 'an I am. Just stand by an' see how lovely an' neat I'll dress the little cretur'. There, there, chickey!" he murmured soothingly, as the child twisted its little limbs, and nestled against his rough jacket with the instinct that teaches a baby where to seek for its natural nourishment.

"I'm 'fraid I'll break it, it's so little an' delicate: I declare, I'm 'fraid I'll break it!" said Top ruefully, as he vainly tried to introduce its tiny pink feet into the little socks.

Mother Birch watched with a sarcastic smile his awkward and ineffectual attempts, until he looked up, and said with pathetic humility, "You're right, mistress: you're quite right. I ain't as handy as I thought. I believe winmin is cleverer 'an a man with babies; but I'll learn. Top'll learn in no time, if you'll jist give him a lift now."

The old woman could not resist this kindly invitation, especially when her fingers were itching to get hold of the child; so, with an amiable grin that implied full pardon for Top's snubbing, she set to work; and, in a few moments, the little creature was as respectably and comfortably clothed a baby as ever was seen, even in the most aristocratic family of that neighborhood.

"There, now!" said Top, as soon as the important toilet was completed, "I s'pose you want to be about your work; don't you, Mother Birch? an' I don't 'need you no more to-day."

"I'm kind o' unwilling' to leave the young one; still, I must, or I sha'n't get nothin' done to my rags," said the old

woman, with a lingering look at the child, as she turned toward the door.

Mother Birch was what they, in their vulgar parlance, called a "bad lot." Her coarse, wrinkled face bore the indelible stamp of an evil life; and those who knew her best declared that she had neither heart nor soul, so depraved and vicious was she in her conduct. But there must have been some latent good under the crust of sin and degradation, some sensitive spot that the fires of passion had not seared, or that soft, almost tender smile would never have touched her lips as she turned away from Top's baby.

Every one in the lane knew how the little stranger had come among them; for the night before, when Top found that the woman was dead, he had rushed out and called in his neighbors, who had cared for the poor body, and prepared it for its burial as decently as their humble means would allow them to do. Now, as Mother Birch emerged from the old man's cellar, all the women and children cried out, "How's Top's baby? how's Top's baby?"

"As well as can be, you rag-a-muffins, you! Stop your noise, an' get out o' my way! I don't want to answer none o' your questions," replied the old creature as she hurried along with an air of great importance; while the women hurled taunts and insults after her, and the children straightened themselves up, puffed out their cheeks, and, with their hands on their hips, imitated her appearance, walking close behind her, until she disappeared within her own door.

As soon as Top was alone, he turned toward his treasure with an air of relief: already it was so precious to him, that he was jealous if another touched it, or looked at it; besides, he felt a sort of awkward shame, a kind of fear of showing his love for it, of petting and caressing it before strangers.

"I'm glad she's gone," he said, with a great sigh of contentment, as he held the child close to his heart, and swayed back and forth gently. "She's a' old meddler, is Mother Birch, an' I'm very sorry I've got to

leave you with her, chickey; but I can't help it; you ain't old enough to stay alone, an' Top's got to sell his sand to buy bread an' milk for your little stomach. Oh! you're a beauty, you are; such soft little hands an' feet, such little fingers an' toes! An' you're mine, all mine. Top's never had much; an' he's al'ays been a lonely cretur', with no one but hisself to talk to. Now he's got a baby that'll stay with him day an' night, that'll laugh an' talk some day, an' call him daddy. Yes: you'll say daddy to poor old Top, won't you, deary? 'cause he's al'ays thought as how he'd like to have a little cretur' to call him daddy. How thankful I am that your poor mammy fell down an' died on my sand-heap 'stead o' any other! 'cause it's better for me to have her baby than to leave it to suffer like hundreds of poor little souls in this great city. Top'll be good to you, little one: Top'll be real good," he said, with a smile full of tenderness, as he stroked his wrinkled old face with its soft, warm hand. "Yes, Top'll be good. He'll give you enough to eat, an' nice, clean clothes to wear; an' when you're big enough, you'll go to school, an' learn to read like a real gentleman. You've crept into my heart, baby,—my poor old heart that's al'ays been kind o' empty, a waitin' for somethin'. Now God's sent you to fill it, an' it'll never be hungry any more; for you crowd it full o' love, till it's ready to burst." Here the old man's trembling voice broke into a sob; and, laying his face against the silken hair of the child, he wept happy tears for the first time in his dreary life.

CHAPTER III.

BLUE-EYED VIOLET.

BEFORE the dwellers in Black-cat Lane were well aware of it, Top's baby had grown into a fine lad of twelve years. He was a tall, straight, handsome boy, with regular features, and serious brown eyes, so calm and deep that they seemed al-

ready to have looked into the mysteries of life. His speech, manners, and character were altogether superior to those around him; and, as Top always kept him clean and fairly well dressed, compared to the other dirty, ragged children, he looked every inch a little aristocrat. Then he knew how to read and write; for the old man had kept the promise made to his baby, and had tried to have him taught like a "real gentleman." Besides, he never exacted any labor from the boy, who was not idle and indifferent, but simply ignorant that there was any need of his working. He had always had a poor but clean bed, coarse but abundant food, decent clothes, and a warm fire in winter; therefore he did not know how different was pinching and degrading want from his comparatively comfortable position. Old Top adored him as something infinitely superior to other children. He was proud that his hands were soft and white, his skin clean and smooth, his beautiful black hair carefully combed, and his clothes whole and neat. It was no matter if he worked harder than ever, tottering about all day under the heavy weight of his sand, earning a penny honestly; no matter how toilsome the means, scheming, economizing, pinching, often going hungry himself, that his boy might be well fed; working late into the night by the feeble flame of his little lamp, while the child slept peacefully in his warm bed. It was seldom now that Top retired when Bow Bells struck nine. There were little socks to be mended, little trousers and jackets to be patched, and little shirts to be carefully darned. His poor old back often ached, his eyes were dim and watery, and his limbs trembled weakly under his burden; for he was growing old, — just how old he did not know; but he was certainly not far from seventy. Yet he bore the labor and privations of his life with sweet serenity and patience, and no one ever heard a murmur escape his lips. Mother Birch had remonstrated with him more than once, because he worked like a slave, and did so much for the boy.

"Not a word, not a word!" he would say with an impatient jerk of the head. "Top knows what he's about, an' don't want no interferin'; Abel ain't like other boys, he ain't. There's difference 'tween fish an' fowl. You never saw him a playin' in the gutters, black an' dirty; you never hear no bad lang'age out o' his mouth, nor rude, nasty tricks like other young ones. He likes to go to his school, clean an' reg'lar; an' when he's home, he likes to set by the fire with his old daddy an' his books. He's a rare boy, Mother Birch; an' I count myself lucky if I can work my fingers off for him."

In this Top did not the least exaggerate. He would willingly and gladly have given every limb of his poor old body for the boy, if it would have served him in any way. Labor for him was light, self-denial and privation sweet. It did not matter how tired he was: his aching back and stiff limbs were forgotten when, the day's labor over, his boy stood at his side, one arm laid fondly around his neck while he repeated a lesson, or read a simple story, which seemed to him a remarkable acquirement for one so young. Or sometimes he would kneel at the old man's feet, leaning his head against his knee while he looked silent and thoughtful into the glowing fire.

Top, wondering what he saw there, would remain perfectly quiet lest he should disturb a reverie that seemed sacred. At last he would look up, his great serious eyes full of mysterious light, and say, "Daddy, don't you see things in the fire, — cities an' palaces an' mountains?"

"No, sonny," Top would reply gravely: "I can't say as I do. I don't see nothin' but red coals an' black, an' bits o' white ashes."

"Why, there, in the middle o' the grate, there's what looks like human beings a strugglin' an' fightin' together. Sometimes the blaze makes them red an' mad; then it dies out, an' they're black an' solemn; an' at last they all go to smoke an' ashes. It's like life some way, daddy, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes: I s'pose it is," Top would an-

swer with grave reverence, and a look of wonder, as though he were assenting to the solemn prophecy of a sacred oracle. He had told the boy again and again the sad story of his mother's death, always throwing a mantle of charity over her sins; and the child would listen with pale cheeks and tearful eyes, wondering if she really heard the voices of the sea, and saw the downs, and the ships, and her father's boat with sunlight on the sails. Where were those downs she played upon when a child? Who was her father? and why had she wandered so far from him and the blue sea, to die unknown in the very heart of London? These thoughts disturbed the dreamy brain of the boy, and awoke in him a vague curiosity to know something of his mother's history.

"You needn't puzzle yourself about it, child," Top would say, in reply to his many questions. "It don't make no matter who your gran'laddy was, nor where he lived. She said with 'most her last brenth, that he was a good man; an' that's enough to know. You've got his name, an' its a fine one as ever a lad had. Abel is a pious name, an' Winter sounds serious an' good. Two names, my boy; an' poor old Top never had but one, an' he only got that by chance. I don't find no fault, 'cause it ain't no use now as I've gone through my life with only one name. Still, it's a deal more respectable to have two, an' you've got 'em, my boy; so be contented, an' don't puzzle your brains a tryin' to find out what the Lord never intended you to know."

Although the boy was still called Top's baby by the greater part of the dwellers in Black-cat Lane, Top never failed, when speaking of him, to give him his full title; for to the simple-minded old man, whom fate had defrauded of his birthright, it was the proudest inheritance that he could possess.

Sometimes when Abel had a holiday, and Top was away at his work, the boy would wander off alone into Lendenhall Street, through Poultry and Cheapside to St. Paul's, where he would remain for hours, looking with a sort of awe at the solemn pile, think-

ing how near the dome was to heaven, and how he should like to be a bird with light wings, that he might fly up above the smoke and fog, and sit and sing all day in mid-heaven, happy and free. Another place that particularly pleased him was Christ's Hospital. From St. Paul's he would go into Newgate Street, and stand for hours with his earnest face pressed against the railing, watching the scholars at their play. The Blue-coat boys were very curious and interesting to him on account of their quaint costume. Their blue gowns, yellow petticoats, red girdles, and white clergyman's band round their necks, seemed to distinguish them as something uncommon and superior. He looked at the lofty, beautiful hall, and the clean, smooth court where they played, and sighed when he contrasted it with Top's cellar, and the dirty, broken paving in Black-cat Lane. Poor boy! he was beginning to take life seriously, beginning to feel, in the depths of his heart, the difference between his surroundings and that which he looked upon with longing, admiring eyes. For some time he did not know just what this institution was: until one day a good-natured gentleman, who was watching the scholars at their play, noticing his earnest, intelligent face, entered into conversation with him, and, in reply to his eager questions, told him that it was a school to educate poor boys. That many great men, whose names would live always, had there learned all they knew; and that knowledge could make people noble in spite of lowly birth and poverty.

The boy went home more thoughtful than usual, and applied himself to his books with renewed zeal. For days and days a new desire filled every thought. Why could he not be a Blue-coat boy, and learn every thing, and become great through knowledge? At last one night, when he stood by Top with his arm over his shoulder in affectionate intimacy, he approached the subject.

The old man looked at him in fear and astonishment, and said, with a pitiful tremor in his voice, "Whv, now, Abel, that ain't

possible! you don't want to go an' shut yourself up in Blue-coat School, an' leave your poor old daddy alone, do you?"

"No, no, I don't! I never thought of that," cried the affectionate boy, hugging the old man's neck closer.

"An' then, 'sides all that, you couldn't get in, you couldn't. That school's for the respectable poor, not for the like o' us, my lad: we don't exactly come under that head. We've no friends to help us, an' the Lord Mayor an' aldermen ain't a goin' to bother theirselves with humble creetur's as us. Then another thing, sonny, you're too old. I've heard say as no child could get in there after he's seven, and you're twelve: so it ain't no use to try. 'Sides, there's no need of it: you can read an' write, an' you're uncommon clever with your 'rithmetic, an' that's enough; you've learnt plenty at ragged school to take you through decent. Look at your poor old daddy, he never knew nothin', never could tell one letter from another, an' never had no one to send him to school. I hope, sonny, you're not a goin' to find fault 'cause I ain't done more for you." This thought was more than the old man could bear: his voice was choked with emotion, and something like a sob broke from his full heart.

"Find fault with you, daddy, dear! no, no, indeed!" said Abel, hanging round his neck, and crying with him. "You've always been good to me, too good: don't think I complain; but I'd like to be a scholar, and know every thing, for I'm sure reading and writing isn't all; and I'd like to be rich and great, so that I could give you a fine house to live in with a garden, and a lake, and a boat on the Thames. I won't say any more about the Blue-coat School: I won't think any more about it; but, daddy, I want to do something to earn my own living. You're too old to work for me, and I do nothing."

"Bless my soul, boy! what ails you now? I ain't a workin' for you, I'm a workin' for myself; an' you ain't no extra expense, scarcely. Still, now you're gettin' a big boy, an' if you want to do some-

thin' you can. There's lots o' countin'-houses in Fenchurch Street, where they often want boys o' your age. I'll look around some, if you'll only wait patient: I'll look around."

Abel waited, and waited patiently. Top had either forgotten his promise, or wished to defer the long-dreaded day that would separate them in a measure. He could not endure the thought that his boy was no longer a baby, that he was fast growing to an age when he must go out into the world and struggle for himself. But, while the old man procrastinated, Abel was busy looking out for his own interests. He never passed a counting-house into which he did not slip, and ask modestly and respectfully, if they needed a boy. Nearly every one spoke kindly to him; for his handsome, intelligent face and remarkable neatness impressed them favorably. Although no one wanted him at that moment, many promised to give him the first vacancy; and, with this in prospect, he waited hopefully, with many strange dreams of the future floating through his restless brain.

When Abel promised Top that he would think no more about the Blue-coat School, he tried very hard not to do so; yet he could not drive it from his mind. Day after day he lingered around the double railing on Newgate Street, watching the happy boys, and envying them as much as it was in his noble little heart to envy any one. As he was returning home from his visit, late one afternoon, a little girl sitting on the steps of the Mansion House attracted his attention. Her face was covered with her hands, and she was weeping bitterly. Her frock was dirty and ragged; and her little bare feet were grimy and bruised, as though she had walked over rough paths, while her torn apron was full of crushed and broken violets bound together with bits of soiled ribbon which showed that they had been tied up into small bouquets such as gentlemen wear in their coats.

"What's the matter with you, little girl?" said Abel gently, bending over her, and drawing her hands away from her face.

His pleasant voice soothed her directly. Swallowing a great sob, she raised a pair of wonderful blue eyes confidingly, and said, in a very sweet, winning voice, "It's awful, it's real awful!"

"What's awful? an' what are you crying for? an' what's your violets all broken to pieces for?"

"It's that I'm cryin' about: my vi'lets is all ruined. Some nasty, bad boys snatched my board away, an' pulled them all out of the holes, an' tore 'em all in pieces, an' throwed 'em in my lap, and run away as fast as ever they could; an' now I ain't got none to sell, an' Mammy Flint'll beat me awful if I go home without money. An' I'm hungry an' tired." Here the poor little soul broke into bitter sobs, and buried her face again.

"Never mind," said Abel encouragingly: "don't cry so, an' I'll try an' help you. Why didn't you call a policeman before they run away?"

"Lor', boy, what a flat you are!" and she looked at him with undisguised contempt in her great blue eyes. "You don't 'spose p'licemen is ever round! Why, they're never nowhere when you want 'em. I did cry an' call; but no one heard me, least ways if they did, they didn't come. Oh! oh! Mammy Flint'll beat me awful if I go home without no money."

"There, there, don't cry so!" said the boy again; for the passionate weeping of the child moved him strangely. "Tell me where you live, an' what's your name?"

"My name's Vi'let," she replied: "they call me Blue-eyed Vi'let, most al'ays; an' Mammy Flint lives in Duck's-foot Lane, an' I stay with her when she don't beat me an' drive me away."

"Haven't you no father, nor no mother?" questioned Abel, his little heart all aglow with indignation against Mammy Flint, and admiration for the beautiful child.

"No: I ain't none. Mammy Flint says as how my mother sold flowers in Drury Lane, an' how she was a real beauty, an' a 'ansome actor fell in love with her, an' how she died when I was born; an' that's

all I know, which isn't much. P'rhaps if she'd lived, Mammy Flint wouldn't a got me, an' I wouldn't a been beat so."

"Poor little thing!" returned Abel; "but what makes you go back to Mammy Flint again when she's so cruel to you?"

"'Cause I ain't got no other place to go; an' I'm hungry an' tired," said Violet, looking imploringly into the face of her little champion.

"Never mind, come along with me. I've got a good home with Daddy Top. He's real good, he's always real good to me; an' I know he'll give you something to eat, an' p'rhaps he'll let you stay with us."

Violet hung back, drawing away from Abel's proffered hand, while her cheeks suddenly flushed crimson, and her great blue eyes sought the ground with evident guilt and confusion. "I'm 'shamed to go with you," she stammered out at last, "'cause I told you an awful lie 'bout them vi'lets. I broke 'em to pieces myself. That's a dodge Mammy Flint learnt us; an' it pays better 'an sellin' 'em whole. When they gets a little wilted, we tears 'em up; an' then we sets down, and cries like mad till some one comes along as pities us, an' asks us what's the matter. Then we tells 'em the same story as I just told you, when no boys ain't been a near us; an' they most al'ays give us a shillin', an' sometimes more. When we've sold that party, we goes to another place, and plays the same game, till a p'liceman comes 'long an' spots us. Then we have to run away an' keep out o' sight, or else we'd get trapped, an' our fun'd be spiled."

Abel looked at her in profound astonishment; for, although he had lived all his life in the midst of iniquity, owing to Top's watchfulness and his own natural goodness, he knew very little of such dark ways. The coolness, and evident relish, with which the little imp told her story at first frightened and disgusted him; and he was inclined to run away and leave her to her fate. Then, on second thought, he felt that it would be ignoble and cowardly to desert her, as she was only the victim of Mammy

Flint, and, likely, had never been taught any better; and then she was so young and so pretty, it was dreadful to leave her to the tender mercies of such a wretch as this creature who had corrupted her so early.

While Abel was thinking this over, scarce knowing what to do, she was watching him anxiously. "I s'pose you don't want me to go with you now you know how awful I lie?" she said at length, with a sort of timid smile, while the tears gathered slowly in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, I'm real sorry, you're so wicked," returned Abel seriously. "I'm afraid Daddy Top won't like me to bring home a little girl that don't tell the truth."

"You needn't blame me, you needn't," said Violet, a little sullenly. "It ain't my fault: she makes me do it. If I didn't, she'd beat me to death every day, she would. Oh, I'm awful 'fraid of her! An' I can't go back to her to-day, any way, 'cause I've throwed away my v'lets, an' I ain't got no money, an' I can't get none now. It's awful, it's real awful! I wish I hadn't told you, I do, then you'd a took me with you." Here passionate sobs choked her voice; and, throwing herself on the steps, she burst into a flood of genuine tears which melted Abel's heart directly.

"Don't cry any more, don't, for pity's sake! and I'll take you just the same. Of course it ain't your fault; and you sha'n't go back to that horrid old woman that makes you do such wicked things. I'll tell Daddy Top all about it, and he'll help you to get an honest living."

The child sprang up readily, wiped off the tears with her dirty apron, and gave her little hand confidently to Abel, who led her away from the sin and suffering of her old life, to what might have been a beautiful destiny, but for the fatal inheritance left her by her mother.

"Where in the world did you get that little cretur?" cried Top, who stood in the door as Abel approached, still holding the hand of the child.

"O daddy! I found her a crying on the Mansion-house steps!" and the boy told her

brief, sad history, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes. "Now give her something to eat, for she's tired an' hungry, there's a dear daddy."

"Yes, yes, Abel, o' course I will. Old Top never refuses nothin' you ask him, does he? I don't wonder you pity the poor mite. It's awful to be brought up in such sin an' wickedness, an' so dirty too! I b'lieve a little water'll do her more good 'an vict'als at first. So your name's V'let? I hope you'll be a good little gal, 'cause you've got a real sweet name as alwys 'minds me o' spring," said Top, addressing the child kindly, as he poured out a basin of fresh water, and gave her some soap and a coarse, clean towel. "Now wash yourself clean, mind, real clean; for Top don't like dirt, specially on children;" and, with this injunction, he left the child to her ablutions, and went to the door-step where Abel was sitting in deep thought.

"Now, sonny, what's to be done with this little cretur' you've brought home? We can give her a crust to eat, that's true; but she can't sleep here, secin' we've only one room. She's quite a big gal, ten years old I should think; so you see, she can't stay here o' nights."

"I never thought of that, daddy," said Abel dejectedly, while Top scratched his head and pondered deeply.

"I've got a plan at last," cried the old man, brightening up. "I'll go an' see Mother Birch: I b'lieve she'll let her stay with her nights, 'cause she's feeble-like now, an' all alone, an' the child'll be company for her. She's better an' more 'umble 'an she used to be; an' she won't be bad to her, if she ain't a goin' to cost her nothin'. I'll go right off an' see her, before I give you your supper; an' I'll be back by the time the little gal's washed."

Abel watched the old man hobble off on his errand of kindness, and then peeped into the door to see if Violet had finished her bath. She was rubbing her face vigorously, and shaking her abundant curly hair while she laughed to see the water fall in showers over her bare white arms.

"She's ever so much prettier now she's clean," thought Abel. "I do hope daddy 'll let her stay here always, she'll be so much company for me; and she doesn't seem a wicked child, after all." In the midst of his soliloquy, Top returned to say that Mother Birch was perfectly willing that the little girl should share her humble bed. "She's old an' feeble now," said Top compassionately, "an' 'ts better for her to have some one with her o' nights, 'cause, if she's worse, Violet's big enough to call in the neighbors, an' so she won't be the least in the way."

Then the old man bustled around and prepared the simple evening meal, while Abel showed the child his books, and opened to her, for the first time in her life, the beautiful new world of knowledge.

The next morning Top bought a fresh supply of flowers for Violet, and sent her out with much good advice, telling her seriously but kindly that she must work honestly to earn her living, as he was too poor to feed and clothe her, and that she must be a good child, and remember, if she did not sell her flowers, that she must not resort to falsehood, as she always had a home to come to where there was no Mammy Flint to beat her. Long before night, Violet returned bright and happy. She had sold all her flowers and brought Top the proceeds, which were three shillings. With this he bought her a neat, second-hand calico frock at his old friend's, the Jew in Houndsditch. So, clean and fresh, with lovely face and fragrant flowers, Blue-eyed Violet became a great favorite with the gentlemen who passed in and out of the Mansion House, selling her bouquets so readily, that, instead of being an extra expense to Top, she rather increased his small income.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OLD STORY.

Now that Violet was earning money, Abel was not contented to be idle any longer. So he gave up his school, his dreamy

wandering round St. Paul's Churchyard, his pleasant hours at the railing of Christ's Hospital, and his walks to and from the Mansion House, where Violet sat on the steps like a little queen, her lap full of flowers, and her blue eyes sparkling with pleasure as sixpence after sixpence fell with a cheerful ring into her tin money-box. All these dear delights Abel relinquished to pass his hours from seven in the morning until seven at night in the counting-house of Thorpe & Son, ship-chandlers, on Lower Thames Street, where he received three shillings a week for running of errands, sweeping, dusting, and making himself generally useful.

Mr. Thorpe, who was the only one now in the firm, his father having died a year before, was a pleasant, kind-hearted gentleman. From the day when Abel had first stood before him with his fine eyes raised frankly to his face, he had been favorably impressed with the boy; so he often talked with him as he passed in and out of the clerk's office where he was always busy, and sometimes he sent for him to come into his own private room to receive some message, or to perform some little service. In this way he saw considerable of Abel, and began to feel quite an interest in him. One day, when they were alone, the boy sorting and arranging his papers with deft hand, Mr. Thorpe questioned him about himself. Thereupon Abel told him his little history with such winning artlessness that the kind-hearted merchant could scarce restrain his tears.

"So you really wish to go into the Blue-coat School?" he said, when Abel told him of his desire and disappointment. "Well, my lad, you're too old for that now; but there's nothing to prevent your studying alone. You shall have all the books you need. Come to me for what you want: I will supply you. Devote your evenings, in fact, all your leisure hours, to study; and there's no reason why you shouldn't become an educated man. After all, the will's what's required. Be attentive, diligent, and honest in your work; and you shall remain with me

as long as you wish, and he promoted as you deserve. Now, my boy, you have your fortune in your hands; only be industrious and faithful to my interests, and you shall never need a friend." Then he told him, with a father's fond pride, that he had a son at Eton who was nearly seventeen, and that when he finished his collegiate course he would enter the counting-house, and afterwards become his partner; so that the style of the firm might remain Thorpe & Son, as it had been for more than a century.

All these promises and little confidences delighted Abel, who studied to please his employer in every way. He was always on the alert to do any thing that was needed; early and late at his post, watchful, quick, and careful, ready to lend his hand to assist any one, whether in his department or not; showing remarkable skill and intelligence for one so young. Years after, he looked back on these days as the happiest of his life; for his troubles had not then begun. When his work was done, and well done, he would hasten to his humble home, with a step that was never weary, and a heart that was never anxious, carrying with him some new books, a ribbon for Violet, some little gift for Top, or a dainty for their simple supper. How they enjoyed that meal! the three seated round the pine table, Top as much a child as either of them, laughing with delight at Violet's lively description of some little adventure, counting with eager pleasure the proceeds of her day's sales, planning for a new frock or hat with as much interest as the girl herself, or listening attentively to Abel's account of his work, his friends, his conversation with Mr. Thorpe, his ardent boyish plans and expectations, beautiful with the glow of youth and hope. These were moments in the old man's life that left him nothing to desire or regret. Instead of one child, he had two; for Violet was very fond of him, and had given him no trouble: so far, she had been a good girl, had kept herself neat and clean, and had assisted Top about his household affairs willingly and skilfully. Every morning she went to sell

her flowers on the steps of the Mansion House; and every evening she returned cheerfully, with a merry heart and light step, to give old Top the proceeds of her day's sales, which he carefully added to a little fund he was saving for her future needs. So Violet had nothing to complain of: she was well fed, well clothed, clean, and healthy; she had almost forgotten her past life and old Mother Flint; and there was not a happier flower-girl in all London than she; and, besides all her other blessings, Abel was teaching her how to read and write, and how to be good. The boy was a guardian angel, who stood between her and evil; and old Top was her faithful mentor, who never failed to point a moral from the wretched girls and women who filled the tenements around them. "Look at her, Vi'let," he would say, referring to some poor sinner who was reaping the bitter harvest of her folly, "I can remember her when she was young, an' as lov'ly as a flower, with blue eyes like yours, an' cheeks as red as damask roses! but she was vain an' idle, an' went wrong. Dear Lord! see her now! what a wreck she is! an' it's the way you'll look if you ever follow in her steps; mind what me an' Abel say to you; keep tidy an' modest, an' tend to your work an' books, an' one o' these days, who knows, p'rhaps you'll be mistress o' your own house, with a husband an' a baby that you'll be as fond of as I was o' mine when he was a wee thing."

In a year Abel had become so useful to Mr. Thorpe, that he increased his wages, and allowed him many favors unusual to a boy in his position. The money he earned seemed a small fortune to Top, who hoarded it carefully, to the end that his child, who was growing tall and large, might be better clothed; for he could no longer wear the little patched jackets and trousers which the old man picked up for him in Houndsditch. Top was delighted when he saw him arrayed for the first time in an entire new suit, coarse and plain, to be sure, but well cut, and well made; and Violet danced around him, like a bewildered sprite, clap-

ping her hands, laughing, and telling him that he was "a deal han'somer 'an the Prince o' Wales."

It was on a Sunday, when Abel wore his fine clothes for the first time, and Violet had a new cambric frock, and a pretty straw hat with a blue ribbon. Like all girls of that age, she was anxious to display them: therefore, she clamored to be taken somewhere; and Abel joined her, crying at the same time with her, "Take us somewhere, daddy: take us somewhere."

"I would willin'ly, children; but I ain't fine enough to go out with you, I ain't," said Top, looking at himself ruefully. "I've got only my old patched duds, that ain't fit company for these new things."

"O daddy! don't say that," cried Abel, bringing forward the old man's best jacket and cap; while Violet tied his neckerchief into a smart bow. "You're always nice enough. We're proud of you any way; ain't we, Violet?"

"Well, then, if you don't mind, an' if you ain't 'shamed o' your old daddy, I'll go along an' take you both to the Tower. Have you ever seen the Tower o' London, Violet?"

"No, no, daddy, I never have. I've never seen only the outside," cried the girl eagerly. "Oh, oh! won't it be jolly to see the inside!"

"An' Abel'll tell us all about it, 'cause he knows history," said Top proudly.

"Yes: Abel'll tell us," echoed Violet, as they set out on each side of the quaint old man.

It was a bright June day, for there are bright days in London, and a happy day for these three beings who envied no one. Violet almost laughed under the noses of the warders, who were so important in their curious costume; but when they entered the Lion's Gate, she became suddenly grave, and clung closely to Abel's hand. The deep moat, the gloomy arches, the warlike towers, frightened her a little; and her great blue eyes devoured Abel, while he whispered, "This is the Traitors' Gate, where prisoners, brought by the Thames,

entered never to go out again. This is the Bell Tower, where Queen Elizabeth was imprisoned; and this is the Bloody Tower, where the little Princes were murdered by their cruel uncle."

"It don't look very wicked now," whispered Top, as they followed the warder into a room where the portcullis to one of the inner tower gates was drawn up, unused and harmless enough. One of the officers lived in this tower; his wife was washing dishes on a table near the massive iron-barred portcullis, with its great crank and rusty chain; some scarlet geraniums blossomed in a window over it; and a child played on the floor with a broken painted soldier. The woman was singing cheerfully when they entered; and the sun shone bright on the flowers, and touched the opposite wall with a patch of gold.

"It's innocent an' peaceful enough here now," said Top with some surprise. "I don't b'lieve its true that all them wicked deeds was done here."

"True as gospel, my man," returned the warder, as he stooped to pinch the baby's cheek.

"Will you let us look under the stairs where the bones of the little Princes were found?" asked Abel of the pleasant-faced woman.

"Yes, indeed I will, my little man," she replied, kindly patting the boy's handsome head. Then she threw a tin horse to the child to amuse it while she was gone, and led the way, while the warder stopped to take a drink from a bright pewter mug.

Violet would not look into the dark hole: she disliked dreary places; and her face was quite pale and awestricken when Top and Abel joined her at the door.

"Goodness! child, you needn't be afraid. There's nothin' there but an old closet, an' some pots an' pans, common enough now, even if the Princes was buried there, which I don't much b'lieve, seein' as no one can tell correct what happened so long ago."

The armory interested and pleased them all much better than did the Towers. Violet

clapped her hands at the horses all dressed in the brightest steel, thinking at first that they were real animals that would prance and paw if those grim warriors, also in shining armor, did not hold them so tightly. Then she wished that all these quiet figures and proud-looking chargers would suddenly come to life, and rush at each other with their lances tilted, and their scarlet and white plumes waving to and fro. And what if all these gilded banners and badges and pennons should flutter and float in the wind, and the swords should clash, and the cannons roar, and these brazen-mouthed trumpets should ring out their loudest peals? So absorbed was she in thinking of all this, that she scarcely heard Abel tell her she must walk faster, as the warder was impatient at her lagging steps. Although she was delighted with the armory, she thought the jewel-house the most beautiful of all. The crowns and the royal sceptre with the cross of gold, the rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, the rod of equity with the golden dove, and the orb banded with precious stones, all these made her eyes sparkle and her cheeks glow. She loved beautiful things; and she showed her love so strongly, that Top would not allow her to remain to look at them as long as she wished.

"They're only temptations o' Satan," he said, "to lead the poor astray. You mustn't love jewels, child; if you do, they'll be your ruin. Many a girl has lost her soul for one o' them sparklin' things. Don't love 'em, don't covet 'em, don't think nothin' about 'em."

Abel could not help looking at them any more than Violet could; for he was saying to himself, "Her eyes are as blue as the sapphires, her teeth as white as the pearls, her lips as red as the rubies; and, while we have her, we needn't envy the queen her jewels."

They were both unwilling to go, and lingered a little as Top led them away: then the old man, fearing that he had deprived them of a pleasure, began to blame the warder to excuse himself. "They al'ays do hurry so," he said, when they were outside

the gate. "We ain't seen half our money's worth, have we?"

"Oh, yes, we have, daddy!" cried Violet excitedly: "them beautiful jewels is enough for one day. O Lor'! how I should like to have a brooch as big as that biggest one that sparkled so."

"Hush, hush, Vi'let," said Top sternly, "don't go to admirin' jewels; if you do, you'll soon learn t'admire sin: don't think o' finery if you want to be a virtuous, happy girl."

"I only like them 'cause they're pretty, that's all, daddy," returned Violet, glancing slyly at Abel, who was walking thoughtfully at her side.

"You're not ponderin' on 'em, are you, my boy?" questioned Top anxiously.

"No, no, daddy! I wasn't thinking of them at all. It was something quite different: I was thinking that I should be contented to be poor and humble, if I only might be happy and peaceful all my life. If I could, I shouldn't like to be rich and great, and miss being happy."

"You're a good boy, Abel: you're al'ays thinkin' o' somethin' good," said Top approvingly; "an' so you can't fail to be happy. You've got a fair prospect before you; an' you'll be a blessin' to every one, 'specially your old daddy."

"But don't you h'lieve that every one that's rich is happy?" questioned Violet with unusual thoughtfulness. "Seems to me, if I had silk frocks and pretty jewels I'd be awful happy."

"O Vi'let, Vi'let! I'm sorry, I am, to hear you say that. It's only good people that's happy," replied Top severely. "You never can have silk an' jewels honest, never; an' if you get 'em any other way you'll come to dreadful misery."

The girl opened her great blue eyes, and smiled a little disdainfully, but said nothing; for the jewels seemed to flash before her, and the silken embroidered banners to float in the air around her. From that day a new passion took possession of her heart. She thought constantly of silks and jewels, and looked with silent contempt

on the plain clothes. Top bought for her. She never saw an elegantly dressed lady pass in her carriage but she envied her, and wished that she could have the same. Still she breathed no word of her discontent to Abel, who loved her more and more as time passed away. During the still happy years of their childhood, Top, liking to make them happy, often took them on little excursions. In the winter they went to the British Museum, to Kensington, and the National Gallery, — for this poor old man was naturally refined and intelligent, enjoying even what he did not understand; and in the summer, to Windsor, to Hampton Court by the Thames, to Kew Gardens, to Greenwich, and to many other suburban resorts. Often in the long twilights of spring, they took an omnibus and rode to Hyde Park, where they wandered about at will among the crowd of pleasure-seekers. There Violet saw much to strengthen her love for finery and showy attire. In the innocence of her heart she envied the guilty women who flaunted in robes of shame, not knowing at what a ruinous price they had bought them. Often when Top and Abel thought her perfectly contented and happy, she was making comparisons, complaining silently of her hard lot in life, and wishing she were older, that she might earn money enough to buy handsomer dresses.

Almost before old Top was aware of it, his children were no longer children: for Violet was sixteen, and Abel eighteen. The boy had gone on steadily improving in knowledge and goodness, having been promoted from one position to another, until he was now Mr. Thorpe's private secretary, with a salary of forty pounds a year. Violet still sold her flowers on the steps of the Mansion House, a neat, graceful girl, whose blue eyes and lovely face attracted far too much attention; yet her innocence and youth had protected her till now, and Abel's love and watchful care left her little to fear in the future.

Old Top still continued to live in his cellar, and carry his sand to his customers as usual. Though he was very feeble now,

and tottered pitifully, nothing could induce him to leave a place that had been his home for so many years; but he had hired the floor above, and now had a little parlor and two sleeping-rooms, one of which Violet had occupied for some time, Mother Birch having dropped off suddenly about the time of Abel's first promotion. They were a very happy little family, and the old man was more than contented with his lot. Sometimes, in thinking of all his blessings, his heart would soften until the tears would run down his cheeks, and he would say in a voice of reverential gratitude, addressing himself after his old habit, "Top, you've never deserved half you've got. The Lord's been too good to you to give you two such children, an' four rooms to live in, an' such a blessin' in Abel. If that poor creature could see her boy now, wouldn't she rejoice over him, he's so good, and such a gentleman! An' Violet, too, that'll be his wife some day, he couldn't find a better nor a fairer in all London."

So, while Top was rejoicing over his own happiness, and the pleasant future of his children, Abel and Violet were rehearsing the first chapter of that sweet old story that nearly all who have lived have listened to in the glowing morning of youth and hope.

CHAPTER V.

LOST.

"Isn't that beautiful? isn't that perfect? Won't you buy it for me? I should so like to have it!" said Violet, looking into Abel's face with real entreaty in her lovely eyes. "I haven't a single pretty thing; and that is so pretty!"

They stood before a jeweller's window in the Strand; and the object which she so much coveted was a flashy brooch of false diamonds and emeralds, marked, "Only one crown."

"Buy that for you, Violet? Why, it's

only glass and pinchbeck," replied Abel, laughing.

"I don't care if it is: it's lovely, and you might buy it for me."

"My dear Violet, you know I hate to refuse you any thing," said Abel, gently pressing the hand that lay on his arm; "but be reasonable, and don't ask for what is impossible. In the first place, even if it wasn't a waste of money to buy it, it's not a suitable thing for you to have. Think of the folly of your wearing such an ornament as that in your present position. One of these days, when you're my dear little wife, and I have a salary of perhaps two hundred pounds a year, you shall have a brooch of real gold; but now, pray don't ask for such a bauble: it would add nothing to your beauty."

"Indeed it would," returned Violet, pouting and tearful. "I'd look ever so much better if I had that to fasten my collar instead of this ugly bow. If you really loved me as much as you say you do, you would not refuse me such a little thing."

"Don't say that, dear," cried Abel, with a troubled glance at the pretty, clouded face at his side: "I give you all I can. I'd willingly give you more if I could; but we must save our money, and be very prudent, that in a year we can furnish rooms in a more respectable locality than Black-cut Lane. Then, dear old daddy mustn't work any longer. He is very feeble, and we must support him comfortably as long as he lives. He has done so much for us, that we can never half repay him."

"I know it, Abel: he's been good, and we'll do every thing to make him happy; but still, I do want that brooch awfully."

"Don't look at the worthless thing any longer. Forget such follies, and be happy with what you have," said Abel a little sternly, as he drew the reluctant girl away from the show window with its false glare and glitter.

"Why don't you ever take me to a play?" persisted Violet. "Other young people, no better off than we are, go sometimes."

"I don't take you because I don't think

it best, in our position, to indulge in such useless expense; besides, it promotes a taste for pleasure that is ruinous to sober contentment."

"I can't see any harm in being happy once in a while."

"Happy once in a while! But ain't you always happy with me, Violet?" questioned Abel sadly and anxiously.

"I am happy enough, I suppose," returned the girl. "But every one wants a change now and then."

"Well, we often have a change. Didn't we go to Battersea, and pass a delightful day, last week? don't we take charming walks in the parks? don't we go to free lectures and concerts? and don't we have plenty of books to read together? How can we be happier than we are? We're young and healthy, and have enough for our simple wants: then, why wish for what we can't have?"

"I'm glad if you're contented," replied the girl fretfully; "but I'm not. It's no use. I may as well tell you the truth: I do like fine things. I should like to be rich, and ride in the park, and go to plays; to dance and sing; to have gay company around me, and — and" —

"No more, Violet! that's enough!" cried the young man sternly. "I know what you would say: that you're not satisfied with the life I offer you. In Heaven's name, think what you are saying! and, if you have such foolish desires, keep them in your own heart, and smother and kill them there; for they never can be gratified lawfully. Don't pain me, don't pain the good old man who has done so much for you, by giving expression to them."

"O Abel! you're so cross, so awful cross and unreasonable!" returned Violet pettishly. "You know I love you dearly, and Daddy Top too; still I can't help it if I like pretty things: but don't look so, don't speak so, and I won't mention it again."

Abel's heart softened directly when she raised her beautiful eyes, full of tears, to his face with a timid, imploring glance. They were in the street, but it was even-

ing, and no one was near; so he put his arm round her, and kissed her fondly. After that they walked on in silence. At the entrance into Ludgate Street, they were met by a wretched looking man, who held out the stumps of both arms, and asked for charity in a voice of pitiful entreaty. There was an expression in his mournful face that Abel could not resist; so he stopped, spoke kindly to him, and gave him a shilling.

"There," said Violet, when they were out of hearing, "you gave that beggar a shilling; but you would not buy the brooch for me. You are so generous to every one else."

"What! complaining again? remember the promise you just made me."

"Ah! I forgot: I will remember it. Forgive me, Abel; you're better than I am," replied the girl penitently.

When they reached home, they found the lamp burning on the table, and their books laid ready for them; for it was a rule with Abel never to go to bed until he had read something useful. Top had retired for the night, but called to them from his little room to say that they would find some currant-buns in the closet for their supper.

"How thoughtful he always is!" said Abel with a tender smile. "How much we shall have to do for him to repay him for all his loving care!"

Violet made no reply, but silently laid aside her hat and shawl.

"Shall we read a chapter of 'The Heart of Mid-Lothian,' before we go to bed?" questioned Abel, drawing a chair near to the table.

"No: I don't want to read to-night," replied the girl, twisting a curl of her soft brown hair idly round her finger.

"Are you vexed with me, Violet, dear?" said Abel at length.

"Vexed? Oh, no! I was only thinking."

"Of what?"

"Never mind: I sha'n't tell you; because, if I do, you'll only be cross and scold me. I'm sleepy and tired, so I'll go to bed;"

and, stooping over him, she touched her lips lightly to his forehead, and they parted for the night.

Long after Violet retired, Abel sat at the little table with "The Heart of Mid-Lothian" open before him. But he was not reading: he was thinking deeply; and more than once a silent tear rolled down his face, and fell unnoticed on the pages of the book. The next morning he awoke with an unaccountable depression at his heart, which he carried with him to his work. When he entered the office, Mr. Thorpe met him at the door, and introduced him to his son, Mr. Robert Thorpe. The young man gave his hand to Abel pleasantly and frankly, and said, that he was glad to have a companion whom his father respected so highly; that they were to be together in the private office; and he was sure they would soon be good friends.

Abel replied simply and honestly, that he should do all in his power to deserve his esteem and confidence; and that he should be happy to be useful to him in any way.

"Then take him under your care, and introduce him to business at once; for I'm afraid he's an idle dog, and will find work here rather dull after his life at Eton," said Mr. Thorpe good-naturedly. "Now I'm going to Lloyd's for an hour; and I'll leave you together to get better acquainted."

When Abel was alone with young Mr. Thorpe, he studied him carefully; for he had seldom seen a handsomer face and figure. He had a broad, white forehead; light, curling hair; brown eyes, womanly sweet in their expression; a small mouth, with full lips, shaded by a thin, silken mustache; a short chin a little receding; round, white throat; broad, square shoulders; small feet and hands; and long, well-shaped limbs. Although he was handsome, as Abel saw at a glance, still there was something wanting in his face: perhaps it was strength, perhaps it was truth. His countenance was like an unfinished sketch, full of beauties, and full of imperfections. "He is indolent," thought Abel, making his mental estimation, "fond of pleasure, generous, and weak, and he

will disappoint his good father. Still I know I shall become attached to him in a very little while; and before a year I shall be ready to make any sacrifice for him."

In that, Abel had judged rightly: before a month he was devoted to young Mr. Thorpe; and, before a year, he loved him better than any one besides Violet and Top. And the young gentleman liked Abel in a good-natured, patronizing way. He was very idle, and took but a little interest in his father's business, although he had the prospect of a partnership after the first year. Mr. Thorpe never knew how careless Mr. Robert was; for lately, being in bad health, he spent less of his time in his office than formerly, leaving a great part of his work to his son, whom he wished to be thoroughly acquainted with the business of the house before he represented it as a partner. But Abel did the work of both manfully; never complaining if he was overtaxed, or if he worked earlier and later than the other clerks, so that Mr. Thorpe should not discover his son's unworthiness.

"It's cursed dry work!" young Mr. Thorpe would say sometimes, yawning over the huge piles of letters that it was his duty to open, "to sit here hour after hour, bent over these papers, when one wants to be in the park or on the Thames."

Often he would come in late, flushed and excited; and, instead of taking his seat at his desk, he would say, "Winter, you must look over the letters to-day. I'm off to Regent's for a game of cricket." Perhaps it would be the match of "Gentlemen" against "Players," or "Kent" against "All England," or "Eton" against "Harrow;" and he was an inveterate cricketer, and could not deny himself the pleasure of being present at every popular match. Then he would add, as he hurried away after selecting his own private letters, "If the governor comes, don't tell where I'm off to; and, if there's more than you can do, give it to some of the 'sobs' in the outer office."

After he was gone, Abel would tackle his work resolutely, and never leave his post

until every thing was completed. He liked to labor hard; he did not mind being over-taxed; he was young and strong, and withal, very ambitious, and anxious that his employer should find him useful and faithful. He had often boasted that he never was tired in all his life; that at night he was as fresh as in the morning; that he could work like a horse, and never exhaust his strength: but now there were times when he liked to be inactive; when his daily duties seemed to weigh a little upon him; when his step was not so elastic, nor his heart so light. Was it weariness, or anxiety? He did not know. Perhaps it was disappointment; for Violet was very strange sometimes, and he could not always find an excuse for her caprices.

Not long after the evening when he had refused to buy the brooch for her at the Strand, he happened to be near the Mansion House, returning from a commission for Mr. Thorpe; so he thought he would stop and walk home with her. The girl, looking another way, did not see him until he was close beside her; but the first thing he noticed, as he approached, was the hateful gewgaw that he had denied her, fastened into the front of her dress. His disappointment, and the thought that she should buy it in spite of his advice to the contrary, wounded him so deeply that he could scarce conceal his trouble. The moment her eyes fell upon Abel, she started violently, flushed crimson, and, hastily tearing out the offensive ornament, she tried to conceal it in her pocket, while she stammered a confused welcome.

"Violet, how long have you had this thing?" said Abel severely, intercepting her hand on its way to her pocket.

"Three days," she stammered.

"Then, why have I never seen it before?"

"Because — because — I don't know" —

"No equivocation! It's a little thing, but it hurts me dreadfully. You know I didn't wish you to have it; yet you bought it, and concealed the fact from me. Have you worn it before to-day?"

"Yes."

"Then, you've hidden it away when you came home, so that I should not see it."

"I was afraid that you'd be cross, and that Daddy Top would scold me."

"And so you deceived us both?"

"I didn't deceive you; I didn't say any thing about it," she returned, looking at Abel a little defiantly.

"Violet, where did you get the money to buy it with? You've brought home your usual amount every night: how, then, did you get a crown?"

She hesitated, turning pale and crimson by turns, and hanging her head in the deepest confusion.

"Tell me: where did you get it?" urged Abel with a determination to know all.

"A young gentleman gave me a crown for a bouquet."

"Why did he give you a crown for a bouquet, when you sell them for sixpence each?"

"I don't know."

"And you kept it?" questioned Abel, his eyes fixed on her sternly, and his face pale with anger.

"Why, he wouldn't take it back; so what could I do but keep it?"

"What did he say to you? tell me quick, what did he say?" cried Abel, almost beside himself with jealousy, which he now felt for the first time in his life.

"How can I tell what he said? I don't just remember."

"Tell me the truth: I know by your face that you remember every word."

"Well, he said—he said I was too pretty to sell flowers."

"Was that all?"

"The last time he said that I ought to be dressed like a lady, and have nothing to do, instead of sitting here all day."

"The villain! did he say that? Then you've seen him more than once?"

"Yes: he passes here every day."

"And stops to talk with you, and you listen to him?"

"What can I do? he always buys my flowers."

"What sort of a man is he? Do you know his name?"

"No: how should I know his name? He's young and handsome, has beautiful eyes, and wears rings and chains. He's a gentleman, I'm sure of that."

"Violet, come home with me at once," said Abel, quivering with anger, as he took her by the arm, and led her away rapidly.

"Your flowers are all gone, you'd nothing more to sell: what were you waiting there for? Tell me, what were you waiting for?"

"I wasn't waiting. I was just going when you came."

"O Violet, Violet! how wicked you are! how false to me when I trusted you so!" and Abel trembled so that he could scarce speak.

"Let me alone: you're real cruel, and you hurt my arm!" cried the girl, wrenching herself from Abel's tight clasp. "You ought to be ashamed to bully me in the street, with every one hearing: I say, you ought to be ashamed!" And she burst into a flood of tears, which were more passionate than penitent.

"Hush! For God's sake, don't say I bullied you! It breaks my heart to speak cross to you; but this is more than I can bear. Let us get home as quickly as we can."

"And you'll tell Daddy Top?" sobbed Violet.

"Yes: I'll tell him. I never keep any thing from him."

"And he'll abuse me too."

"How can you be so unjust? Has he ever abused you?"

"No; but he will if you set him on."

"Violet, I sha'n't set him on: I shall tell him the truth, and let him advise us what to do; for you can't go there again."

"Can't go there again! then, what am I to do?" cried the girl, the tears dry on her hot cheeks, and her eyes wide with astonishment.

"Violet, you're my promised wife. In less than nine months we're to be married; then is it right that you should listen to

such talk? that you should take money from strangers? You're poor; God knows we're all poor enough; but that's no reason why we can't be honest: and there must be no secrets between us, nor no suspicion. You're too young," he said, softening as he looked at her, "and too pretty, dear, to be exposed to such temptation. You can't go there again: you must either stay home with daddy, or find some other occupation more suitable for you."

When Top saw Abel and Violet enter with such troubled faces, he knew at once that something was wrong, and questioned them anxiously. Then Abel, trembling and pale, told the cause of his vexation; while Violet sat silent and sullen, neither interrupting him nor excusing herself.

The poor old man's face clouded sadly; and, looking at Abel with infinite pity and love, he said soothingly, "I'm surprised and sorry; but don't take it too serious, my boy. Vi'let's only thoughtless. You're thoughtless, ain't you, Vi'let, an' not wicked? An' you won't never do so again? It's the first time you've gone wrong, an' I'll venture to say it'll be the last. It'll be the last, won't it? Why don't you speak, an' answer me?" he said a little impatiently, as he waited for a reply.

"What's the use of my speaking when you're both against me?"

"We're not against you, my girl," returned Top severely; "don't go to havin' that talk. Me an' Abel's your best friends in the world. I'm your father, in a manner; an' Abel's to be your husband in less 'an a year, if you behave yourself. Then, how in the world can we be against you? Remember what I told you long ago, that a love 'o finery would lead to ruin. An' the flattery an' fine words o' these dandy jackanapes is a curse an' a blight, a livin' blight, that'll blacken an' wither the sweetest flower as ever blossomed. Good God, girl! ain't I seen 'em? 'ain't I knowed things as 'd make your heart ache bitter enough?" and he glanced compassionately at Abel, who sat with his face covered, weeping silently. "I once heard a

poor, dyln' cretur' deplorin' her evil ways. She was an outcast. She'd had no bed for months but London mud; she was nothin' but a skeleton, wasted with starvin' an' sickness, an' so young, not more' an twenty; an' a most the last words she said was that she'd twisted ropes o' sand, an' trusted to 'em; an' they'd broke, an' left her a wreck. I tell you, my girl, that's the way it'll be with you, if you don't mind what Abel an' me tell you."

"O daddy, stop!" cried Abel, springing from his seat; for Violet, deadly pale, was swaying to and fro, ready to fall from her chair. He put his arms round her, and drew her head to his shoulder, saying tenderly, "You're sorry and suffering, darling; and that's enough. It's all forgiven; we won't think of it again."

"Yes, I'm sorry. O daddy, I did wrong! Abel, I deceived you; but I won't do so again. I'll never do so again, only forgive me this once."

"You're forgiven, Vi'let;" and Top smoothed back the girl's beautiful hair, and patted her cheek fondly, saying again, "It's all over, an' you'll never hear any more about it."

After that she did not return to her old place. The Mansion-house steps knew no more of Blue-eyed Violet. Abel procured her a situation at a flower-shop in Holborn, which was a more respectable way of earning her living; and she seemed perfectly contented with the change, attended diligently to her work during the day, and passed her evenings preparing her simple wedding outfit; for in the early summer she and Abel were to be married. In this way the winter passed off quietly and happily; but when spring came there was a noticeable change in Violet. She grew moody and irritable, irregular in her hours of returning home at night, and idle and listless when she was there. Abel noticed this change with anxiety; and Top watched her closely, yet could discover no cause for her uncertain behavior. Still the humble preparations went on for the expected marriage. Abel had found four neat rooms in a clean

court out of Little Eastcheap, Grace-church Street. It was near his place of business, and could be made very comfortable and cosy; and Top had promised him, rather reluctantly however, to go and live with him, as he was now too feeble to work. So Abel looked forward with honest pride and pleasure, to the moment when he should have a home of his own, where he could protect and care for the two beings he loved best on earth.

One night, about a month before the day fixed for their marriage, Abel went to the shop in Holborn to fetch Violet home; for, having finished his own work earlier than usual, he had an hour to devote to her. While he was waiting for Violet to put on her hat, Mrs. Burt, the mistress of the shop, began to express her regrets to the young man that she should lose her assistant so soon. "She brings me a deal o' trade. Her pretty face and nice ways please my customers amazin'. Why, there's one young gentleman as spends a crown reg'lar every day for flowers. I don't know whether it's the roses or the v'lets he likes best," this with a sly glance at the girl, who stood with averted face and burning cheeks.

"I'm glad she pleases you," replied Abel very gravely, so gravely that the good woman looked at him in some surprise; "but I'm not sorry that she will have a home of her own soon: you can understand my reasons. Put on your shawl, Violet," he added, turning to the girl, who lingered, as though unwilling to go.

She obeyed silently and reluctantly; and, taking Abel's arm, she left the shop with a sullen good-night to her mistress. The young man watched her face closely while he talked on some indifferent subject. More than once she glanced back anxiously, as though she were looking for some one, while she talked rapidly, and walked hurriedly. At last, when they left Holborn, and turned into Farringdon Street, her manner changed suddenly; and she said in a harsh, angry voice, "Abel, you're watching me."

"God forbid, Violet, that I should watch one who'll be my wife in less than a month!"

"But you do, all the same: I see it in your face. You don't trust me."

"Violet, darling, sometimes when people do wrong, they're very suspicious."

"I don't understand you," she said sullenly. "You have a strange way of saying things."

"Never mind, dear, don't let us disagree. I'm too happy to notice trifles, and I don't want you to either. If you're a little uncertain sometimes, I think it's the way with all girls: that some whim has entered your pretty head, and to let you indulge it is the best way."

"I don't have whims, Abel: I've serious things to think of," she returned with a heavy sigh, and a furtive glance at his kind face.

"Possible!" he said, laughing a little. "I thought you were full of fancies, and as careless as the wind." Then he changed the conversation, and told her how very kind Mr. Thorpe had been to him; how he had made him a present of ten pounds toward furnishing his rooms, and had promised to increase his salary at the end of the year. All this Violet listened to with little apparent interest, and Abel felt it; still he was too confident, and too happy, to be exacting. An hour after, while they sat around their little supper-table, suddenly the girl burst into tears, and sobbed passionately, refusing to tell them the cause of her trouble, and declining to answer their anxious questions.

"She's tired and nervous," said Top, in reply to Abel's mute look of inquiry. "She's nervous, that's all; to-morrow she'll be better. Go to bed, V'let, dear, an' rest, an' sleep; it's that you need."

The girl got up with a trembling step, still holding her handkerchief before her eyes, and went toward her bedroom door. Then, as if some sudden impulse had prompted her, she turned, and, throwing her arms around Top's neck, she kissed him fondly, and said in a choked voice, "You

have been good to me, daddy; and I'm grateful and thankful. And you, too, Abel," she cried, with another passionate burst of tears, as she clung to the young man, and kissed him with a sorrowful fervor, "you've been so patient and gentle with me; and I don't deserve it." Then, before Abel could speak, she broke away from his encircling arms, and, rushing into her room, she closed the door, and locked it behind her. Both remembered that scene and that embrace long after. The thought of it was a comfort to poor old Top on his death-bed; the memory of it, a consolation to Abel in the dark hours that followed.

The next night Abel was detained in the office to do some extra work for young Mr. Thorpe, whom he had scarce seen for the day; therefore it was late when he reached home. The first question from Top, as he entered the little parlor, was, "Where's Violet?"

"Why; isn't she home?" cried Abel in astonishment.

"No; she hasn't come, and I thought she was with you."

"I haven't seen her. I've just left the office. She must be at the shop: I'll go and fetch her;" and, without another word, he rushed out, leaving Top to wonder why she was so late.

When Abel reached Holborn, Mrs. Burt was just putting up her shutters; and to his anxious inquiries, she told him that Violet had left earlier than usual, saying that she had a headache, and must go home.

"But she's not there," cried Abel in dismay.

"Not there! Where can she be, then?"

"God only knows. What shall I do? Where shall I go?" he said, trembling with excitement.

"I'd keep calm; I wouldn't worry: she's no doubt all right. Perhaps she's met an acquaintance, and gone somewhere to pass the evening."

"She has no acquaintances; she never

would do such a thing: something has happened to her."

"Go back home, an' likely you'll find her there," said the woman kindly.

"Tell me, Mrs. Burt, have you noticed any thing wrong? has Violet had any acquaintances that I don't know of?"

"I'm not sure, Mr. Winter; but I am afraid she has. That handsome young gentleman, as I spoke of the other night, has been here lately more 'an was necessary. Only to-day I spoke to Violet about it, kindly like, just as I would to one of my own children. At first she was a bit cross; then she laughed it off, and nothin' more was said. I'm sure somethin' been troublin' her lately. To-day she seemed dull like, an' just before she went out I'm sure I saw her a cryin'."

"I can't hear any more," said Abel fairly quivering, and pale as death. "I'll go home and see if she's there yet; for of course she'll come some time to-night."

Scarce knowing what he did, he rushed like the wind through the streets, and burst into the little room where Top waited anxiously, only to find that she was not there. Without stopping to listen to the old man's trembling inquiries, he started out again. Pale, wild-eyed, driven by the demon of suspicion and doubt, he scoured the streets around Holborn, in the hope that he might see her or hear from her. At last, almost exhausted, he leaned against a lamp-post and tried to think; but his brain was in a whirl, his senses seemed leaving him. A policeman seeing him, and thinking he was intoxicated, spoke harshly to him; but, hearing his story, he tried to comfort him. "You'd better go-home an' go to bed. It's late, an' you can't do nothin' till daylight. The gal's lost, that's certain; an' it's common enough in London: but you can find her in no time, if you set about it the right way, an' if she ain't gone off of her own free will. In that case it's hard to find 'em. Wait till mornin', an' go to Scotland Yard: they'll fix it up all right for you there. Young an' pretty, you say? Well, then, it's not so strange that she's

lost. If she was old and ugly, ten to one you'd find her home safe enough when you got there."

Abel did not wait to hear any more from the "guardian of the night," but dashed off with the word "lost" ringing in his ears like a funeral knell. Neither did he wait for morning before he went to Scotland Yard. He took a hansom, and paid the man an extra shilling to drive him there as quickly as possible.

The officer listened to his story with what Abel thought stony indifference; took the description of the girl, item by item, even to the color of the ribbon she wore on her hat; and then said coolly, "But how do you know she ain't gone off of her own accord?"

"I know she would never do that," cried Abel desperately. "Why, we were to be married in less than a month."

The officer looked at him with a sort of sarcastic pity; and, turning to a man half asleep in a corner of the room, he said laconically, giving him the written description, "Here, Jim, look this gal up."

Abel saw there was nothing more to be learned there, and nothing more to be done for the present; so he dismissed the hansom, and walked away he scarcely knew whither.

It was daylight when he reached home. Top was still up, waiting anxiously. "Have you heard any thing?" he cried, looking with fear at Abel's haggard countenance.

"Nothing, nothing, daddy: she's lost! she's lost!" and, throwing himself on the floor at the old man's feet, he hid his face against his knees, and sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BITTER CUP.

THE first thing that Abel did the next morning was to take a cab, and drive out to Mr. Thorpe's at Brompton. He did not go there with the intention of intruding his

trouble upon his employer, but for the purpose of obtaining leave of absence for a week, that he might devote his whole time to his search for Violet. As soon as he entered his presence, Mr. Thorpe saw by his downcast, sorrowful face, that he was in trouble; and, holding out his hand, he said kindly, "What is it, Abel?" This unexpected interest was too much for the poor fellow, whose heart was ready to overflow at the first word of sympathy; so, with a burst of tears, he told his employer of the sudden and strange disappearance of Violet, of his fears of foul play, and his wish to devote his entire time to a search for her.

Mr. Thorpe listened to him with the deepest pity. He had his suspicions; but he could not bear to discourage the poor young man, by even hinting them. "So you think there is some villainy at the bottom of this? you are sure that she hasn't gone of her own will?"

"No, no! I don't know. I'm sure of nothing. O Mr. Thorpe! don't say that! don't for God's sake! She was as good and as pure-hearted a girl as ever lived," cried Abel, struggling desperately against his own fears and suspicions.

"Yes: she may have been all that; and I dare say she was: but still some villain might have deceived her, and won her confidence, and at last induced her to listen to his proposals."

"I can't bear it, Mr. Thorpe; indeed I can't: pray don't think that of her."

"I know it hurts you, Abel; you loved the girl; you trusted her; and you still have faith in her: but be prepared for the worst, the very worst, and try to bear it like a man. You have my warmest sympathy, and more than that, my assistance in finding her. Advertise in all the newspapers; employ any means you like, and I'll defray the expense. It's a hard blow for you; and you don't deserve it. You've tried bravely to get on, and you're worthy of a better fate; but, in case of the worst, be patient and strong, and in time you'll get over it."

"I never shall, Mr. Thorpe: I never shall. I loved her more than my own life."

"Abel, I speak to you as friend to friend, as man to man. I've liked you from the first; there's always been a sort of sympathy between us; and now in your trouble I can feel for you, as I could for my own son. I've had some experience. I've drunk of the bitter cup myself. When Robert's mother died, I thought life was finished for me; but I've outlived despair, and am resigned, and even happy at times. Our first trouble is the hardest to bear. Time cures, while it inures us to our misfortunes. Be patient, and trust in God; and you'll outlive this, even at its worst."

"I hope I may; for it seems to me that I could not endure life with such a weight upon me," said Abel, as he wiped away his fast flowing tears.

It was a blessed thing for him that he was young, and had not outlived his tears. No matter how great is the grief, while we can weep, it does not burn and consume the heart.

"Take a week, and longer if you like; and I'll do your work myself," said Mr. Thorpe, pressing his hand kindly and encouragingly as he left him.

From there, he went to Scotland Yard. Of course nothing had been heard of the girl in so short a time. Then he hastened to the publishing houses of all the prominent London journals, and caused the following advertisement to be inserted.

"If Violet will return to her home, and her unhappy friends, all will be forgiven, no matter how great the fault.

"ABEL."

This could only apply to her if she had gone away of her own will: he was slow to admit it, still, he would leave no stone unturned, if he might but win her back. Afterward he went to the flower-shop, in Holborn, to learn if Mrs. Burt had heard any thing of her.

"I don't know as it's much to tell you, Mr. Winter; but my little boy, as carries

out the flowers, says he's sure he saw Violet get into a cab, at the corner of Oxford Street, about seven o'clock last night; an' that was a few minutes after the time she left here."

"Where is the boy? let me see him at once;" and Abel's face changed suddenly from the pallor of despair to the crimson of hope.

"Here he is. Now, Johnny, tell the gentleman all you know, as straight as a book," said the mother, as the boy sprang over the counter, and placed himself squarely before the young man, eager to give any information, in the hope of receiving a sixpence.

"Are you sure it was she?" asked Abel, fixing his eyes on the boy, as though he would read his heart.

"Yes, sir, as sure's can be. Why, I just seed her an' 'alf an hour afore, an' she 'nd on the very self-same things. I can tell you every one, sir. A grayish-like caliker gown, with tucks inter the bottom, a little black apron with crinkly red braid on it, a brown shawl, an' a white straw hat with a bluish-plaid ribbon. An' 'er hair a kind o' hangin' down 'er back in curls. Ain't that 'er, sir?"

"Yes; that is certainly the way she was dressed," replied Abel, almost weeping at the exact description, as exact as he had given it the night before at Scotland Yard. "Did you see her face?" he inquired; for the boy was burning to tell more.

"No, sir, I can't say as I did. 'cause when I first popped 'er, she was a-puttin' one foot on ter the steps o' the cab, an' 'er back was ter me, an' the driver he was a-lennin' forward to listen to somethin' she was a-sayin', an' she was a-cryin' like a — like a — fish," he blurted out, in dire extremity for a comparison.

"How did you know she was crying, if you didn't see her face?" asked Abel sternly, not caring for any elaborations, and only requiring in his emergency the simple, unvarnished truth.

"Hush, hush, Johnny," interposed his mother. "You didn't say afore as how she was a-cryin'."

"Well, 'cause I didn't think of it," returned the imperturbable informant; "an' now I 'member as how I thought she was, 'cause I sced 'er 'ankercher in 'er 'and when she reached out to fasten the door."

"Was she alone? Now tell me the truth, and I'll give you a shilling."

"I don't know, sir; but I s'pose she were, 'cause I didn't see no one; though I should n't wonder if there were some one a-waitin' for 'er in the cab; 'cause the curtains was down like as they al'ays is to a funeral."

"Which way did the cab go?"

"Why, down Oxford like mad. So fast that a p'licemen batted at the 'orses; but he didn't hit 'em, an' the driver just snickered, an' thumbed his nose at 'im."

In spite of the seriousness of the occasion, Mrs. Burt laughed at the facetious description of her offspring, and Abel sighed heavily; but the boy maintained his solemn gravity, his head thrown back, his thumbs in his trousers pockets, and his unwavering eyes fixed on the young man's face, as unflinchingly as a statue of Truth.

"Did you notice the number of the cab?" cried Abel eagerly, as a sudden thought made his heart bound with hope.

"No, sir, I didn't. How could I when he drove off like lightnin'? but I'd know the cabby anywhere if I set eyes on 'im, 'cause he 'ad a nose as big as — as big as a — stove."

"Johnny, Johnny, be careful an' tell the truth," mildly interposed Mrs. Burt again.

"Well ain't I a tellin' the truth, as solemn as though I was sworn?" questioned Johnny in an injured tone of voice.

"Well, I can't say as how you are; 'cause no man's got a nose as big as a stove."

"Yes, them cabbies is. Lots of 'em's got noses as big as little stoves; an' I didn't say what size stoves," returned the boy, determined to defend his word from imputation by the most unanswerable logic.

"Never mind that," interrupted Abel, driven to desperation by this nonsense. "You think you'd know the man if you saw him again?"

"Certain, 'cause 'o the nose," replied

Johnny with an air of the strongest conviction.

"Well, then, Mrs. Burt, will you let the boy go with me? perhaps with his help I can find the cabman, and may learn from him what I want to know."

"Certain, certain, Mr. Winter: keep him as long as you like, an' I'll borrow a neighbor's little boy to run errands while he's gone," replied Mrs. Burt kindly as Abel hurried away.

Johnny, delighted with the prospect of a day among London cabs, expressed his satisfaction with a double somerset, and a final exit on his hands, much to the dismay of his mother, who declared that he would turn his brains upside down.

It is needless to say that Johnny's story of the nose was a fabrication of his inventive brain: there was no cabby to be found with a facial appendage larger and more striking than that of a hundred others, as Abel began to suspect; for, after a day's search among the five thousand public vehicles which constitute part of the rotary motion of London, and their five thousand drivers, he failed to find one with a nose as large as even the smallest of stoves, in spite of Johnny's constant prediction that they would come upon him somewhere when they didn't expect it, although he pretended to be looking for him every moment. Before the day was over, the poor fellow, hoping against hope, had asked hundreds of these obdurate Jehus if they had driven a young girl from Oxford Street the night before, only to receive an indifferent and disheartening negative. Nearly all the week he might have been seen at the different cab-stands, and around Holborn and Oxford Streets, with Johnny always at his side, interested and attentive; but still the man with the remarkable nose never made his appearance, nor ever had been seen by any one, that he could discover, except that young disciple of Truth, who frequently declared that "he must a died sudden, or else he'd a turned up afore."

It was not until a week was spent in this useless search that Abel would acknowledge

to himself that he had been deceived in regard to Violet's having gone away in a cab. Still, the fond mother had not the least doubt that her offspring had seen the girl driven off in a vehicle whose conductor had an enormous nose, though, perhaps, not quite as large as a small stove. At the end of the week, after Abel had haunted Scotland Yard, the cab-stands, and the streets around Holborn, with no success, he was obliged to confess to poor old Top, who sat at home, weakly lamenting, that he had but little hope of ever finding Violet, or of even hearing from her. "She must have gone of her own will, or else all my efforts wouldn't have been in vain," he said gloomily.

"God forgive her, my boy, if she did! for it'll be the means o' my death. It's a blow I can't get over. Some way I feel ten years older an' I did a week ago. I'm sorry for her. I pity her from the bottom o' my heart, 'cause I know what dreadful sufferin' she's got before her; but it's you, Abel, I feel for the most. It's like tearin' my soul from my body, to see you in trouble, an' not be able to comfort you. I've al'ays been a comfort to you afore. Ain't I, my boy?"

"Yes, yes, you have, daddy, dear," sobbed Abel; "and you are now."

"No: it don't seem as if I was now. I know I kind o' fail to reach your ease. It ain't like your other little troubles; an' none but God can comfort you. It's no use for me to talk much about it to you. It's no use to keep a tearin' open your wounds that'll bleed enough without. I was very fond o' Vi'let; but o' course I didn't love her as you did, that was to be her husband. Still, I loved her so much, that, if she should come back penitent, I'd forgive her; an' I hope you would too."

"Yes, I'd forgive her; I have already: but she'd never be the same to me again. I've lost her; I know and feel it: even if she should come back now, she wouldn't be the same. I've lost Violet, and I never shall find her."

"But you'll try an' be resigned an' pa-

tient like, and not lose your interest in life, an' get discouraged when you're all alone, an' don't have me to talk to you."

"Don't have you, daddy? Why, what do you mean? You're not ill, are you? Do you feel pain anywhere? Tell me, and I'll bring a doctor," said Abel anxiously, as he looked with close scrutiny into the pale, wrinkled face of the old man. His trouble surely had blinded him, or he would have noticed before how dreadfully this week of anxiety had told upon poor old Top. His cheeks, that had always a healthy flush, were now colorless and sunken. His hands trembled pitifully; and his voice, that had never lost its cheery chirp, was now low and depressed. "I believe you *are* ill, daddy, and won't tell me! I'll go at once for a doctor," he exclaimed, starting up, and taking his hat.

"Now, Abel, dear, don't do no such a thing," said the old man, smiling in his face, and detaining him gently. "I've never had a doctor in my life, an' I never want one. An' I never had a sick day, an' I'm not sick now. When my time comes, I'll go. When God calls poor old Top, he's ready; an' all the doctors in the world can't keep him a minit. So you see, it'd be a pity to spend money for nasty drugs, as'd only turn my stomach, an' spoil my appetite. Now, you don't s'pose poor old creatur's like me is a goin' to last al'ays, do you? Why, look at my sand-pails: how many times I've had to get new ones! An' people can't last al'ays, any more 'an sand-pails. Don't talk any more 'bout my bein' sick, but just try an' eat a bite o' supper. There's a nice slice o' bacon, and some muffins hot an' well buttered. I've got your supper for you many a night when you had such an appetite that you couldn't get enough. Now you've got plenty, an' you ain't got the will to eat it."

Abel drew near the table, and tried to force down a little food; but Violet's place opposite to his was empty, and he missed her as he never had before. There seemed to be a black shadow over the spot where he had seen her lovely face so often. His

heart was too full. A sob rose in his throat and almost suffocated him. He tried to drink the hot, strong tea that Top had poured for him; but he could not swallow: his tears fell into his cup, and scorched his lips. "It's no use, daddy," he cried, putting it down. "I can't eat, I can't drink: my heart is broken." Then he wrung his hands, and moaned, "Oh, if she were but dead! If she were but dead! I could hear it, and thank God. I'm too wretched! My cup is too bitter, my burden too heavy! Let me go to my own room. I'm better alone; and I'm so tired, perhaps I shall sleep a little, and forget my suffering."

"I shouldn't wonder if your bed was the best place for you," said Top encouragingly, as he lit his candle. "But before you sleep, just ask God to help you a bit, an' he'll do it; for he al'ays gives us a lift when our burden's too heavy for us to pull through alone."

In his little room, Abel tried to lift his heart to God, tried to draw strength from the fountain of love and pity; but, in the midst of his prayers and sobs, he saw only the face of Violet, her blue eyes tearful, her mouth quivering with sorrow and penitence, and her hands outstretched to him. At last overcome by weariness, for the first time within a week, he sank into a deep sleep, from which he did not awake until the morning sun shone into his room. That day he took his place again in the office of Mr. Thorpe, and performed his duty with his usual attention, though all noticed that his face was gloomy and downcast, and his manner more reserved and serious than usual. Only Mr. Thorpe knew his sad secret, and he respected it. Young Mr. Thorpe came in late. He was silent and pre-occupied, and Abel thought that he looked jaded and ill: perhaps it was his morbid imagination; for certainly every thing seemed changed to him now. When he returned home at night, with that dreary dread which we feel on entering for the first time a house from whence the mortal remains of some beloved one has

been carried, he found Top in bed, and very weak. Again he expressed his anxiety, and again the old man smilingly assured him that it was nothing. At his time of life people needed more sleep; they were babies for the second time, and returned again to the needs and habits of infancy.

About three weeks after Violet's disappearance, and the day before the one fixed for his marriage, Abel returned home to find the poor old man very weak and drowsy. "It's no use, my boy," he said, smiling faintly, as the young man leaned over his bed and smoothed his pillow. "I've hated to break it to you; but I've got to now, seein' as I've had my warnin', an' I ain't long to be with you."

"Don't say that, daddy, dear; don't, I pray," cried Abel, as more than one tear dropped on the pinched, wrinkled face.

"But it's true, my child, an' you ought to be glad to see a poor old cretin' like me finish up his work, an' go to sleep in God's cradle; for the grave's his cradle, an', some way, I'm longin' for it, an' ain't sorry, only for leavin' you alone an' in trouble: that's what grieves me now. I've thought of it, a-lyin' here to-day with no one to speak to but God."

"O daddy! why didn't you let me stay with you?"

"'Cause, Abel, I wanted to be alone. I had business with my Maker, accounts to settle; an' I didn't want no confusin' o' figures with others bein' round. We wanted it all alone to ourselves, God an' Top, for the last reckonin'. I said to myself, loud an' earnest, like them judges in court, 'Top, confess wherein you've done wrong.' An' I answered, after I thought my life all over like, 'Good Lord, I can't see if I've done wrong al'ays, 'cause in my ignorance I don't know; but I've tried to do right. I've never wronged any one knowin'ly. I've al'ays give just measure o' sand. I've paid to the utmost farthin' for all I've had. I've kept myself and all about me clean, an' I've never refused a crust an' a cup to the poor an' hungry; but you know if in thoughtlessness I've committed sins, been

over hasty in my temper, an' misjudged any one, an' spoke nasty angry words, an' been harsh an' unforgivin'; you know it all, Lord, an' I 'umbly crave your pardon.' Then it seemed to me that a voice, clear and distinct, like water a tricklin' over stones, said some words that I heard a minister speak once in a meetin' at Smithfield, long ago, when I was a young man; an' it was this: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' By that I know it's all settled, an' I've nothin' more to worry about; now I've had my warnin', an' I'm ready to go. I'll tell you about it, Abel. Last night, just after Bow Bells struck twelve o'clock, — I've heard 'em for over eighty years, an' soon I shall hear 'em for the last time; but they'll ring, an' ring the same when I'm gone; an' some other poor cretur'll lay in this little room, an' hear 'em; an' Top'll be safe enough in his Father's house a listenin' to 'em, faint-like, way below, here on earth. Well, as I was a sayin', I heard Bow Bells; an' they sounded as they never did before, — as though angels had rung 'em, an' then waited an' rung 'em again. An' then all was still, an' I sort o' slept, an' dreamed that your mother — your poor mother, Abel, that died on my sand-heap — come to me all in beautiful white, as clean and fresh as a lily, with a face as innocent an' peaceful as a baby, an' held out her hands, an' said, 'I've come for you, good old Top,' — think of that, she called me 'good,' — 'The dear Lord says I may bring you to him.' Then I took her hand confidin'-like, an' we seemed to be floatin' in the air, away up above the cross on St. Paul's; an' as we went, leavin' the city an' all its noise an' sin below us, she leaned toward me, an' said so sweet an' saintly, 'Top, you've saved my child; through you my boy will come to me. My sins are all washed away, an' I shall look in his face holy an' pure.' That is what she said, I remember every word. Then it seemed as though a great light shone round us; an' music like the charity children a singin' in St. Paul's filled the air. With that I woke, an' found myself here in my little room, an' the lamp out, an'

the moon a-lookin' in my window; an' I felt so peaceful an' happy that I knew I'd had my warnin', an' my work was nigh done."

"It was only a dream, a sweet, happy dream," said Abel, laying his face on the old man's pillow, to hide his tears. "My poor mother knows in the other world how good you've been to her boy; and God sent her in a dream to tell you so. Daddy, dear, I've been thinking a good deal of my mother since Violet went away; and I've sometimes thought that perhaps she was one of those poor outcasts, whom the world never forgives, and whom God never refuses to pity."

"I'm 'fraid she was, Abel. I never meant to tell you, but now p'rhaps it's best: it may make you more gentle with Vi'let. It was her that said as how she'd twisted ropes o' sand. Poor cretur! she'd suffered an' was penitent, 'cause I saw the tear on her cheek after she was dead. Remember that, if ever you come across Vi'let; for no matter what she's done, there was somethin' good in the girl. I can't never forget how she put her arms 'round my neck, the night before she went away, an' kissed my old face so lovin'. Her heart was full then; an', if we'd a knowd all, we might have saved her. Abel, since I've laid here alone, weak an' tired like, I've thought more 'an I ever did in my whole life afore, an' I b'lieve it ain't intended for us to be very happy here on earth, 'cause our happiness is to come after this life, an', more 'an that, I b'lieve God don't mean us to be harsh an' condemn any one; for we're all sinners in his sight; an', if one's a little better 'an another, it's p'rhaps 'cause they ain't been tempted an' tried: an', good or bad, we're all his children, an' he loves us all. If that poor, s'iled, crushed mother o' yours is clean an' white in heaven, we musn't turn our backs on any one. That's why I don't feel hard to'ard Vi'let, an' I could take her in my arms an' forgive her, 'cause I know God will. An', Abel, dear, I want you to, if you ever find her. Be pitiful to her, an' kind, just like the Lord's been to your mother."

"I will, I will," said Abel solemnly: "I promise you that I will."

"An' I want you to try an' be strong, an' patient, an' live to do all the good you can to the poor an' sufferin'. P'rhaps God intends that you ain't to be happy here: I'm 'fraid he does. I'm 'fraid sorrow'll be your portion, 'cause you've commenced so young; but you'll get your share o' happiness in the end when God takes you home, — that is, if you don't trust to ropes o' sand; an' I'm sure you won't, Abel. You've more good in you than to turn to folly an' sin for 'comfort. I'm sure you'll do right, even if it makes you suffer for the time. If you have enemies, forgive 'em, an' do 'em a good turn; an' be just to every one. I don't know as I can say any more 'an that. Now, my boy, I've got somethin' to give you 'sides advice. When I'm gone, you'll find a box under my bed, an' here's the key round my neck. There's near upon a hundred pounds in that box, — I've been all my life a savin' it, penny by penny, — an' six pounds that belongs to Vilet. It's her money that I laid away for her to buy things for her weddin.' If ever you find her, give it to her with my love an' forgiveness. P'raps some time that money that I've saved scrap 'll be of use to you. Then, dear, you'll think o' your old daddy, an' love him, won't you?"

"I shall think of you always without that, an' love you while my life lasts," said Abel, tenderly smoothing the scanty gray locks, and the closely-lined brow.

"I've been good to you most al'ays, haven't I?"

"Yes, yes, better than I've deserved."

"If I've ever been a little harsh an' impatient to you, you'll forgive me, won't you?"

"You've never been: I can't remember an unkind thing."

"Thank God for that! I shouldn't like to think that I'd made you unhappy when you've been such a blessin' to me. The only thing I'm sorry for is that you couldn't a gone to Blue-coat School when you set your mind on it. I don't think there was

ever any thing else that I didn't try to do for you. Now I've finished all, an' I'd like to have died seein' you happy with Vilet; but that can't be, so I must go an' leave you alone an' in trouble; an' it's hard, but God knows best when to take me."

After that he fell into a light slumber, and Abel sat by his side holding the gentle hand that had caressed him and toiled for him so lovingly, with a heart too full for tears. From time to time he awoke, and talked calmly and cheerfully of some scene in his boy's childhood, or some of his pretty baby ways, the memory of which still had the power to warm and cheer his heart. Once, after a long silence, when Abel thought him sleeping, he looked up and said, "Do you mind that day, so long ago, when we'd been to the Tower, an' you said you shouldn't like to miss bein' happy? You was so young an' full o' life then that you thought you couldn't bear it. Now I'm 'fraid you'll have to: I'm 'fraid sorrow an' sacrifice 'll be your portion; an' the only anxiety I have is that you'll sink under it."

"Don't fear for me, daddy. I know what my lot's to be: I know that my happiness is all behind me; but I shall try to bear whatever's laid upon me. I shall try to bear it like a man."

"That's right, Abel. I'm glad to hear you say that; but don't forget to look to God for help."

When Bow Bells struck twelve, the old man was sleeping like a child; and Abel, watching him, saw a smile of ineffable peace steal over his face, — a still, holy smile, while his lips parted in a few, low, broken words: "I'm ready, Top's ready; give me your hand, mistress, an' Abel 'll come after us." Then, without sighing or moving, he ceased to breathe; and the smile settled over his kind old face, touching it into childish calm and simplicity.

The dawn of the day, the day that was to have witnessed his marriage, found Abel sitting motionless by the bed, holding the gentle old hand in his, and looking with a sort of stupor into the plain, wrinkled face

that had always shone with love and kindness for him. The tender affection, the ready sympathy, the patient, unwavering love of his life, was gone; and he was alone and in trouble.

CHAPTER VII.

A TERRIBLE INJUSTICE.

THE pleasantest of all pleasant June mornings! The sun is turning the smoke into a golden mist; the fresh wind shaking down showers of blossoms from every tree and shrub, the birds singing, the children laughing, the parks and gardens full of merry, light-hearted strollers: the whole city is alive with gayety and excitement; for it is the carnival of London! it is "Derby Day!"

In a small, neatly-furnished room in a clean court out of Little Eastcheap, near an open window filled with geraniums and roses, at a table covered with books, sits Abel Winter, reading attentively. He is very thin and pale; and his face has an expression of patient seriousness which cannot be called sorrow; his dress of deep mourning, though plain, is scrupulously neat and precise, and his manner that of a man who lives within himself, asking little and expecting little from those around him. There are no signs of luxury in the room, except in books and flowers. The windows, and two or three stands, are filled with choice plants, and pots of sweet Parma violets; and books are scattered around on shelves, tables, and chairs, in that careless fashion which shows that they are constant and familiar companions. There is a tap at the door; and Abel lifts his head, and shuts his book with a lingering glance, as though unwilling to leave it, as his landlady enters with his breakfast.

"I'm a little late this mornin'," she says, in a pleasant, hearty voice; "but it's not

my fault in the least. It's the boy as is behind time with the milk; an' he said as how it wasn't his fault neither, 'cause nothin's reg'lar on Derby Day."

"Never mind, Mrs. Battle. I've an hour yet before office-time; and I'd rather read before breakfast than after: the brain's more active when the stomach's empty."

"Are they? Well, I don't know as to that; but I like to eat before I do much: I'm faint-like if I don't."

"Well, for physical labor you need to; but for mental, that's different," returned Abel gravely, as he seated himself at the table with his book still in his hand.

"Lor! now, Mr. Winter, I'm no scholar, an' I don't understand half them big words you've used; but do just put down your book while you eat your breakfast. I've heard as how it was the worst thing in the world for the digesters to read when you're eatin'."

Abel smiled a little, sad smile, and said he believed it was considered injurious, but that he had never felt any ill effects from it.

Mrs. Battle poured out his coffee, placed the muffins and chops conveniently near him, smoothed the table-cloth, and changed the arrangement of his knife and fork several times, and then lingered as if loath to go; for she quite depended upon a chat with Abel while he was taking his breakfast: but this morning he seemed less inclined than usual to listen to her entertaining remarks; for he divided his attention pretty equally between his book and his coffee.

"Your flowers is lookin' fine this mornin'; ain't they, Mr. Winter?" she said at length, hovering round them, and picking off a dead leaf here and there. "I dusted 'em yesterday, an' drowned 'em with water, which freshened 'em up amazin': an' them violets, how sweet they do smell! Why, they scent the room like a garden."

"Yes: they're very fragrant, and grow beautifully," replied Abel sadly and abstractedly, as though he were thinking of something else.

"Do you know, Mr. Winter, that it's just four years ago to-day since you come here?" said Mrs. Battle, with the door in her fingers, as if it had just occurred to her as she was going out, when really she had been thinking of it ever since she entered the room.

"Yes: I remember it too well," returned Abel with a sigh.

"I don't forget it, 'cause it was a awful day for me. First, in the mornin' early, I heard as how my Cousin Betsy's little boy was drowned in a wash-tub down in Sussex. Then straight upon that bad news comes more, — for cats never die but kittens do, — a' aunt o' my husband's mother had to drop down sudden that very time, an' never speak again; an' it was a great disappointment too, 'cause she had property, an' died afore she had time to make 'er will, an' my poor man never got a penny; an' goodness knows he needed it bad enough! Then, just as my eyes was as red as a lobster with cryin', an' I hurryin' like mad to get your rooms ready for you an' your bride," (Abel winced), — "tryin' to make 'em neat an' pleasant-like, you come all in deep mournin', pale as a sheet, an' tells me that you'd lost her sudden, an' shouldn't need four rooms, but would take two all the same. I can't never forget what a shock it was, along of not lettin' all my rooms, and a-thinkin' that every one was a-dyia' sudden; for no one would never a thought it of that young pretty cretur' as come with you one evenin' to look at the rooms."

"Please don't speak of it, Mrs. Battle: I can't bear to be reminded of that dreadful time."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Winter. I didn't mean to hurt your feelin's; I was only just a-thinkin' how long you'd lived all alone an' in mournin'! an' how much happier you'd be if you had a wife to keep you company, an' to dust your books, an' tend to your flowers!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Battle; you're very kind; but I never shall have a wife. I'm contented as I am. I'm sure you don't

mind taking care of my things; and I'm quite satisfied."

"An' I am, too, Mr. Winter, for that matter. You're a' excellent lodger as ever was: so quiet an' no trouble, as I've often told my man, an' always wipes your feet, an' don't forget there's a scraper at the street-door: still, it seems to me you're kind o' lonely-like, for all."

"No, Mrs. Battle: I don't think I am. Books and flowers are pleasant companions."

"Yes, I s'pose them are for scholars; but there's people as needs human bein's round 'em to sort o'chirk 'em up a bit. Now, Mr. Winter, instead o' settin' here alone, an' puzzlin' over them books, which is like deal men's bones, dry an' mouldy, why don't you go to the Darby? Everybody's goin', an' it's a day like we don't often have. It'd do you a deal o' good. Me an' my man'll be startin' in a' hour. We've a pickled tongue, a slice o' ham, an' bread an' ale, with a 'alf of a cold chicken, for a lunch. There's a plenty for you, if you'd like to go an' take a bite along of us."

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Battle; but I haven't a holiday: there's a deal to be done in the office; for young Mr. Thorpe goes to the races, and we're behindhand in our work."

"Oh! that's a pity to shut yourself up to-day. Now, Mr. Winter, if you don't mind, I'll pick up a bit," said Mrs. Battle, clearing away the breakfast things before Abel had fairly swallowed his last cup of coffee; "for, you see, I must fly round to get things tidied up before I go, an' my man's so impatient if I'm late."

"I'm going out directly, Mrs. Battle," said Abel, taking up his hat. "So you can hurry all you wish. Good-morning, and a pleasant day."

"He's always nice an' civil spoken," soliloquized Mrs. Battle, as the door closed upon the young man; "but I'm glad he's gone, 'cause I can clatter the things as much as I like, an' I can work a deal faster when I can make a noise. It's the only

thing he's the least fussy about, is noise; an' he do like to be still as well as any one I ever see. How awful pale he turned when I spoke of his trouble! Lor! I thought there wasn't the man born as'd remember a woman a month after she was dead, let alone four years, and never take off his hat-band neither. I've al'ays wondered what killed her, whether it was a fit, or a turn o' fever, for she died awful sudden; but I never can draw it out o' him, he's so close-like. You might as well try to get hair off a' egg. Any way, it was a' awful stroke, I'm sure; for I used to hear him nights a-walkin' an' walkin', 'till I thought he'd wear the floor through. But now he's got quieter, and reads and studies more, an' tends his flowers, an' lingers round them v'lets tender-like. I know he loves 'em best of all his plants 'cause her name was Vi'let: I heard him call her that the night they come together to look at the rooms. Though he's calmer an' stiller now than he used to be still I believe he ain't cured yet; 'cause he never smiles like a man as has much heart. Goodness! there's my man a-bawlin' for me to hurry, as though he thought I had a dozen pair o' hands, an' could do every thing in a minute. I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin' in a flash," she shouted, seizing the tray, and hastening off with an awful clatter of dishes and a slipshod scuffling.

What Mrs. Battle had said was, for the greater part, true. Abel, after having buried poor Old Top respectably in Kensal Green, had come there dressed in deep mourning, with eyes that looked as though they were drained of tears, and a face so pale and wan that Mrs. Battle declared he seemed more like a ghost than a living man. He had said very little, only giving her to understand, that, instead of a happy bridegroom, he was a sorrow-stricken lover, who had lost the object of his affection almost on the eve of his marriage. The kind-hearted woman pitied him, and respected his grief, though she was aching with curiosity to know all about it; but Abel's reserve and dignity baffled every effort to draw him out; so that after four years she knew no

more of the particulars of his loss than she did the first day that he came.

In less than a year after her disappearance, he had seen Violet twice. The first time was shortly after Top's death, when he caught a glimpse of her driving in Hyde Park. She was dressed in silk and muslin, and wore a fashionable blue bonnet. The carriage, her dress, explained all: she had deserted him to become the mistress of some wealthy rival, w' o gave her rich dresses and jewels. He had suspected and feared it; but now, when he knew it beyond a doubt, he was completely beside himself with rage and indignation. Not knowing what he did, he followed the carriage, running like a madman in the hot July sun, until he attracted the attention of the passers, who turned and looked after him, saying that he had escaped from an asylum: this brought him to a consciousness of his folly; and, rushing into the shrubbery, he sank exhausted and quivering with anguish on the grass under a tree, where he lay with his face to the ground for hours, while those who noticed him thought him either sleeping or intoxicated. When he was calmer, he arose and staggered home; shutting himself in his own room, he wept, and moaned, and raved the night away, forgetting his courage, his manliness, his dignity, his promises to poor Old Top, in the one maddening thought, that she had been false to him, and was happy, living in sin, with another. After that passionate outburst, with a feeling that the inevitable must be endured, he became calmer and more resigned. Still, with the strange inconsistency of the human heart, he haunted every place where he thought that there was a possibility of seeing her, until one night he caught another glimpse of her in the crowd around the door of Covent Garden Theatre. She was just stepping into her carriage; and all he saw was her beautiful face and head, with a cluster of pink roses in her brown curls. Forgetting himself, forgetting the place and the people, he darted forward, and cried out in bitter distress, "Violet, Violet!" But the crowd drove him back, scarce noticing

his pathetic cry, so eager was each person to extricate himself from the press, while the strong arm and menacing club of a policeman prevented him from reaching her in spite of the most frantic efforts. While he struggled in vain, the carriage drove away, and was lost to sight among the hundreds of other vehicles that filled the thronged street. After that, he went constantly to the same places, but he never saw her again. In those two brief glances he had learned that the desires of her girlhood were gratified, — that she had jewels, rich dresses, and a carriage, and went to the play like a fine lady. When he thought of it all he abhorred her; and, grinding his teeth, he would say with terrible vindictiveness, "She's twisting her ropes of sand! she's twisting her ropes of sand! and by and by they'll break, and leave her a wreck." But as time passed off, and he did not see her again, his feelings softened toward her; and he began to think of her as we think of those who have sinned against us and are dead, with pity and forgiveness, wishing again that she would come back to him penitent, that he might show her the endurance of his love and tenderness.

The day after "Derby," Abel was at his desk, when Robert Thorpe came in, looking pale, heavy-eyed, and jaded. Only noticing his companion with a curt "Good-morning," he threw himself into his chair, leaned his elbows on his desk, and, dropping his head into his hands, he remained for a long time in deep thought. At last he looked up with a weary sigh; and, drawing a pile of letters towards him, he began to open them, glancing over them, and hastily flinging them aside impatiently, as though the least labor were unendurable.

"Are you not well this morning, Mr. Thorpe?" said Abel, after watching him for a few moments.

"Thank you, I'm well enough, as far as my health goes; but I'm awfully bothered in my mind. To tell you the truth, Winter, I bet too heavy yesterday, and lost: it's like my cursed luck! and the governor is as hard as a mill-stone this morning. I've

been going over some little items with him; and I swear if he don't think I'm extravagant, — says I'm too flush, and spend more than I ought to of the profits; but what's the use of being partner in a house like this, and working like a dog, if one can't spend a pound without accounting for it. I declare, I'd rather work on a salary as you do: then I could dispose of my money as I liked."

Just then there was a tap at the door; and a clerk, putting in his head, said, "A man to see Mr. Robert Thorpe."

"Show him in," returned Robert gruffly.

Abel looked up, as a common, low-browed, evil-eyed Jew entered; but, understanding that he had private business with his employer, he bent over the invoice he was copying, and paid no attention to the new-comer.

When Robert Thorpe saw who the person was, his face flushed with anger and mortified pride. Rising, he opened the door of a small cabinet, which was seldom used by Mr. Thorpe, as all his private business was transacted in the presence of Abel, and desired the evidently unwelcome visitor to enter. They remained closeted for some time, in a very loud and stormy interview; for Abel occasionally heard the words, "Derby," "betting," "interest," "security," and so on, bandied about between the disputants.

At last the Jew came out with a cunning glitter of satisfaction in his snaky eyes, and glided away without a word; while Robert took his seat at his desk, pale, and trembling with angry excitement.

Neither spoke for a long time. Abel copied attentively; and Mr. Robert read and re-read his letters, without understanding their contents, so confused was he by the Jew's visit.

At last he started up, and said, "It's no use: I can't do any thing to-day. That infernal Jew's upset me. You'll have to go over the correspondence, Winter; and, for Heaven's sake! see that every thing's right; because the governor'll be in to-morrow.

He's getting over his attack, and he's always cross-grained and fussy after; so look out that all's straight. I'm going to the club, to rest a while; and I sha'n't be back to-day. If Lloyd's man comes in, pay him ninety-three pounds, seventeen shillings,—a private bill. I'll put it in the safe;" and, as he spoke, he folded a number of notes in an envelope, and, opening a safe used to deposit small amounts, he placed the package in it, and closed the door with a sharp bang. Abel was looking at him; and he remembered the violence with which he shut the door, and the expression of his face, long after. Then, taking his hat and cane, he walked out, telling the clerks in the outer office, as he passed, that he should not be back again for the day.

After he had gone, Abel sat for a long time in deep thought. Something was wrong with Mr. Robert Thorpe: he had feared it for some time; but he had liked him so well, that he would not acknowledge it, even to himself. Now the Jew's visit had confirmed his worst suspicions. He was involved in debt, and his father knew nothing of it: and, that he might not learn of his folly, he had gone to this unprincipled money-lender to extricate himself. Then, his pale face and jaded air told of late hours and dissipation. He had neglected his business, injured his health, and squandered his money; and his father, in ignorance of it, trusted his most important interests to him. "How will this all end?" thought Abel. "Perhaps it's my duty to tell Mr. Thorpe my fears. But how can I,—how can I go to my employer, and complain of a son that he loves to idolatry? I can't do it. I must go on, as I've been doing, working for him like a slave; for I pity him, and like him, and I can't betray him. For near five years I've devoted myself to him, been patient enough, God knows! under his exacting commands; shielded him, and excused him, in a hundred ways: and what have I got for it? a pleasant smile, a kind word now and then. It's a mystery why I should like him, when I know he is unprincipled; but still I do."

It was very late when Abel left the office, as he had double duty to perform. All the other clerks had gone long before; and he let himself out, as he always did, by a small rear door that led through the warehouse into a narrow, covered passage, which conducted to the street. As he passed out some one was leaning against the wall near the door, who, when he approached, moved toward him, and then drew back hastily, and remained motionless. "It is some houseless creature who has sought a shelter here," he thought, as he hurried out into the half light of Lower Thames Street.

The next morning Mr. Thorpe came into town early. He was weak and thin from a severe attack of gout; and Abel thought that he had never seen him looking so poorly. Mr. Robert was at his desk working diligently when his father entered. He got up, shook hands affectionately, and inquired about his health.

"I'm better, thank you," returned Mr. Thorpe; "but I'm weak, miserably weak, and fit for nothing. Why didn't you come home last night, Robert? I was alone all the evening."

"I'm sorry, sir; but I stopped at my club, and went to bed early. I was so used up and tired."

"Tired, were you? Why, was there more to do yesterday than usual?"

"Yes, sir," replied Robert, looking furtively at Abel, who was bending over his desk, apparently absorbed in his work, though in reality he heard every word of the conversation.

"But you manage to keep every thing straight between you?" said Mr. Thorpe, glancing at Abel.

"Certainly, sir! Winter's invaluable in an emergency; but I'm afraid he's over-worked."

"Ah! you young men don't know what work is," returned Mr. Thorpe a little fretfully. "Why, after my father died, all the business came upon me; and it was as large then as it is now, for it hasn't increased any these last four years: and I did alone as much work as you and Abel do together."

Abel left the office, perform. All the days did, by a small passage, which as he passed out inst the wall near approached, moved drew back hastily, as. "It is some as sought a shelter hurried out into Thames Street."

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"Well, I don't understand it: I'm sure I'm not idle," said Robert, with unmistakable dissatisfaction; "and Winter works like a horse."

Abel looked up gratefully, and was about to speak, when there was a tap at the door, and a clerk entering, said, "A man from Lloyd's with a bill."

"Then he didn't come yesterday?" and Robert unlocked the safe as he spoke.

"No, sir," replied Abel.

"Where's the money? It is not here," said Robert, turning with a blanched face.

"I don't know," replied Abel, rising from his seat. "I saw you put some money there yesterday before you went out, and I've not seen it since. The man didn't come, and I had no occasion to open the safe."

"By Jove! that's strange," exclaimed Robert, glancing from his father to Abel. "There's no one that has a key to the safe, but my father, you, and I."

"Tell the man to wait a moment," said Mr. Thorpe to the clerk, who still stood at the door all eyes and mouth. "Give him a check for the amount, Robert, and send the messenger away; then we will look into this matter," he added, turning toward his son a puzzled, troubled face.

While Robert Thorpe wrote his signature to the draft with a very unsteady hand, Abel stood watching him in a dazed sort of a way, scarce comprehending the magnitude of the suspicion that had fallen upon him.

"Now pray explain this to me," said Mr. Thorpe, when the man had finally withdrawn with the check; "for I must confess I don't quite understand such an irregular proceeding."

"It's very easy to explain, sir," returned Robert, still very pale and nervous. "I owed a bill at Lloyd's, a private bill; and I expected the man to call yesterday. I put the amount, which I happened to have by me, into the safe, telling Winter if the man came to pay it to him. He did not come yesterday; but this morning he comes. I open the safe: the money is gone. No one has the key but you, myself, and Winter.

He was the last one in the office yesterday, and the first one this morning; yet he says that he knows nothing about it."

"Do you dare to say that I do?" cried Abel, turning toward Robert Thorpe with a face as white as marble, and eyes that glowed like fire.

"Yes, certainly: who else but you can know any thing about it?"

"You are a liar! You know I've never seen the money," shouted Abel at the top of his voice, utterly forgetting himself in his indignation.

Poor fellow! he had not come from a good stock; so he lacked the *finesse* that teaches better-bred people to control their temper in every emergency.

"Mr. Winter" (the "Mr." was ominous), said Mr. Thorpe slowly and sternly, "that will do. You have forgotten yourself: you have insulted your employer, and my son."

"He insulted me first," returned Abel angrily.

"Leave us alone, my son: we'll settle this between us," and Mr. Thorpe motioned to Robert to quit the room.

As the young man went out he looked back with a strange expression on his face,—an expression that Abel remembered long after; and the remembrance of it softened his animosity when the first bitterness of the wrong had passed away.

When his son had gone, Mr. Thorpe turned a troubled face toward Abel, and said, in a voice of mingled pity and entreaty, "I'm sorry for this, Abel. For God's sake! can't you explain it? If you needed the money, and took it, say so at once; and I'll overlook it. I'll promise you I will."

"Do you believe me capable of such a thing, Mr. Thorpe?" asked Abel with a strange calmness.

"I'm unwilling to; but what can I think? Robert put the money there: you saw him. He went away, and left you here; and, when he returns, the money is gone. No one else but you and he have keys to the safe, or even to the room. Nothing else is disturbed: no other person

can have taken it. You see it's against you.

"Yes; I see it is," returned the poor fellow, trembling in every limb as his anger gave way to the grief of being suspected by the man who had trusted him and befriended him always. "Still, Mr. Thorpe, you know me so well, I should hope, that no suspicious circumstance could change your good opinion of me."

"But what can I do? It lies between you and Robert. I can't accuse my son: it lies between you two.

"Then he is guilty; for I am not."

"How dare you say that in my presence?" shouted the old gentleman furiously. Then he calmed himself and said, "But I'm an idiot to lose my temper with you; there's no excuse for me. Be reasonable, Abel, and think of the absurdity of such a supposition. What would induce Mr. Robert Thorpe to steal the pitiful sum of ninety-three pounds from himself?"

"I don't know. I know nothing about it. I never have seen the money. You know it; and he knows it too. I've worked day and night for him. I've served him faithfully. I've made myself a slave to him, and this is the return. He accuses me of stealing a paltry sum of money!" here the poor fellow broke down; and, sinking into a chair, he wept violently.

Mr. Thorpe watched him with a painfully puzzled, pitying look, thinking to himself, "I can't believe he's guilty: I really can't."

At last Abel started up; and, dashing off the tears, he cried out in hard, angry tones, "I'll never forgive him: I never will! He shall suffer if he don't take that back."

"Calm yourself, Abel, and listen to reason. I can't think you've done it. I really can't, though every thing's against you. I'd rather lose a hundred times that sum than to accuse you. I'll replace it. I'll speak to my son, and you must apologize to him for what you said; you really must. Then, I think, we can let every thing go on as usual, and, perhaps, in time, the matter will be explained."

"What! You think I'll stay here and go on the same with that suspicion resting upon me? And that I'll apologize to Mr. Robert? No, Mr. Thorpe: I'll do neither. You've been good to me, sir; once, when I was in dreadful trouble, you were kind to me, and I don't forget it; but now you ask too much. No: I'll not work for you another day. I'll starve first." With this he took his hat and rushed out of the rear door, before Mr. Thorpe could say another word.

CHAPTER VIII.

LEFT TO HIMSELF.

FOR several days after the unhappy affair in Mr. Thorpe's office, Abel remained at home in his room, shutting himself up, refusing food and the kindly attentions of Mrs. Battle, who thought he was ill, and declared it to be the result of his poring over his books while he was taking his meals. She was not wrong in supposing that he was suffering, though the cause was a very different one from what she imagined; for in his deepest trouble he had never been through darker hours than these. The worst feelings in his nature were aroused: every vindictive, cruel passion, that until now had lain dormant, started into action at this provocation. Whatever of evil his mother had bequeathed to him was stirred up against the perpetrator of this bitter wrong. In his other troubles he had been gentle and patient, enduring all with a quiet courage worthy of a superior nature. But now his heart was seething hot with hate and revenge toward the man who had accused him so unjustly, who had ruined him with a word; and the most unbearable part of it was that he had loved his enemy, had devoted his best feelings to him, his most earnest endeavors, the very freshness and strength of his life. Virtually he had been

his slave, toiling for him day and night, and receiving but a scanty pittance in return, studying his interest more than his own, wearing out health and strength in his service, making every effort to save him from censure, blinding his own father to his faults, and enduring blame patiently that he might suffer no reproof. In short, he had sacrificed himself day by day, night by night, to be of service to this man who had so cruelly accused him on the first occasion for suspicion; and for what motive he could not divine. His anger against his enemy made him see his faults in the worst light, and he now encouraged conjectures which he never would have admitted before: he began to doubt his honor. Only Robert Thorpe himself could have withdrawn the money from the safe where he had placed it. But what reason had he for doing so? the smallness of the amount made the very supposition absurd. If he was involved in debt, so pitiful a sum as ninety-three pounds could not extricate him; besides, was he not a partner in a flourishing, well-established house? and could he not have raised ten times the amount in a hundred different ways? Therefore he could not have taken it simply to get possession of the money, which had been Abel's first impression: there must be another and a deeper motive behind it all; and that could only be a determination to disgrace him so that there should be a reason to dismiss him from his service.

"I understand it all now," he cried starting up, after hours of deep reflection, and walking the floor rapidly. "He's a greater villain than I thought him: he fears that I suspect him, that I know too much, and that I will betray him; he looks upon me as a spy, and has taken that base means to banish me. After all I've done for him, it is too cruel. It is more than I can bear. I will not submit to it calmly. I will not allow that man to ruin me. I will go to him, and expose him before his father, who shall know all of his irregular proceedings for the last four years. And the Jew, how can he explain that? Why

was he closeted with him? What can he say when I tell his father of all these things?"

Full of this intention, and beside himself with excitement and anger, he did the very worst thing that he could have done: he rushed into Mr. Thorpe's private office, where he was sitting quietly with his son, and accused the young man before his father in the most immoderate and insulting language. Robert, with fearful pallor and flaming eyes, interrupted him again and again; while Mr. Thorpe trembled so with indignation that he could scarce speak; but, when at last he recovered himself, he opened the door with a dignity that Abel could not mistake, and, saying a few low, impressive words to him, which cooled him directly, he bade him leave his presence forever.

The poor fellow tottered out through the warehouse into the dark passage, so faint and dizzy that he was obliged to lean for support against the wall. A great sob broke from his trembling lips, and a convulsion of grief shook him like a leaf. Mr. Thorpe, the man he had so loved and revered, the man for whose esteem and confidence he had labored all his life, had threatened to have him arrested like a common criminal! had ordered him to leave his office, or he would send for an officer to take him to prison on a charge of theft! Was there ever a more cruel wrong done an innocent man? The first shock had cooled him, now the numbness had passed away; and the sting that remained maddened him. Full of a terrible resolve, alone in that dark passage, but a few steps from God's blessed sunlight and the hurrying feet of men, women, and children, he took a fearful oath, clutching his hand, and shaking it in the direction of the office where Mr. Thorpe sat with his son, silent and gloomy, neither daring to accuse or excuse the rash young man who had insulted them in such an unwarrantable manner. Then he hurried home, rushing blindly through the crowds of people who stared at him wonderingly. Fires and tempests had slumbered in his

poor soul until now; and he had never been aware of their existence. It was the injustice, the terrible injustice, that aroused them to a whirlwind. Those who think they understand human nature well tell us that a consciousness of innocence makes us submit to accusation calmly. That will pass as a theory of some persons who have had but little experience in the workings of the heart; for, if there is one spark of passion in the soul, it will be ablaze at such an injury, or we are not human.

When Abel reached his room, he threw himself upon his bed, and lay for hours in a stupor of despair and discouragement. "What is the use," he thought, "to struggle any longer? I've tried, if ever any creature did, to keep my head above water. Since I lost her and dear old daddy, I've had as little heart as a man ever had; and yet I've tried not to sink. I've devoted myself to these two men. I've lived on their approval, their kindness. I had no other aim in my desolate life than to serve them faithfully. I've lived for them and my books. I've studied hard, when I haven't been working, to raise myself up to an intellectual level with them; to make myself more worthy of their esteem and friendship. I've never wronged any one in my life, and I never meant to; for four years my heart has bled silently, and I haven't disturbed others with my grief. I've tried to live a blameless, unobtrusive life, satisfied with enough for my daily bread, and my other small needs; and I've given what I could spare to those poorer than myself. I couldn't do much for others; but God knows I've done what I could. My confidence in them was the link that bound me to humanity. After my dreadful disappointment, their friendship made life endurable. I've been unhappy enough; I've had my share of trouble, yet this seems to be the heaviest of all. Poor old daddy was right: I was born for sorrow and sacrifice. There's always been a sad sighing in my ears: perhaps it is the old moan of the ocean that my mother heard, or the inheritance she gave me before I saw the light. What a lot mine's been! —

never to know a father, to be born of an outcast, to be reared in poverty and ignorance, with a soul thirsting for knowledge as the dry earth for rain; to love but one woman, to be deceived and deserted; and now to be crushed with this cruel wrong! What is there to be thankful for in such a destiny? Fate is against me. It is no use: I shall struggle no more!" Then, forgetting poor old Top's dying warning, he began to twist his ropes of sand: he began to accuse God of injustice, and all mankind of mischievous intentions toward him; he exaggerated the evil by encouraging it, and thinking of it, until he worked himself up to a frenzy of passion and revenge. He was burning with fever, a scorching thirst tortured him: he drank water by the quart, but that did not appease it. Then he did another foolish thing: he sent Mrs. Battle for a bottle of brandy, and drank a glass for the first time in his life.

The good woman was anxious and alarmed when she looked at his haggard face and blood-shot eyes. "You're ill, you are, Mr. Winter; an' you must have a doctor. You're feverish an' thirsty, which is the way they're took with small-pox an' yaller fever; both's goin' about London, and you've come across 'em somewhere," she said with melancholy decision, referring to the diseases in a way that corresponded with the figurative language of the Bible, "of plagues that stalk by noonday!"

"You're mistaken, Mrs. Battle: I'm not ill, and I don't want a doctor," returned Abel in such a loud, cross tone, and so unlike his usual polite, quiet way, that his landlady left the room in terror, declaring to her husband that their lodger had got the "delirium tremblers instead of the small-pox, which was caused, no doubt, by them books."

All the remainder of the day, Abel drank brandy, and raved and tossed, swearing bitter vengeance against Robert Thorpe, so that by night he was in a fit condition to commit almost any madness. When Bow Bells, that had made such music in poor Old Top's dying ears, rang

nine, he was preparing to go out. He arranged his disordered dress with trembling hands, drank another glass of brandy, and then, taking a small revolver from his drawer, which he had used to practise in a shooting-gallery, he loaded it carefully, with a steady hand, and put it resolutely into his breast-pocket. As he took his hat from the table, he caught a glimpse of himself in a glass, and looked with a vague wonder at the haggard face and wild eyes, which seemed but a spectral reflection of his own. Then he stole out of the house like a criminal, saying, "He shall right me, or I'll take his life;" and he repeated it over and over in his heart, as he went through the street, until he reached London Bridge, where he could see through the fog the dim light in the window of the office on Lower Thames Street. It was as he had expected: Robert Thorpe was writing there, doing the work that he had always done; and later he would leave by the rear exit, through the warehouse and covered way, as was the custom with those who remained late.

The night was very dark; and a sougling wind drove the dense fog into the gloomy passage where Abel waited with the instrument of revenge clasped firmly in his hand, repeating over and over to himself, "He shall right me, or I'll shoot him like a dog." It seemed to him that he had waited there for hours, pressed against the door, listening for the steps that did not come, his soul a whirlwind of fierce passion, his heart full of burning hate and revenge, when suddenly he became conscious that some one was there besides himself; that another human being was watching in the darkness with him; for a soft, rustling sound told him that a woman's drapery was brushing against the damp wall. Turning his head, the faint light from Lower Thames Street struck across his face, and revealed it in all its ghastly pallor to the person, who sighed heavily, and withdrew again into the shadow.

"Who is here?" he said in a voice of

ill-controlled anger, for he feared that this intruder would baffle him in his scheme for extorting reparation from Robert Thorpe; but there was no reply, only a low, broken sob which touched his heart directly. "My God! It's a woman, and she's in trouble. What can I do? How can I get her away before he comes?"

Holding out one hand in the dark, while with the other he clasped the weapon of death close to his heart, he said more kindly, and with a softened voice, "What's the matter? are you hungry? Do you want money to get a night's lodging? If you do, here it is: take it, for God's sake! and go to a more comfortable place than this." But still there was no answer, only the low, broken sob. Then he left his post, and went softly toward the dark mass huddled against the wall. She was draped in black from head to foot, and not one feature of her face was visible in the obscurity. As he approached her, trembling with excitement and a nameless fear, she advanced toward him, and held out a dark bundle with a weary, drooping motion, as though she could no longer retain it in her grasp.

Instinctively, scarce knowing what he did, with the pistol still clenched in his hand, Abel reached out his arms, and received into them what he knew directly to be a child, wrapped in a thick garment. Before he was well aware of what he had done, before he had time to refuse the little creature so strangely thrust into his keeping, the woman glided by him out of the passage into the street, and he saw her no more; for he made no effort to follow her, but stood stupidly holding the bundle at arms' length. A moment after, a slight movement and a pitiful cry recalled him to himself; and, gathering the child close to his breast with the first instinct of the human heart, he tried to soothe it, and silence its plaintive wail. The instant that the little living thing nestled to his bosom, the warmth and life seemed to penetrate to his very soul, driving out the demon of darkness that reigned

there. "My God!" he cried, like one awakened suddenly from a horrible dream, "Where am I? Why am I here?" Then, as the thought of the crime he had meditated burst upon him in all its horror, he groaned aloud; and, flinging the pistol as far from him as he could, he clasped the child closer, and rushed from the place, just as Robert Thorpe's advancing steps fell upon his ear.

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE ANGEL.

WHEN Abel fled from the advancing steps of Robert Thorpe, his one desire was to escape from temptation. In an instant his feelings had entirely changed; and he now looked upon the crime he had been about to commit with the greatest horror. He did not stop until he was sufficiently far from his enemy to insure his safety; then he turned into a dark court piled with bales of goods, where unobserved he could pause a moment to recover himself. Sinking down on one of the boxes, and still holding the child to his heart as a shield against the tempter, he tried to think of what had taken place during the last few days; but he could remember nothing clearly since the hour that Robert Thorpe had accused him of a crime he had never committed. All the intervening time was like the confusion of a troubled dream that left no distinct impression, only fear.

"Father in heaven!" he cried with anguish, "I was about to commit a dreadful crime: I was about to stain my soul with another's blood. How can I ever expect mercy from thee? How can I ever raise my eyes to thy face? How can I walk uprightly and fearlessly before my fellow-men with the memory of this awful intention haunting me? I was insane. I was deserted by my good angel. I was

left to myself. O daddy! dear daddy! did you know what your boy was about doing? Did you entreat Christ to interpose and save him? How can I ever meet you in the other world with my sin and ingratitude ever before me? I forgot all my promises to you, — promises that comforted you in your last hour. I forgot my resolution to do right, to be patient in trouble, to be faithful to your advice. I forgot all; and how can I hope for mercy and forgiveness from God?"

There alone, in the darkness and dreariness of night, utterly broken in spirit, and crushed, with remorse and penitence, he prayed as he never had prayed before, with the child clasped to his heart, a saving angel that had come between him and sin. After that he was calmer: a great agony seemed to have been lifted from him; and he walked out thankfully into the street with the feeling of one who had been saved from sudden destruction. He stopped for a moment under the nearest lamp; and, drawing back the shawl from the face of the infant, he looked at it for the first time. It was fast asleep: two little pink fists were doubled close under its dimpled chin, long curled lashes lay on its cheeks, and little rings of golden hair clustered round its white forehead. Its frock was fine and white: it was warm, clean, and sweet, and did not look like the neglected child of an outcast. There was a mystery about it. Who had thrust it into his arms? Was it some poor creature who wished to abandon the fruit of her shame, and had not the courage to leave it in the street, or at a door where charity could not refuse it? Or was it sent to him by God to save him from himself? Was it a little angel clothed in human flesh that had been put into his arms to drive the demons of hate and revenge from his heart? While these thoughts were passing in his mind, he had formed no plan as to what he should do with it. Its very helplessness appealed to him for protection. The warmth of its little body penetrated his heart. It had saved him from a fearful sin: he could not

abandon it, even though a policeman was at that moment walking towards him, and he had only to tell him the story, which was a common one, and put the child into his arms, to be relieved of it and all further responsibility; but he could not do that, — no, he could not. It nestled again in his arms; and he clasped it closer to his heart, as he turned into Little Eastcheap, and hurried toward his own home.

When Mrs. Battle discovered that Abel had stolen quietly out of the house, from what she supposed to be a sick bed, she declared to her man, with the most ominous solemnity, that his body would be found in the Thames next morning, as he was "as crazy as a March hare. He had slipped away to drown hisself, an' it was a' awful misfortune, besides bein' a loss, as they'd never in the world let their rooms when it was known that a lodger had drowned hisself out of 'em;" but when she saw him enter her little back parlor, after she had given him up entirely, damp, pale, disordered, but alive, with a large bundle wrapped in a blue and green plaid, her anxiety was changed into joy; and, scarce knowing what she did, she accumulated question upon question. "Why, Mr. Winter, how could you do so? You don't know what a' awful start I got when I found you'd gone out. You seemed so sick and strange-like this afternoon, that I was afraid you was light-headed, and had kind o' wandered off, an' might come to harm. I've been into a dreadful state, n-fidgittin' to the door every minit to see if you'd come. Why, what possessed you to go out when you was so knocked up? Where have you been? an' what 'ave you got in that shawl?"

"Don't get excited, Mrs. Battle; pray, don't. There's nothing at all the matter. I'll tell you all about it, if you'll only give me time," said Abel, sinking into a chair, and smiling a sickly sort of a smile, to reassure the good woman, who was quivering with curiosity and surprise. "I went out to get the air," he continued, feeling obliged under the circumstances to resort to a

falsehood. "I felt feverish and poorly; so I thought I'd take a turn" —

Just then the child moved and cried a little; and Mrs. Battle threw up her hands and exclaimed, "Good Lord, Mr. Winter! you've got somethin' livin' in that bundle. Is it a baby, or a dog?"

"It's a baby, Mrs. Battle; and, if you'll be calm a moment, I'll tell you the strangest thing of all. I'd stopped a moment to rest, and was leaning against a wall; or, rather I saw a woman leaning against a wall, — excuse me if I'm a little confused, my head's not just right yet, — I saw a woman leaning against a wall, in a very dejected and feeble sort of a way; and so I went toward her to see if I could be of any assistance, when she held out this bundle; an' I, not knowing what it was, took it from her; then, before I fairly knew what I had done, she disappeared in the darkness, and I couldn't see her anywhere."

"O Mr. Winter! is it possible that you are so innocent as that? Why, it's an old trick in London, for them miserable cretars to get clear o' their babies that way. I must say as how you was took in nicely. What kind of a thing is it? If you've no objections, I'll take a peep;" and Mrs. Battle began to unfold the shawl with averted face, saying, "I'm a'most afraid to touch it: I da' say it's pison with dirt."

"No," returned Abel, giving it into her hands with a sigh of relief. "I've looked at it: it's like all babies, but it seems neat enough."

"I do declare if it ain't as clean as wax, and as lovely too," exclaimed Mrs. Battle, dropping off its cocoon-like wrappings, and holding it up to the light, — a tiny, little, white creature, as pure and sweet as a rosebud. "Mercy alive! Mr. Winter, don't it puzzle you to know how them mothers can 'bandon a child like this — an' a cambrie frock with lace, an' 'broidery on its patticoat! It ain't no common child."

The little creature winked and blinked under the strong light, rubbed its tiny nose with its pink fists, and whined, screw-

ing up its little face to an unintelligible knot.

"I s'pose it's hungry. If you'll hold it a minit, I'll get it some milk," said Mrs. Battle, reaching it out like a roll of linen.

Abel took it, awkwardly enough to be sure; but a warm thrill, common to all humanity, went through his heart when it nestled its little head against him. It had beautiful blue eyes; and, as he looked into their depths, his own grew misty and tender.

"What are you going to do with the mite, Mr. Winter?" questioned Mrs. Battle, as she fed it handily, patting it every now and then on its back when it choked a little and caught its breath.

"I don't know, Mrs. Battle," returned Abel thoughtfully: "I've 'not decided. What do you think we'd better do with it?"

"Why, I should say to call a p'liceman, an' let 'im take it to Guildford Street, to the fondlin' 'ospital."

"Oh, I can't do that!" cried Abel, remembering at what a moment it had been put into his arms, and what it had saved him from. "It would be cruel to send it to such a place."

"Well, I don't see no other way. A child like this is a heavy charge, an' no small expense."

"Yes, that's true, Mrs. Battle; but you can take care of it to-night, can't you? and by to-morrow I'll decide what I am to do with it. Now I'll go to bed; for I'm tired and not feeling well, and I know you'll take the best of care of it." Before he went out, he stooped over the child, and looked into its beautiful eyes, smoothing its soft cheek gently. A little hand struggled from the folds of the towel that Mrs. Battle had placed under its chin when she fed it, and twining itself round one of Abel's fingers, it held fast with a clinging, detaining grasp. He could not resist, that: it appealed to him more forcibly than language. Snatching it up in his arms, he kissed it over and over, and then laid it down, blushing like

a girl. "Good-night, Mrs. Battle, good-night," he said almost cheerfully. "Take good care of it, and we'll decide in the morning what to do."

When Abel entered his room, he sat down quietly among his books and flowers. It was not yet midnight; still it seemed to him that he had been away for weeks, so strange had been the experience through which he had passed. In thinking of what had happened during the last few days, he seemed not to have been himself, but another person. Now that he had returned to his normal state, he could look upon every thing calmly and reasonably; and his thoughts went back to his past life, to his babyhood, to poor Old Top, who had taken him, a waif thrown upon his charity, as this little one had been thrust upon him, and reared him, and loved him faithfully all his life. Then how could he refuse to do the same for this little abandoned creature? Besides, had it not been sent to him in a moment of terrible temptation, to save him from a crime that would have ruined him forever. Was it not a gift of God, a little angel laid into his arms to comfort him, to soften his heart, and to cheer him? "I'll not cast it away," he resolved. "I'll keep it and care for it. It's my duty, and I'll do it." Then he began to think again of his troubles,—of Robert Thorpe, and the wrong he had done him,—and was surprised to find how much his feelings had changed and softened towards him. Instead of wishing for revenge, he almost pitied him, and even thought that in time he might forgive him. When Bow Bells struck twelve, he retired for the night; and, being completely exhausted by all he had experienced, he soon fell asleep, and dreamed of dear Old Top,—thought that he came to him with a face full of tender peace, and, laying his hand on his head, he said sweetly, "Abel, give thanks to God, and never forget his mercy!"

The next morning he was up early, and waiting anxiously for Mrs. Battle, who was later than usual with his breakfast. When at last she made her appearance, she ex-

cused herself a little crossly, on the ground that the baby had hindered her.

"How is it, and how did it sleep?" inquired Abel eagerly.

"Oh, it's well enough! but it's a deal o' trouble. It kept me an' my man awake all night."

"I'm sorry for that, Mrs. Battle; because I've decided to keep it, if we can make some arrangement."

"As to that, Mr. Winter, I've nothin' to say. You've a right to keep it if you want to; but you don't expect me to take care of it, do you?"

"No, certainly not, Mrs. Battle; unless I pay you to attend to it. I thought, as you had no children of your own, you might like to keep the little thing, for a consideration; and it would be a deal of company for me when I'm in the house."

"Well, I don't know as I'd mind. It's a nice little thing; an' my man's took quite a notion to it," returned Mrs. Battle, brightening up at the thought of the "consideration." "I'll do the best I can for it; but it'll need clothes an' things."

"Yes; I've thought of that. Here's five pounds; lay it out for it to the best advantage," said Abel, opening his desk, and handing her a note.

"Now, I declare, this is real handsome of you, Mr. Winter! I'll fit her up nice for that: she'll be as neat as a pin."

"Oh! it's a girl, is it? I never thought whether it was a girl or a boy."

"And another thing, Mr. Winter: we must have a name for her."

"Yes; I suppose we must; but I can't think of one. Never mind it now: we'll wait a while, and perhaps one will come to us. Bring the little thing up, Mrs. Battle: I'd like to see it before I go out."

Mrs. Battle brought the baby. It was as clean and fresh as a rose, its mouth dimpled with smiles, and its blue eyes wide and sparkling.

Abel held it for more than an hour; awkwardly at first, but soon he became accustomed to the delicate little bundle, and handled it more gracefully. She cooed

and laughed, and held out her chubby hands for his flowers; and he allowed her to clutch her little fingers full of blossoms; but, when she crammed them into her rosy, wet mouth, he became alarmed, and called for Mrs. Battle to take them out. Every movement seemed perfect, every smile and glance wonderful. She had brought a new interest and hope into his life, to take the place of the old; and, while he looked at her, he found himself thinking, "She is a little angel, sent by God to soothe my troubled heart, and to brighten my dreary life."

It was some months before Abel could find any new employment: but he did not suffer, because he had saved quite a little sum from his own earnings, and he had invested the hundred pounds that Top had left him, to good advantage; therefore, he had a small income to defray his expenses and provide for the child. But, as month after month passed away, he began to get discouraged, and feared that he should never find a situation, not having any reference; as he could not mention Mr. Thorpe, for reasons that can be easily understood. At last, one day, when he was almost in despair, he chanced to enter a counting-house on Fleet Street, where they were in need of a copyist. Judging favorably of him from his face and appearance, they engaged him for a fair salary, without requiring reference. It was a long time before he could feel at home in his new position: he missed the faces and surroundings among which he had passed the greater part of his life; but at last he became accustomed to the change, and settled down patiently to his new work. There he displayed the same fine quality that had won Mr. Thorpe's confidence: so that his new employer began to look upon him as a valuable acquisition, and treated him with so much consideration, that he had nothing to complain of. Perhaps his condition was even bettered; for, after a year, he received a larger salary, and had less work to do than before.

So the time passed off; month followed

month, and year followed year, until the baby, who had never received any other name than Pet, had grown into a lovely child of five years. She was affectionate, docile, and intelligent; and Abel loved her to idolatry. Mrs. Battle had been an excellent nurse, had kept her clean and neat, and had not spoiled her with injudicious petting; so that Abel, in his hours at home, had not found it difficult to train her mind, in the right direction. Besides his business, he had no thought, desire, or aim, that was not connected with the child. Every shilling he saved from his wages was hoarded for her; every plan was in reference to her future; he forgot himself in his love for her, or he united his life so closely with hers, that he confounded one with the other. Sometimes he would look at her, as she lay asleep in his arms; and thinking of her beauty, which he felt was a dangerous gift, he would wish she were less attractive and lovely, trembling as he remembered the unhappy fate of poor Violet. Had he ceased to regret Violet, in this new love? Oh, no! there were hours when he thought of her with anguish,—hours when the stone would suddenly be removed from the grave of his love, and she would stand before him in all the freshness and beauty of those early days. But in nine years the heart changes; and some tell us, that even the system undergoes a complete transformation once in seven years,—that every drop of the original ichor passes away, and a new takes its place. If that be so, then we cannot wonder if we transfer our sentiments, our desires, our hope, to some new object. Violet was gone forever out of his life: for nine years he had not looked into her face; for nine years he had not heard the sound of her voice. She was no more to him than a phantom of the past, a memory, a dream. He had long thought upon her as dead, long ceased to look for her in the streets. It was years since his heart had leapt to his throat at a glimpse of a face or figure that resembled hers. There was a time when he could not turn a corner without

thinking that he might meet her face to face; but at last he began to feel that London was large, that the world was large, and that their paths might run forever one on each side of life's river; and that the river would broaden and deepen, until it reached the ocean of eternity, and they who had commenced their journey side by side would meet no more on earth.

CHAPTER X.

A WITHERED VIOLET.

It was Sunday morning. Mrs. Battle was tying a pretty blue bonnet over Pet's golden curls. Abel was leaning back in his chair by the open window, with a copy of the "Times" in his hand; but he was not reading, he was watching the child, while Mrs. Battle dressed her that he might take her for a walk. She was such a lovely little creature, that, in spite of his better judgment, he was very proud of her, and bought her pretty, dainty things,—kid shoes, embroidered frocks, and little silk bonnets, that she might be as neatly dressed as other children in the park. There has been no notable change in the room since we peeped into it. The flowers bloom as brightly, the violets are as fragrant, the breakfast-table, with its clean cloth, and remnants of chops and muffins, presents the same appearance; only that now there is, beside Abel's chair, a child's chair, and, beside his plate, a child's bright pewter plate and mug; and perhaps there are not quite so many books strewn round as formerly; but, instead of them, are headless dolls, broken toys, colored blocks, and illustrated primers. A child's presence is visible everywhere; and Abel finds no fault. He likes to see her things lying about; for Pet is a part of himself, and what she likes he likes also. While he was fondly watching her, standing docile under the hands of Mrs. Battle, who turned her round like a top, giving

her a twitch here, and a pull there, he glanced from time to time at the journal he held in his hand; suddenly he uttered a cry of astonishment, the paper fell to the floor unnoticed, and he said, as though he were thinking aloud, "How strange, after all these years, to read of their ruin!"

"What's ruined, Mr. Winter?" exclaimed Mrs. Battle, who had caught the last word of his remark. "I hope it ain't all the fruit as is dropped off the trees along with them nasty caterpillars."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Battle! It's nothing to do with fruit and caterpillars. It's the failure of a house I once worked for,—the house of Thorpe & Son. They were considered very reliable; and it gives me quite a shock, as their liabilities are uncommonly large."

"Well, that's a pity," returned Mrs. Battle, who was a clever business woman, and understood the terms he had used. "It's a pity for them, if they're honest, which looks very doubtful; an' a greater for them that they owes. I hope you didn't have any thing with them, Mr. Winter?"

"Oh, no! I drew out what little I had at the time I left their employ, five years ago."

"What's been the cause of it, do you s'pose?" continued Mrs. Battle, who always wanted the particulars of every thing.

"I don't know, unless young Mr. Thorpe has been very extravagant, and managed affairs badly. You see, Mrs. Battle, his father's health was poor; and I fancy every thing was left to him at the last. It's given me quite a shock: it's very sad, really. I'll go out and take a turn in the air, as soon as you have Pet ready."

"She'd been ready a' 'our ago, if she wasn't the troublesomest little nite in the world to dress. She's so small, that 'er things is al'ays a-droppin' off; an' I do want 'er to look tidy-like."

"She'll do nicely, Mrs. Battle; she's very well as she is," said Abel, taking his hat, and holding out his hand to the child, who danced down the stairs, delighted to be free from Mrs. Battle's fussing fingers.

"Where would you like to go, a ct?" he asked, looking into her sweet face.

"Oh, to St. James's Park, papa! I've got some biscuit for the ducks, an' they do waddle so cunnin', an' eat out o' my hand as tame as kittens."

He never denied her any thing reasonable, so of course they went to St. James's; and Pet enjoyed a perfect morning, feeding the ducks, and following them from place to place; while Abel sat near, on a bench, watching her graceful little figure flitting here and there, her golden curls blowing in the wind, and her blue eyes sparkling with health and happiness. While he was looking at the child, and mentally comparing his present peace and prosperity with the misfortunes that had fallen on his old enemy, he saw a gentleman approach her and speak to her. At first he did not pay much attention to it, as it was not an uncommon thing for people to notice Pet, and it rather pleased than disturbed him; but as he glanced again at the stranger, who stood with his back toward him, he was struck with something familiar in his appearance. Those fine shoulders, that curling brown hair, he had seen before. At last he turned in his direction; and Abel saw, for the first time in five years, the face of Robert Thorpe. For a moment, something of the old anger stirred in his heart; but, when he noticed how changed he was, his feelings softened, and he pitied him deeply, in spite of all. His face was thin and pale, his eyes sunken and dull, his handsome mouth drooping and sad, and his air weary and dejected. He looked like a man who had suffered deeply, who had striven and struggled, but who had been at last defeated in the battle of life. If Abel had seen him happy and prosperous, he would have passed him with pride and indifference; but, as it was, he felt sincerely sorry for him, and almost forgave him the wrong he had endured for so long.

He seemed to be deeply interested in Pet, who stood with her sweet face raised to his, her blue eyes full of innocent light, her long golden curls falling away from her flushed cheeks,—

"A sight to make an old man young."

After a few moments, at some remark of the child's, Robert Thorpe looked toward Abel, and saw him sitting there, for the first time. He started with surprise; a vivid flush crimsoned his face; and turning suddenly, without another word to Pet, he offered his arm to a feeble old gentleman, who sat on a bench, half hidden by a cluster of laurel; then the two walked hastily away, with a backward glance in Abel's direction. The old, sickly man was Mr. Thorpe. He scarce recognized him in the shrunk face, the stooping body, and trembling limbs. Misfortune had left terrible traces upon him, as well as upon his son.

As soon as Robert Thorpe turned away, Pet came running to Abel, all delight and animation. "What was that gentleman saying to you, dear?" he asked, drawing her to his side.

"Oh, nofin' much! he said, What was my name?"

"And you told him?"

"Yes, sir: I said it was Pet."

"Was that all he asked you?"

"No, sir: he said, Where did I live? an' did I like the ducks? an' did I think the park was nice? an' who was with me? An' I said my papa, an' I showed you; and then he went away. An'—an'—that was all."

Abel gave but a passing thought to the circumstance of Robert Thorpe's having spoken to the child, supposing that he had been attracted by her beauty, as others were, and had talked with her, not knowing that she belonged to him; but he could not banish from his mind the image of the feeble, tottering father, clinging to the son who had ruined him. "They are bitter toward me yet," he thought. "They've not outlived their old indignation and anger. If they knew what I had suffered for them, of my penitence and remorse, they would pity and forgive me, even as I do them."

One evening, not long after that, Abel went home, and found a letter lying on his table. It was addressed in a woman's hand, scrawling and irregular; and it sur-

prised him greatly, as he had no correspondents, especially feminine. With a presentiment of trouble, he turned it over and looked at it, not daring to break the seal. At last he summoned courage; and, tearing it open with a nervous hand, he read the following:—

"DEAR ABEL,— I wouldn't trouble you, but I know I haven't long to live: therefore I ask you to come to me, as I have things of importance to say to you. Forget all the trouble I've made you, and remember only when I was good. Don't be long after you receive the letter, in coming, or perhaps I sha'n't be here. You'll find me at No. 3, Cottage Place, Pimlico. Ask for Mrs. Watson, which is the name I'm known by.

VIOLET."

With a face of marble, Abel thrust the letter into his pocket, seized his hat, and rushed out, almost pushing over Pet, who was hurrying up stairs to see him. Stooping, he caught the child in his arms, kissed her with a strange fervor, and bade her go to Mrs. Battle, as he was obliged to go out, and would not be back for some time. Then he hastened into the street; and, hailing a fly, he told the man to drive him to Cottage Place, Pimlico, as quickly as possible. Arrived there, he knocked at the number designated in Violet's note. A neat, elderly woman answered his summons. To his inquiry, "If Mrs. Watson lived there?" she replied, "Yes, sir; and I suppose you're the gentleman she's expecting. She said, when you came, I was to show you up directly."

A moment after, Abel stood, pale and trembling, at Violet's door. The woman tapped lightly: a weak voice said, "Come," and he was alone in the presence of his lost love. She was propped up with pillows on a low bed before an open window. Some woodbine and honeysuckle trained over the casement filled the room with fragrance; the last beams of the sun lay in level rays over the bed, and the thin white hands folded patiently on her breast

When her eyes fell on him, a faint red flushed her cheek: she raised herself from her reclining position, reached out her arms, and cried in a voice he never ceased to hear, "Abel! Abel!"

In a moment he was on his knees by her side, his arms round her, and she weeping passionately with her face pressed close to his. He never could remember distinctly what passed in that moment; for his emotion paralyzed him. In thinking of it afterward, he could only recall a few broken sentences in which she implored him to forgive her, and he, in a voice choked with sobs, had assured her that she was forgiven long ago. It was not much, but it was enough. There are some feelings too deep for words. Then, exhausted by her weeping, she threw herself back on her pillow, and lay with closed eyes, like one in a swoon. Abel leaned over her, clasping her hands in his, and weeping bitterly, his soul full of sorrow and pity at seeing her but the wreck of herself. Her wan, sunken face showed the ravages of a terrible disease, and was already stamped with the unmistakable signs of approaching dissolution. He had found her after nine long years; but, as he had said to poor Old Top before his death, he had not found the fresh, sweet Violet that he had lost: she was but the shadow of his early love,—a crushed, scentless, withered flower.

While he hung over her, noting every change in her beloved countenance with an anguish too deep for expression, she opened her still beautiful eyes; and, looking at him imploringly, said with a gasping, broken voice, "Abel, tell me something of my child. I'm longing to hear from her. Tell me of her."

"Your child, Violet?" then a sudden conviction struck him like a blow. "Your child! Is she yours? Was it you who gave her to me?"

"Yes, Abel: I gave her to you."

"Why were you there alone in the darkness of night with your child?"

"I was there many times before. I was waiting for a chance to see its father."

"What?" cried Abel, bewildered and terrified. "Who is her father? You don't mean,—O Violet! you can't mean"—then he turned away his head, and covered his face, shrinking from the blow which he felt he was about to receive.

"Abel," she said in a weak, excited voice, "try and be calm while I tell you all. I'm so feeble that you mustn't agitate me too much, or I can't never say what I want to. It was Robert Thorpe who"—Abel clenched his hands, and groaned aloud—"though, as God is my witness, I didn't know his true name until long after. I don't want to excuse myself, and I won't: I'll tell you the whole truth, Abel. I loved him,—yes, I loved him so well that I would willingly have died for him. I didn't count myself as anything beside him. I worshipped him from the first day he bought my flowers on the Mansion-house steps. Then you took me away, and I didn't see him for a long time. I tried to forget him, and be happy with you,—yes, I tried hard, Abel, to be happy with you and dear old daddy. I know what you would say: you think I don't know that he's dead, but I do. It was a long time ago, just after I went away, that he died; and perhaps I helped kill him. I've been many a time since to the old cellar, just to see the place where we were children together, and so happy with him. When you took me away, I thought I'd never see Robert Thorpe again. I didn't even know his name, who he was, nor where he lived; but still, though I tried hard enough, I was sure that I could never forget him. It was toward spring, when, one day, he happened to be passing the shop in Holborn, and saw me. It's no use to tell you all that followed. Abel, I've been wickeder than you ever thought; and even then I deceived you time and time again."

"O Violet! don't tell me that: you break my heart. I thought you good then," cried Abel, his pale features working convulsively.

"No, Abel: I wasn't good even before I left you. I deceived you, and met him over and over when you didn't suspect it."

While you were searching for me, and advertising, I was in lodgings not far from you. It was all very simply planned: I walked out of the shop as usual, — although my heart was nearly breaking at the thought of your and daddy's sorrow when you would find me gone; and, at the corner of the street, I met Robert. I didn't know where I was going; I didn't care, so that I was with him. He showed me your advertisement: we read it together; and he knew then who you were, though I didn't suspect. I thought him to be Charles Watson, — that was what he called himself at that time. I took that name, and since have always been known as Mrs Watson. It was more than two years after that I accidentally found out his real name was Robert Thorpe. Then I pitied you more than ever, because the one you still trusted as your friend had wronged you so. For a long time we were happy together " —

"And poor old daddy was dying, and my heart was breaking for you," interrupted Abel bitterly.

"Yes, I know it: I've felt it all since; but still I was happy then, — so happy that to think of it reconciles me to all that followed. He was very proud of my beauty, — I was vain then, Abel; but I'm not now, because I've learned the true value of good looks; they're a poor inheritance for one like me, — and he bought me pretty dresses, bonnets, and jewels, and hired a carriage for me that I might ride in the park like a lady while he was at his business. You know, I always wanted fine things; so I enjoyed them when I got them: and I suppose you'll feel sorry, Abel, when I tell you that I never regretted what I'd done. Sometimes I used to think of poor old daddy's warning, and his ropes of sand, and laugh to myself, and call it all nonsense, because I didn't see the end. When we're so happy we never can feel that we can come to be wretched. Robert loved me so that I never thought he'd change; and he was so proud of me! He delighted to have me make myself as pretty as possible. Then he would take me to the play, and be perfectly

happy when all the glasses were turned toward our box. Yes: he loved me then I'm sure of it; and I worshipped him. You mustn't think, Abel, that I ever loved you as I loved him. Now I know I only loved you as a brother. We were brought up together, and how could it ever have been any thing else?"

"Don't, Violet, don't, for God's sake!" groaned Abel.

"It isn't because I want to hurt you, indeed it isn't," she returned, with a strange mixture of heartlessness and pity; "but I want to be truthful to you now, because I've been false enough all my life. I wish I could let it end here, and not tell you any more; but, if I should, you'd think me better than I am, and there mustn't be any deception when we're going into eternity. I must say solemnly, Abel, that, though I've much to blame Robert Thorpe for, I believe he loved me then; and, if I'd been a good woman, I believe he'd love me now. I don't lay all that has happened to me at his door. It was partly my fault, — my vanity and weakness; and perhaps, also, the thought of what I had sprung from. Without doubt I inherited evil from the unhappy creature who gave me being. I don't think God can expect quite as much from we poor weeds who grow out of vile soil."

"But, Violet, remember the best old man that ever lived brought you up from a child, and taught you only good; and he was one of the poor unfortunates. Think of his life, and don't say that it isn't possible for us to be virtuous."

"I've thought of it all, Abel. I've thought of you and daddy, how good you both were; but I never could have been like you. He and you were exceptions. You never had any temptations to do different; but I was tainted from the first. I was always devoured with the desire for finery and pleasure; and it was only you and dear daddy that restrained me so long. If I'd married you, Abel, dear, you wouldn't have been happy: I should have tormented your life. It was best as it was; and I've nothing to reproach myself with

on that account. But I must go on, and get this miserable confession off my mind, or I shan't have strength to finish. I was as happy as I could be for three years. We lived a gay life. Robert brought a great many young men to see me; for he was proud to display his property. I was admired and flattered, and offered many beautiful presents, which I received secretly, because he was proud and jealous, and didn't like me to take things from others. Do you remember that ugly brooch I wanted so much, Abel, and how you wouldn't buy it for me, and I was determined to have it, and got it slyly? That was my first deception, and the beginning of all. And such a worthless thing too! since then I've had real emeralds and diamonds almost as beautiful as those we saw at the Tower that day when we were children."

"O Violet! how can you? Pray don't recall those things! It tears my heart to hear you speak of them."

"Why should it, Abel? why should it hurt you to recall them? I like to think of them sometimes: I like to think that I was innocent once. But, as I was saying, Robert didn't like me to receive presents, and I did all the same; besides, I was very imprudent and foolish; I encouraged visitors when he was away, until at last he discovered it, and was dreadfully angry and jealous. Then he watched, and suspected, and blamed me even when I was innocent. Just before my baby was born, we had a final quarrel. He declared the child was not his, though I swore solemnly before God that it was; for I was true to him, Abel, until he deserted me. After he left me, I quit my expensive lodgings, sold some of my jewels, and took cheap but respectable rooms, where my child was born. You might think that my being a mother would have changed me, and made me better; but it didn't: my heart was too full of pride and anger, and I never sought a reconciliation with Robert. In fact, I didn't want to: I was tired of his jealousy and suspicion; and, besides, I knew he was in debt, and that there must be a change soon;

and I wasn't contented to live humbly, even with him. I thought of this all: for, owing to poor old daddy's excellent teaching, I was prudent in managing for my own interest; and I was determined, as I had lost all else, to sell myself to the highest bidder. But my child was a drawback to my future success. I loved it in a way,—yes, Abel, now I know I loved it; and, if there had been enough good in me, it might have saved me. I was angry and embittered against Robert: the child was his, and he had deserted me just when I needed his care and tenderness most. He alone had the right to provide for it, and he had left it to me. I thought it all over for a long time, and at last I resolved to see him by some means, put the child into his arms, and leave him to support and care for it. I had not the courage or boldness to go into his office, and confront him before his father; so, as I had heard him say that he worked sometimes until late, and came out through a side passage into Thames Street, I determined to go there, and wait for him. For several nights I watched for hours, but I didn't see him. One night I heard some one, and I thought it was he; but, instead, you came out. I knew you instantly, and was frightened, and drew back in the shadow of the wall. A few nights after I went again, and had only been there a little while, when you came, and leaned against the door, as if you, too, were waiting for some one. I saw your face once in a ray of light from Thames Street; and it was ghastly pale, and full of anger, and I caught the glitter of some instrument in your hand: then I thought you had learned all, and had come to be revenged on Robert Thorpe. I was in dreadful agony, for even then I loved him enough to wish to save him. While I leaned against the wall, almost fainting with fear, you spoke, and your voice touched my heart. Something of the old feeling of those innocent days returned; and it seemed as though dear daddy came to me, and said slyly, "Give the child to Abel." Then you spoke again, and came toward me; and,

scared knowing what I did, I reached it to you: you took it, and I hurried away, feeling that I had saved you both, as well as my baby. I knew you would not commit a crime with that innocent in your arms; and, Abel, I knew you so well, that I was sure you would never abandon it, and that you would teach it to be virtuous and happy."

"O Violet, Violet! why didn't you speak to me? why didn't you tell me who you were? I would have been your friend, your brother. I would have saved you from further sin," cried Abel reproachfully.

"It's no use to think of that, my poor Abel. It wouldn't have been the least good. You couldn't have saved me. I wouldn't be saved; I liked my sinful life too well. It was only after my health gave way, and I knew I must die, that I repented and felt sorry for it all; and even now sometimes I'm afraid I'm not penitent enough, and I think that perhaps, if I should live, I might go back to it again. Oh, it's dreadful to be so wicked and uncertain when I'm so near death!" Here her voice was broken with sobs, and she wept passionately for a few moments. Abel soothed her as well as he could, for his own soul was smarting under the torture. At last she regained her calmness, and resumed her sad story. "I never lost sight of you, Abel, from the hour I left you. I knew of dear old daddy's death, and how afterward you went to live in the rooms in Little Eastcheap that we looked at together. Lamb, the faithful creature who let you in, and who has been with me for years, knew a cousin of Mrs. Battle, your landlady, and through her I learned that you intended to keep the child: then I was quite easy about it, because I knew it would be well cared for. I've seen her Abel, — I've often seen her in the park with you; and I've so longed to take her in my arms and kiss her, but I didn't dare to. She's beautiful, isn't she? and I'm sure she's a good child. Why do you call her Pet? Mrs. Lamb found out that she had no other name."

"She was always called that from the first. I wanted to name her for you; but I hadn't the courage to hear it constantly," returned Abel, averting his face to hide the tears that filled his eyes.

"Poor soul!" said Violet, laying her feverish hand on his. "Haven't you got over that yet? I thought you'd forgotten me long ago, and hated me, too, bitterly."

"I've never hated you, Violet. There was a time when I felt hard toward you; but I soon got over it, and forgave you, and longed to see you."

"Ah, Abel! you were good, too good for me. If I'd been different I might have been happy with you to-day, instead of lying here repenting of my sins. God knows I'm thankful that one human being has remained faithful to me! But tell me how did you know that it was Robert Thorpe?"

"I never knew it, Violet, until I heard it this moment from your lips."

"Then why did you quarrel with him, and leave his employ?"

"It was another matter entirely; and I'm thankful I didn't know this then, because it would have maddened me beyond all control." Then Abel told her briefly of his trouble with Robert Thorpe, of his terrible temptation, and of his salvation through the child that she had put into his arms.

"How thankful I am now that I listened to that voice in my heart! Isn't it a proof that those who love us watch over us after death? I told you I thought daddy was near me. Now I know that God sent him to save you. Dear, dear, old daddy, — he's often been with me since I've lain here alone, thinking of every thing; and I know by that he forgave me before he died."

"He did, Violet: he spoke of you so sweetly, and made me promise to be kind to you if I ever found you; and he left you six pounds, that he had saved for you, with his love and forgiveness."

"O Abel! I'm so thankful that he didn't die feeling angry against me. I wouldn't have courage to meet him in another world if I knew it; but the money, — I don't want

It; I've more than I should need if I lived for months, which I sha'n't. I sold all my jewels that I bought at such a price, and hired this little cottage to die in. I've been here nine months, and I've been very comfortable with Lann. There's enough to bury me when I'm gone, and something for her. I don't want to give my child anything. Money got in an evil way would only be a curse."

"She don't need it, Violet. I shall provide for her as long as I live."

"Now, Abel, I've told you all but the particulars of the last five years. They've been bad enough, and it's no use to harrow your feelings by dwelling on them. God don't require it of me. I've been a great sinner, and I've suffered; but perhaps I've not suffered half enough, for it's more mercy than I deserve to be taken away young. It's what I've hoped and prayed for, and God's been good to listen to me. Now I've made my peace with every one, and I don't care how soon I go. Yesterday I wrote to Robert Thorpe, telling him that I was dying. I want him to know that I was innocent when he accused me; and now, surely, on my death-bed, he won't disbelieve me. I told him about Pet, — how beautiful she is, and how kind you've been to her."

"O Violet, Violet! why did you tell him that I have his child? He'll take her from me; he'll rob me of my only treasure, my only happiness! I've loved her always as though she were my own; and, now that I know she's yours, I love her a thousand times more. He'll claim her, and I shall have to give her up," cried Abel, in extreme distress.

"Don't blame me: she's his child. When you think of it calmly, you'll see that I did right in telling him. Besides, Abel, which is the most unhappy, — he or you? He's a poor, ruined young man, with nothing in the world. Perhaps he needs the child more than you do. And then, she's his: if he wants her, he certainly has a right to her; but don't fret. I'm sure he won't take her: he can't provide for her now, and she'd only be a burden on him."

"That may be; he may not take her away at present, but I'll never feel any surety. I shall never feel again as though she belonged to me. I shall never know another happy day with her. Violet, you might have spared me this. You might have left him in ignorance respecting a child he disowned before it was born."

"Be reasonable, Abel," she returned with something of her old obstinacy and selfishness, "and look at it as you ought to. You're better than I am, and you ought to see that it was my duty to clear myself before I died; and how could I speak of the child, without telling him where she was? It makes no difference if you blame me: I think I did right. But that's not all, Abel," she added, bursting into tears, and clinging to his hands. "I can't get over my habits of deception. Mammy Flint's lessons cling to me yet. My real reason is, that I still love him, and want him to think of me sometimes. I know if he has the child she'll remind him of me; and I'll never be quite forgotten. O Abel! I love him yet. I'd give worlds, if I had them, to see him but for one hour, — to lay my head on his shoulder again, to feel his hand smooth my hair. It seems as though I couldn't die without seeing him, and yet I must; for if I see him I'll want to live, and I'll be angry against God if he takes me away. Now I must be calm and penitent and patient, that I may cleanse and purify my soul for the last great change. There's nothing more in this world that I desire, but a sight of Robert; and it's required of me as part of my penance to deny myself that happiness; so I must, or Christ will never let me sit at his feet with the other Magdalen." Then she covered her face with her hands, and remained for a long time in deep thought, while Abel watched her silently. At last she looked up, and said, with a patient entreaty in her voice, "I thought that was all; but there's another thing, Abel. I want to see my child. You must bring her to me. I must hold her in my arms. She must see her mother once, so that she will remember her; for I don't want to be

forgotten. O Abel! I don't want to be forgotten by every one."

"You'll never be forgotten, Violet, by one: the only one you've never loved will remember you always. You think of him, but you never think of my agony. My heart's breaking; and you have not a word of comfort for me," cried Abel, forgetting the stern composure he had forced upon himself, while he wept passionately over her, wetting her face with his hot tears.

The poor, weak, selfish soul was touched to its depths by this; and, putting her feeble arms round his neck, she drew his face down to hers, and kissed him with sorrowful fervor. Then she said, with inexpressible pathos in her voice, "Abel, dear, I've given you the very best I had to give. I've loved you with the only pure love of my life. I've loved you as a sister loves a brother."

That was enough: it reached the very depths of his heart, and comforted him as nothing else could. "Thank you, darling," he replied, struggling hard for composure. "You've given me something to live on. I shall bear it all better now."

"Try to be calm and happy, Abel; don't waste any feeling on me: indeed, I'm not worth it. I've made you suffer enough already, and you've been so good to me. I don't deserve such a friend. There's only one thing more you can do; and that is to bring Pet as soon as possible, for I've not long to wait for her."

Abel made no reply: he was thinking of the effect such a sad scene would have upon the sensitive child. Violet noticed his hesitation, and, mistaking its cause, cried passionately, "You won't bring her! you're afraid her own mother will pollute her. You don't want such an innocent to be clasped in the arms of a sinner. Abel, that's cruel! Haven't I earned the right to see her now? For nine months I've been purifying myself to be fit to touch her. I've shed tears enough to wash me clean. Christ won't refuse me no more than he did that other sinner; then, don't you be hard on me, Abel; don't, I pray. I sha'n't die con-

tented if I don't see her. I've given up Robert, but let me see his child."

"You shall see her, Violet: be calm, and you shall see her. I'll bring her early to-morrow. I'd no thought such as you accuse me of: I was only thinking of the sad impression it will make on her happy little heart; but I'll bring her; you shall see her."

"Thank you, Abel," she replied gratefully: "now I'm contented; but bring her early, for I'm so exhausted perhaps I sha'n't last through the day. I'll try and be patient until she comes. Call Lamb, please. It's time I had my tonic; and I need it."

The old woman came in softly and sadly, at Abel's summons, and leaned over the bed.

"Ah, Lamb dear, it's you," she said, raising her beautiful eyes and smiling gently, "it's all settled. This is Abel, my brother Abel, that I've told you of so often. He's promised to bring the child to-morrow, and I've nothing more to ask. Now give me my tonic, and try to keep life in me until she comes."

Then Abel, seeing how exhausted she was, and how much she needed rest, kissed her tenderly, and went away promising to return early the next day. The following morning he obtained leave of absence from his desk; and by telling Mrs. Battle that he was going to take Pet to visit a lady whom he had known since childhood, and who was very ill, her curiosity was satisfied, and she dressed the child without overwhelming him with questions which he was in no mood to answer.

When he reached No. 3, Cottage Place, Mrs. Lamb met him at the door; and to his anxious inquiries, she replied that Mrs. Watson was comfortable, had rested well all night, and was waiting patiently to see the little girl.

"Now, darling," said Abel, before he took the child into the room, "this poor lady is very ill; and you're not to disturb her. You must be good and gentle, and go to her directly she asks you"

"Yes, papa: I'll be vovy good," replied Pet meekly.

Then he went in, holding her by the hand. Violet's large, bright eyes were fixed on the door; and the moment she saw the child, she uttered a little cry of joy, and held out her arms. Abel led Pet forward; her mother clasped her, and drew her close to her heart; then there was a moment's silence, broken only by stifled sobs. After the first violent burst of emotion was somewhat calmed, she held the little girl at arms' length, and looked at her fondly and proudly, with great tears brimming over her eyes, and trickling down her pale cheeks.

"She's like him," she said at length: "she has his brow and mouth, and my eyes. Haven't you noticed it, Abel?"

"I've always thought her like you, Violet: her eyes have always reminded me of yours; but I don't see his looks, and I don't want to."

"I'm glad she's like me, Abel. He'll never forget me while he has her before him."

The poor fellow had a spasm of pain at these thoughtless words, but he said nothing: he would not cloud that moment of happiness with his own sorrow.

"Put her on the bed by me, so that I can hold her close, and give her some grapes. Do you like grapes, darling?"

"Yes, I do, thank you," replied Pet sweetly.

Then Abel went away for a little while, and left the mother alone with her child, for her first interview, and her last sad farewell. He went out into the street. The morning sun shone brightly, dozens of happy mothers passed him with their children. Then his heart was filled with bitterness. She, still so young and beautiful, lay there dying, holding in her arms, for the first and last time, the child she had abandoned years before. How her sad fate had overshadowed and crushed him! What a grievous destiny had led him years before to the weeping child, playing her first game of deception. How that early influence had blighted her whole life, and

ruined what might have been a beautiful character! He had already suffered much, but still he felt that the worst was to come. Through his love for her child, he had yet to drain the dregs of the bitter cup.

When he entered, after a half-hour's absence, he found Violet weeping convulsively with her face buried in the pillow; while the child's little hands caressed her head lovingly, and smoothed the long, soft hair that hung round her neck.

"The lady cries, papa; an' I've been weel dood. I've kissed her, an' told her all my 'ittle stories, and said I'd be a dood dirl al'ays, an' love her, an'—an' she won't stop at all," said Pet pitifully, with a little sad, puzzled face.

"O Abel! take her away, take her away! I can't bear it!" cried Violet, lifting her tear-stained face, "I can't bear it! She's so good and sweet, that it breaks my heart to listen to her innocent prattle: every word she says stabs me like a knife. Take her away, or I sha'n't have courage to die. Let me kiss her once more, and then take her."

Abel turned away his head, while the poor mother took her last farewell of the little unconscious thing. Then, when he heard a sharp cry of anguish, and a little frightened sob from Pet, he knew the bitterness of death was over; and, turning, he took the child from the relaxing clasp of the mother, and hurried from the room. Mrs. Lamb went to her, when Abel came down with the little girl, and found her in a deathlike swoon, from which she did not recover for hours. "It was the keenest suffering I ever felt," she said to her faithful servant, who was crying near her pillow. "Every word the sweet innocent spoke was a terrible reproach to me. I've never had a harder punishment, than to hold her in my arms, and feel that I was as far removed from her as earth is from heaven. If I'd lived, Lamb, she couldn't have ever been any thing to me. There are stains that can't be wiped out. There's no place on earth for such as we: we need to be

cleansed by death, before we're fit to touch the pure."

When Abel had taken Pet home, he returned again to the bedside of Violet, to remain with her what little time she lived. All through the afternoon and evening, he sat near her, holding her hand in his, silent and sorrowful, watching her beloved face, while she slept peacefully. Once she awoke, and spoke of Robert Thorpe, as though she had dreamed of him; and then, seeing Abel by her bed, with his sad eyes fixed on her, she clasped his hands, and said entreatingly, "You'll forgive him, dear, you'll forgive him, even as God will forgive you; and, if he wants his child, you'll let him have her. Promise me, Abel, that you'll let him have her."

"I promise you," he said in a scarce audible voice: "he shall have her, even though it breaks my heart." A faint glimmer of a smile stole over her face, as she sank again into a peaceful sleep. About midnight, Abel felt that he could not endure a longer vigil; so, telling Mrs. Lamb that he would return again early in the morning, he stooped over her, and, brushing back the thick curling hair from her transparent temples, he kissed her again and again with a despairing tenderness. She half opened her eyes, smiled, and murmured "Robert," then closed them again, and sank into a heavy sleep.

"Her last thought will be for him," said Abel bitterly, as he went away, and left Mrs. Lamb watching her. When he returned in the morning, the faithful servant met him at the door, with pale face and swollen eyes.

"It's all over, sir," said she. "Her sorrows are ended. She never woke after you left her, but dropped off in her sleep without a sigh or a word."

Abel could hear no more; turning, he rushed from the house, and wandered he cared not whither: he could not look upon her dead. The next day they buried her in Kensal Green, by the side of poor Old Top, over whose grave Abel had placed a neat stone, with the simple but touching

inscription, "To the memory of a good man." There is nothing to mark the spot where *she* sleeps, but a mound thickly covered with tufts of fragrant, deep-blue violets.

CHAPTER XI.

ABEL'S SACRIFICE.

AFTER Violet's death, Abel tried to resume his duties as though nothing had occurred to disturb the even stream of his life, — tried to renew his hopes and plans for Pet's future, without fear or anxiety. But it was in vain: things did not seem as they had before; there was no security in his present, no confidence in his future. He felt like a man in mid-ocean, upon a sinking ship, who knows not at what moment the threatening waves may close over him forever. It was a moral torture to him, to feel that he was resting his whole happiness on so frail a foundation; that he was worshipping something that did not belong to him, something that he might lose at any moment. When the child hung round his neck with foud caresses, he felt a sort of guilt at appropriating an affection which was only his through circumstances. Every kiss, every touch of her soft, little hands, were stabs, that bled constantly. He loved her so well, and felt that she was so necessary to his existence, that, if he should lose her, he could not endure his life; and so he looked upon himself, as a kind of *felo de se*, to encourage such an exclusive passion. "I must wean myself," he would say. "I must gradually unloose the cords that she has wound around me, so that, when the time comes, I can give her up without its killing me." Therefore he felt no real enjoyment in her society, seeing that every natural impulse was guarded under a protest of self-denial.

Sometimes she would talk to him gravely of the lady who had kissed her and cried

over her; and say she was pretty and kind, and beg to be taken to her again. Then Abel told her that she was dead, and that she could go to her no more.

"What is it to be dead, papa?" she asked with a puzzled, serious face.

"To be at rest when one is tired, and to have no more fear."

"Oh, no! It's to go away for ever and ever. Mrs. Battle says so."

"Yes, that is one kind of death," he returned musingly.

"Will you ever be dead, papa? Will you ever go away, and leave Pet?"

"God only knows, dear." Then he put the child from off his knee, struggling hard to keep back the tears.

She saw his trouble in his eyes; and, taking his face between her little hands, she said, "What makes you cry, papa? Is it because the lady's dead?"

"No, no, darling: it's not that," he replied, as if thinking aloud. "I'm thankful that she's dead; for now I know where she is. I searched for her years and years. At last I've found her, and I never can lose her again. But go away, Pet; run to Mrs. Battle, I've something to do."

After she had gone, he went to his bedroom and wept freely, feeling that his heart would break if he did not find some relief in tears. The time had not yet come when he could not weep, but it was drawing nearer than he thought.

One afternoon Abel came home earlier than usual, and found that Mrs. Battle had taken Pet to the park. Shortly after, the good woman came in greatly excited, her face extremely red, and her breath coming in short gasps. "Such a strange thing has happened, Mr. Winter!" she exclaimed, dropping into a chair, and fanning herself vigorously. "Such a strange thing, — in all my life I never met a more curiouser."

"What was it?" inquired Abel, with a sudden fluttering at his heart.

"Why, I was a settin' on a bench with my work, an' Pet was a playin' round, when all of a sudden a gentleman comes up to her, an' begins to talk to her. I kind o'

kep' my eye on him, though he didn't look like one o' them men as steals children.

Well, he talked to her, an' the stupid little creature seemed mighty pleased with his chat. By and by he took some sugar-barley out o' his pocket, an' offered it to her a-smilin' like a angel, which she took, the greedy little mite! an' swallowed all down in a wink. Then he held out his hand, and she put hers in it, jest like a bird as is charmed by a serpent, an' was act'ally goin' off with him. I suppose he didn't think I was a watchin' him, 'cause I was behind a tree with my head bent as if I was busy with my work. Well, I jest let him get off a little way, like a cat does a mouse, all the while ready to clap my paw on him when I see what he intended to do.

Then I started, an', afore he knew it, I was there, an' had the child by the hand ready to carry her off. An' I did want to shake her awful, for the first time since I have had her in my care. He looked at me as though he would eat me with his eyes, bones an' all, an' asked me what I wanted. Says I, as proud as the queen, 'I want my child, if it pleases your honor.'"

"What reply did he make?" questioned Abel with trembling anxiety.

"Why, he turned as white as a stone, an' says, angry-like, 'She's not your child; an' you've no right to her.' — 'She's mine, sir, I told him, 'while I've the care of her. Mr. Abel Winter put the little girl in my charge, an' you've no right to meddle with her.' Then he come close up to me, an' said, low and confidential-like, 'See here, my good woman, the child belongs to me: I want her; an' if you'll let me 'ave 'er peaceable, I'll give you somethin' 'andsome.' O Lord! Mr. Winter, you ought to have seen how mad I was! The villain! to try an' buy me that way! But I didn't let him know it: so I says, cool-like, 'That's all very well; but what can I tell Mr. Winter when I go home without the child?' — 'Oh, that's easy enough to arrange: you can invent something. Say you lost her, or she was stolen.' — 'Thank you,' I says, sort of sarcastic, 'thank you,

sir. You're a very 'onest man, an' I like your manners much for a child-stealer; but you've got to find a flatter party 'an me to swallow your nonsense. You look like a gentleman, that's true; but you're not; an' if you're Pet's father I'm sorry for her. Still, I don't believe it. You're more like one o' them circus fellows as wants to get 'er to dance the tight rope.' Then he turned awful mad, an' white, an' looked round as if he didn't know what to do, like as if he wished he had wings, an' could take the child an' fly off' with 'er. An', would you believe it, the little meek mite was a holdin' his hand fast, as if she'd like to go too."

Abel sighed, and looked at the child reproachfully.

"Well, I didn't know just what to do, till I see a p'liceman in the Birdcage Walk: then I says, as bold as could be, 'Now, sir, you may be the child's father or not, I'm sure I don't know, as that isn't easy to tell; but, if you are, you've got to prove it to Mr. Winter, an' get 'er in a 'onest way. You can't buy her or steal 'er from me; an', if you don't let 'er go 'ome peaceable, I'll call that hoffer yonder, an' tell 'im the whole story.' With that he jest wilted-like an' settled down onto a bench, an' dragged the child up to 'im an' hugged 'er like a bear, a sayin' somethin' low, as I didn't hear only the last words; an' them was, 'She's mine, an' I'll 'ave 'er.' I did pity him, Mr. Winter, spite o' all; an' if he was not a thief he was a haector, 'cause no one but a haector could work their face an' feign to feel bad as he did; an' he was 'antsome too, an' well dressed for that matter, though a bit thin an' pale, an' sad-lookin'. At last, I felt as though my own feelin's was a givin' way, an' my heart a risin' up in my throat, so I just took the child and says, 'Come, Pet, come home and see papa.' Then he flashed up like a flame, an' says he, 'By God! he's not her father. An' I'll prove it, an' have her. Tell him so if you like. Abel Winter 'as no right to the child.' Then he kissed Pet over and over, an' says, 'Will you go with me, dar-

lin'?' An' the wicked, ongrateful little creature, she sort o' clung to his hand, an' looked at him as though she didn't know. So I just led her off and brought her 'ome; though I do verily believe she'd a' gone with 'im in a minute."

"Would you have, Pet?" said Abel, taking her on his knee with a sinking heart, "would you have gone with the strange gentleman, and left your poor papa?"

"He did give me nice barley-sugar, an' said, if I'd go with him, he'd buy me a great doll with eyes to open and shut, an' pink shoes, an'—an'—lots o' things."

"Oh, you wicked little girl!" cried Mrs. Battle indignantly, "to leave your good papa for barley-sugar, an' pink shoes, an' a stranger that p'rhaps 'd break your back, and make you stand on the tips o' your toes all day long."

"Don't scold her, Mrs. Battle," said Abel calmly. "The child's not to blame. Her little heart recognized the author of her being; for without doubt it was her father. I've lately learned who he is: he knows that I have his child, and he'll likely claim her."

"O love alive!" exclaimed Mrs. Battle in real terror. "You can't mean it, Mr. Winter! he'll claim her, an' you'll give her up, an' we'll lose Pet? Why, that can't be. We can't live without her, me an' my man, let alone you."

"It's hard, I know, Mrs. Battle. I don't see how we can bear it. It seems to me as if I hadn't strength to go through with it; but, if it comes, I suppose I must," said Abel with sad resignation. "He's her father; and he alone has a right to her."

"Do tell me, Mr. Winter, how did you find it out? an' is he a haector, or a gentleman?"

"It's too long a story to tell you, how I discovered it; and, besides, there are other reasons why I can't explain it to you: but I'm convinced that this person is her father; and he's no actor, Mrs. Battle. We won't talk about it any more, only you're not to take Pet to the park again:

he mustn't have a chance to get her in that way. If he wants her he must come to me like a gentleman, and say so. Now bring us our suppers; for the poor little thing must be hungry and tired."

After Pet had eaten heartily, while Abel watched her, scarce tasting a mouthful, he undressed her, as he often did, and then listened to her prayers, while she knelt before him with sweet, demure face, and clasped hands. Then he took her in his arms; and, pressing her close to his heart, he leaned his cheek against her curls, and fell into a deep reverie. The weight of his destiny crushed him! His past sorrows and disappointments sank into nothingness compared with this present trial; but with it all he felt a strange calm and resignation, — a consciousness that the worst had come, and that nothing more could be added to his already brimming cup. There was no vindictive passion, no revenge, no hate in his heart against Robert Thorpe: he was the father of the child he held in his arms, — the child he loved with a mother's tenderness. Nothing could exceed the charity, pity, and kindness that filled his heart. Pet slept on his breast, her warm, soft cheek pressed to his, her sweet breath floating over his face, her smooth, silken hair clinging to his hands. He looked at her closely, so that every feature might be printed upon his memory in traits that never could be dimmed only by the effacing finger of death. She would spring up a slender, lovely maiden. Under other fond eyes, the flower of her beauty would unfold. She would grow from grace to grace, and he would not be there to see her. To him she would be only Pet, little, golden-haired Pet. He would lose her soon, lose her as he had lost her mother, and never find her again, save in his memory. Then his lips parted close to her ear, and he talked softly, as though she could hear him; as though the voice of his love could penetrate the dull ear of sleep. "Darling, I've done the best I could for you. I've tried to make you happy; I've tried

to make you good. If misfortune and sorrow come to you in the future, God knows it will not be my fault. If he had left you to me, I would have guarded you day and night. I would have watched over you as a miser does his gold. I would have given the last drop of my heart's blood for you; but now he will take you, and I can do nothing more, only to give you into the hands of God. It's not my fault, little one. I would rather have parted with every limb of my body than to part with you. I don't give you up without giving the greater half of my life. What can I do? There's no compromise that I can make between love and duty. I'm spared temptation in the matter. He knows all: he will come and demand you; and I must yield you up, far more reluctantly than I would my life. Yes, far more: because life is nothing, — at thirty years I've finished it. I've no more to hope, to desire, to expect: beyond you there is only a blank. I commenced life full of unshaken faith in the future. I believed in friendship, in love; and I was deceived in both. Why did they not tell me that all was false, that only the hereafter was true? Why did they leave me to buy my experience at such a price? I've searched into the mystery of sorrow, and found in it nothing but grievous chastening. I've asked why it has come so thick and fast upon me, and the only answer I receive is that God has willed it; therefore I must be resigned. But you, darling, how will it be with you? What fate awaits you, my precious one? O my angel! who will love you as I have? who will count thee more precious than life or happiness?" Then he carried her gently, and, laying her in her bed, he smoothed her pillows, and pressed his lips to her flushed cheeks with mournful tenderness. After that he went back to his chair before the fire; and instead of taking a book, as had been his habit, his head sank dejectedly upon his breast, and he fell into a profound reverie. Suddenly a knock at his door, and steps mounting the stairs, startled him.

"A gentleman to see Mr. Winter," said Mrs. Battle's little maid, "an' he's followed me up. Shall I let him in?"

"Certainly," replied Abel rising, and trembling so that he could scarce speak, while he turned away his head to hide the anguish in his face. When he heard the door close he looked up, and Robert Thorpe stood before him, serious, sad, and almost humble. Abel bowed mechanically, and pointed to a chair; for his lips refused to utter a word. His visitor sank into the proffered seat, put his hat upon the table, and, drawing his handkerchief from his pocket, he wiped the beaded drops from his face with a nervous hand; and yet neither spoke.

Abel was the first to break the painful silence: he had conquered his emotion, and regained his calmness in the face of this terrible trial, which he knew required all his courage to go through with unfalteringly. One thought was uppermost in his heart: there could be but one object in this visit; and so he said, addressing Robert Thorpe with quiet dignity, "You've come to take your child. Am I not right?"

"No, Mr. Winter: I've not come to take her; I've come to ask for her."

"And you expect me to give her up? Remember, her mother put her into my arms when she was but a few weeks old; and I've loved her ever since. She's as dear to me as my life. Think what you ask, Mr. Thorpe, and be merciful."

"Don't speak of mercy, for God's sake, don't! If you could know what was passing in my heart at this moment, you would see that I was the one to be pitied, not you," cried Robert Thorpe, still wiping the great drops from his face, with a hand that trembled in spite of every effort at self-control.

"You are thinking of Violet," said Abel with painful calm. "We will not speak of that. I saw her before she died; I forgave her; I've nothing more to say."

"Would to God that I could have seen her also!" exclaimed Robert with a burst of emotion. "I loved her: I'm not ashamed

to say it. I loved her dearly, but I lost confidence in her."

"I know it all," interrupted Abel.

"Since she has written to me with her dying hand, I believe her to be innocent. The child is mine: she is her living image. After I received her letter, I tried to find her. I longed to throw myself at her feet, and implore her pardon before she died; but I sought in vain, until yesterday, when I accidentally met Lamb, her old servant; and she told me all, — how you brought the child, and how contented and peaceful you made her last moments."

"Say no more of it, Mr. Thorpe. You must know how I have suffered. Spare me the pain of referring to her. It is the child that occupies all my thoughts now: let us settle that matter. You want her, and you are determined to have her: am I right?"

"I want her, and I am determined to have her," returned Robert with some of his old authority.

"Are you aware that you cannot claim the child legally, unless you legitimize her? that you cannot compel me to give her up, unless I choose to relinquish her?"

"I trust to your honor in the matter," said Robert, dropping his eyes beneath the steady gaze of Abel. "You surely will not keep the child from her father."

"No, I'll not; but first you must do me justice; you must make a sacrifice for me. You must acknowledge that you believe me innocent of the crime you accused me of five years ago."

Robert changed color, and turned his head, trying to evade Abel's searching eyes.

"You know, as God is our witness, that I never removed the money from the safe. You knew it at the time, Mr. Thorpe, and yet you let me suffer. Now is your time to right me."

It was evident from the convulsive working of Robert's face, that a terrible struggle was going on in his heart. Pride and remorse, good and evil, were in arms together; and the moment was agonizing. At last he started up, and exclaimed, as though the words were forced from him against his

will by an interior power: "By Heavens! Winter, you are right: I know you never took the money. *It was not there for you to take*; and I was a cursed villain to accuse you. You know what such a confession costs me, but I'll do it. I'll make a clean breast of it. I wanted to get rid of you. Not that I had any thing against you personally. No: I always liked you, and you were very useful to me; but at that time I was in dreadful complications, and did not dare acknowledge it to my father. I thought if I only had time, that I might work out of them, and he know nothing about it. The slightest suspicion on his part would have ruined me; and I feared that you would discover something, and expose me. It was about the time I quarrelled with Violet; and she threatened to disclose all to you. I knew if she did, that you would make my father acquainted with my wickedness; and I feared the consequences of his anger. Besides, your knowledge of our private affairs enabled you to discover how badly I was managing in my father's absence. I knew you suspected me after the Jew's visit; and I thought that you would act the part of a spy, and denounce me to my father. I had tried for some time to think of a plan to get you discharged; when suddenly the Devil put that into my head, and I acted upon it at once. It is true that I put the money in the envelope before your eyes; but, instead of placing it in the safe when I stooped to do so, I slipped it into my pocket. I knew the man would not come until the next day, as I had told him to call then. You see, I was safe from being suspected; but I suffered tortures. Don't think I did it coolly, and without pity for you." Abel made a gesture of ineffable contempt. "The consequences might have been worse than they were. Your immoderate temper almost forced my father to resort to harsh means, although I believe he never really thought you guilty."

"Now you must right me with him," said Abel quietly."

"How can I, Winter? Good God! my father's dead: he died two weeks ago."

Then Abel noticed, for the first time, his deep mourning. "I regret that more than any thing. I should have wished *him*, of all others, to have been certain of my innocence; but now I must wait until it is declared before the Judge of all."

Robert Thorpe regarded him with astonishment. He had expected a burst of passionate anger; but, instead, he had received his avowal calmly and almost indifferently. It touched the not entirely ignoble heart of his old enemy as nothing else could, and forced from his lips an exclamation of surprise and admiration. "By Jove, Winter, you take it coolly! You're a different man from me; for, although I'm pretty well down by misfortune, I couldn't listen to the confession of such a wrong without boiling over."

"Mr. Thorpe," returned Abel, in a solemn, still voice, "I had my hour of passion, my temptation of revenge, long ago. It passed over, and left us both unharmed. Thank God for it, not me. Your full forgiveness you owe to the mother of your child. I don't complain, nor accuse you: let the dead past bury its dead."

After a few moments of deep silence, during which Abel seemed to be plunged in a profound reflection, he looked up, and said, "In regard to the child, if you take her, are you able to provide for her and educate her properly?"

A flush of pride burnt for a moment on Robert's pale cheek, as he replied, "Certainly. If I were not competent to do so, I would scarce undertake the charge. Through the influence of a friend of my father, I have a situation, and a salary that will enable me to live comfortably. I have entirely changed my habits, Winter. My past experience has taught me a bitter lesson. In the future I shall avoid the shoals that wrecked me before. My plan is to put the little girl in a good school; and, when she is grown up, she will keep house for me, and be a great comfort to me." Abel shivered from head to foot, and clasped his hands with a gesture of pain. "I shall never marry," continued Robert in a cold, philo-

sophical tone. "I've lost all confidence in women. In fact, I can never care for another as I cared for her" —

"The child has never been baptized, never received any name," interrupted Abel suddenly. "It's my wish that she should be called Violet: I hope you'll regard it."

"I've thought of that," replied Robert: "it's been my intention from the first. It's the only reparation I can make the poor thing, to give her name to the child."

Abel sprang up, and paced the floor rapidly; then with a heavy sigh he subsided again into his chair, and waited, with his eyes fixed on vacancy, for his visitor to speak.

"When may I take her?" Robert commenced.

"When may you take her?" cried Abel with flashing eyes. "I've never said yet that you could take her. I've not made up my mind." Then he pressed his hands over his eyes as if striving for self-control, and added more calmly. "Give me time, Mr. Thorpe; give me one week. This day week you shall have her: come for her then, and she will be ready to go with you. I must have a little time: she's wound herself so round my heart, that I can't tear her off suddenly. You know, one gets so fond of a child at that age," he explained with a sickly smile.

"I don't doubt it, Winter: I'm sorry for you; but, if it's got to be, it's better now than later. It's better to break this up before her tastes are formed."

Abel replied not a word. Robert Thorpe took his hat, and turned towards the door saying, "Very well, then; this night week I'll come for her."

"This night week," repeated Abel vaguely, and added, with a mechanical motion of the head, "Good-evening, Mr. Thorpe, good-evening." Then he sank back into his chair, trembling and exhausted.

After a few moments he got up, took a candle, and went into Pet's room. She was sleeping sweetly, one little hand under her cheek, the other thrown over her head, and tangled fast in her silken hair. He stooped,

and pressed his lips gently to her forehead. To-night she seemed more than ever like her mother; and he murmured softly close to her ear, "Violet, Violet." She partially awoke and nestled to him. One little hand sought his face, and lay soft and warm on his cheek, cold and damp with the dews of emotion. The touch went to his heart. It seemed as though her tender fingers had opened the flood-gates of his soul; and, bowing his head, he wept abundantly, letting his hot tears fall over the golden curls of the child.

Four days after he sent for Mrs. Battle to come to his room. It was evening: Pet had gone to bed; and he was alone, pacing the floor rapidly, his cheeks unnaturally flushed, and his eyes wide and bright, like one suffering from some terrible mental excitement.

The good woman looked at him with some surprise; but he plunged at once into the object of his summons, without giving her time to make her usual inquisitive remarks.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Battle. I've sent for you to tell you that I'm going away."

"Good Lord, Mr. Winter! Going away! an' without givin' me a month's notice!" she cried indignantly, her own interest being uppermost in her mind.

"Yes: I'm obliged to go at once, day after to-morrow; but I'll pay you the month's rent all the same, and you can find another lodger in the mean time."

Satisfied pecuniarily, Mrs. Battle began to quiver with curiosity to know all about it. "Going away, Mr. Winter? Why, it's so sudden-like that I can't realize it. Where are you goin', an' what are you goin' for? An' Pet, are you a-goin' to take her, the little dear that I've had so long?" and up went her apron to her eyes, while a sort of explosive sob struck Abel's ear most unpleasantly.

"Pray, be calm," he said, though he was more excited than his landlady. "Pray, be calm, and I'll explain it in a few words; and you must assist me all you can, and be as quiet about it as possible, for I've a great

deal to think of. In the first place, you're not to mention it to any one; it's strictly private. The house I'm with is obliged to send a clerk to South America. I am offered the chance; my passage is taken: the ship sails Wednesday, and I have a great deal to do. You must prepare Pet for a long sea-voyage; comfortable clothes, you understand."

"What makes you take her, Mr. Winter? You can leave her with me: I'll be like a mother to her; an' I'll look out that that haector-man don't get a sight of 'er. Do leave her with me till you come back!"

"I've no doubt that you'd take the best of care of her, Mrs. Battle, but I don't know as I shall ever come back; and I have decided to take her. It's cost me enough to decide, so don't try to change my resolution; but get her ready, and I'll pay you well," said Abel, so firmly and harshly that Mrs. Battle was a little frightened.

"Oh! I'll do all I can to help you, for that matter, but it's hard for me to lose the child. I love her like my own," and up went the apron again.

"I know it, Mrs. Battle, I know you are fond of her," said Abel, softening; "but it can't be helped; there are very hard things in life, and we have to endure them the best way we can. It'll make no difference: for, if I wasn't going away, we'd lose her all the same; her father would take her. It was he who came the other night to tell me so."

"I knew it was him, the villain. I was a-peekin' out o' the parlor door, an' I knew him the minit I set eyes on him, an' was a mind to tell Betty to slap the door to in his face."

"You musn't feel that way, Mrs. Battle: she's his child, and no one else has a right to her; but I shall take her nevertheless,— I can't give her up. However, we won't talk any more about it: get her ready, that's all. My books I'll have packed to take with me. The flowers you may have: they'll make your room pretty for your new lodger."

"Oh! don't speak of it, Mr. Winter: I'll

never find another like you;" and up went the apron, while Mrs. Battle made her exit, weeping bitterly.

After she had gone, Abel walked the floor like one possessed, a prey to the most conflicting emotions. "I've decided now, and I can't recall it. I must take her with me: I can't leave her," he groaned, heavily oppressed with his burdened conscience. "I've a right to her, — the divine right of love. He'll never care for her as I have: he never will, he never can. She'll be every way better with me. She loves me. I'll train her carefully. I'll make her a good woman; and what guaranty have I that he won't go back to his old ways, and neglect her, and leave her to ruin? It's my duty to take her. Yes, it's my duty!" but the very persistency with which he said it showed that he doubted it. "I thought I'd have courage at the last to give her up, but this temptation's too great for me to resist. I can take her away out of the country, and he will never see her: he'll forget her in a little while, and, perhaps, be thankful that I relieved him of a burden. It may be that Providence ordered this so that I may keep her with me. Yes, I'll take her. Wednesday night he'll come for her, but he'll find her gone. The ship will sail in the morning: at night she'll be out to sea, and he cannot follow us. Then she will be mine forever."

Suddenly he stopped in his hurried walk: a dreadful pallor passed over his face; and he sank back in a chair like one who had received a mortal blow; for it seemed to him that poor old Top stood by his side, and said distinctly, "Abel, give the child to her father; don't go to twistin' ropes o' sand; remember, they'll break, an' leave you a wreck. Give the child to her father, and trust in God for the future." Then all was silent. He looked round wildly: the room was empty; but still he seemed to see before him the kind, homely, wrinkled face, sublime with truth and justice, — he seemed to see it as it had looked upon him so many times; and yet he knew that it had been hidden under the sod for nine years.

"Daddy, daddy!" he cried, "I hear you; I listen to you; I'll give her to her father; I'll leave the future to God; I'll do what's right. Hear what I say, and let it be registered in heaven!" Then he tottered to the child's room; and, throwing himself on the little bed by her side, he clasped her in his arms, as he had once before, to shield himself from the tempter, and prayed between his sobs, asking God to help him. At last calmness came, and with it sleep. All through the night he slumbered peacefully, with the child folded to his heart; and, when he awoke, the morning sun shone into the room. Then, after bathing his face, and arranging his disordered dress, he sat down, and wrote the following:—

"MR. THORPE.—I've decided to give up the child to you. To-morrow morning I sail for America, never to return. Let me say a word to you that comes from my heart. I love her; she is dearer to me than my own life; yet I leave her because it seems to me to be right. She is naturally a good child: if she turns out badly, I do not hesitate to say that it will be your fault. Think of her mother's unhappy fate, and watch over her as a choice treasure committed to your care which I shall require from your hands, pure and unstained, at the day of final judgment. In giving her up, I give up all that can make life endurable. Remember that, and value my sacrifice according to what it has cost me. I have but little to give her,—in all, three hundred pounds, the half of which is the fruit of years of self-denial on the part of the good old man who cared for her mother. The remainder I have saved from my own wages. It is not much; but, if properly invested, it may be of some use in educating her. Enclosed you will find a draft for the amount on the Bank of England, payable to you. I give you no advice in regard to it. I trust to your love for your child, and the bitter lesson taught you by your past experience. Pet is young: she will soon forget me; and I wish it to be so. I would not have her sweet life marred with one regret. Let

the thought of what it has cost me to give her up induce you to be faithful to her, and I shall be contented with my sacrifice.
"ABEL WINTER."

When he finished his letter to Robert Thorpe, he rang for Mrs. Battle, who answered his summons with red eyes and a dejected air. "You'll think me very uncertain," he said in a voice of forced resolution; "but I've changed my mind in regard to Pet: I've decided that it will not be right for me to take her away from her father. He will come for her to-morrow evening, when you will give her to him with this," and he handed her the letter he had sealed and addressed. "To-day you must pack, and get my things ready for me. The ship sails early to-morrow morning, and I shall go on board to-night. Don't say anything to Pet about my going away: I don't want her little heart saddened. Her father will take her: she's already disposed to love him. Among new scenes she'll soon forget me, and perhaps it'll be better for her in the end. I sha'n't be in through the day; put her to bed to-night, and, after she's asleep, I'll come in and take a good-by kiss." Here Mrs. Battle covered her face and sobbed aloud: the anguish in his voice affected her beyond control. "Don't, my good woman, for Heaven's sake, don't weaken me with a sight of your tears! for I need all my strength. I'm going out directly before Pet wakes. You needn't prepare any breakfast for me. Amuse the child, and be very gentle with her. Here's your month's rent, and a little gift for you. I wish it could be more;" and he pressed a roll of notes in the hand of the subdued and weeping Mrs. Battle. Then he took his hat and went out, never as much as glancing in the direction of Pet's room.

About nine o'clock in the evening he returned. Mrs. Battle always remembered it as long as she lived; and she told Robert Thorpe how he had crept up stairs to take a last look at the child, as weak as a dying man,—so weak that he was obliged to cling to the railings for support; how he

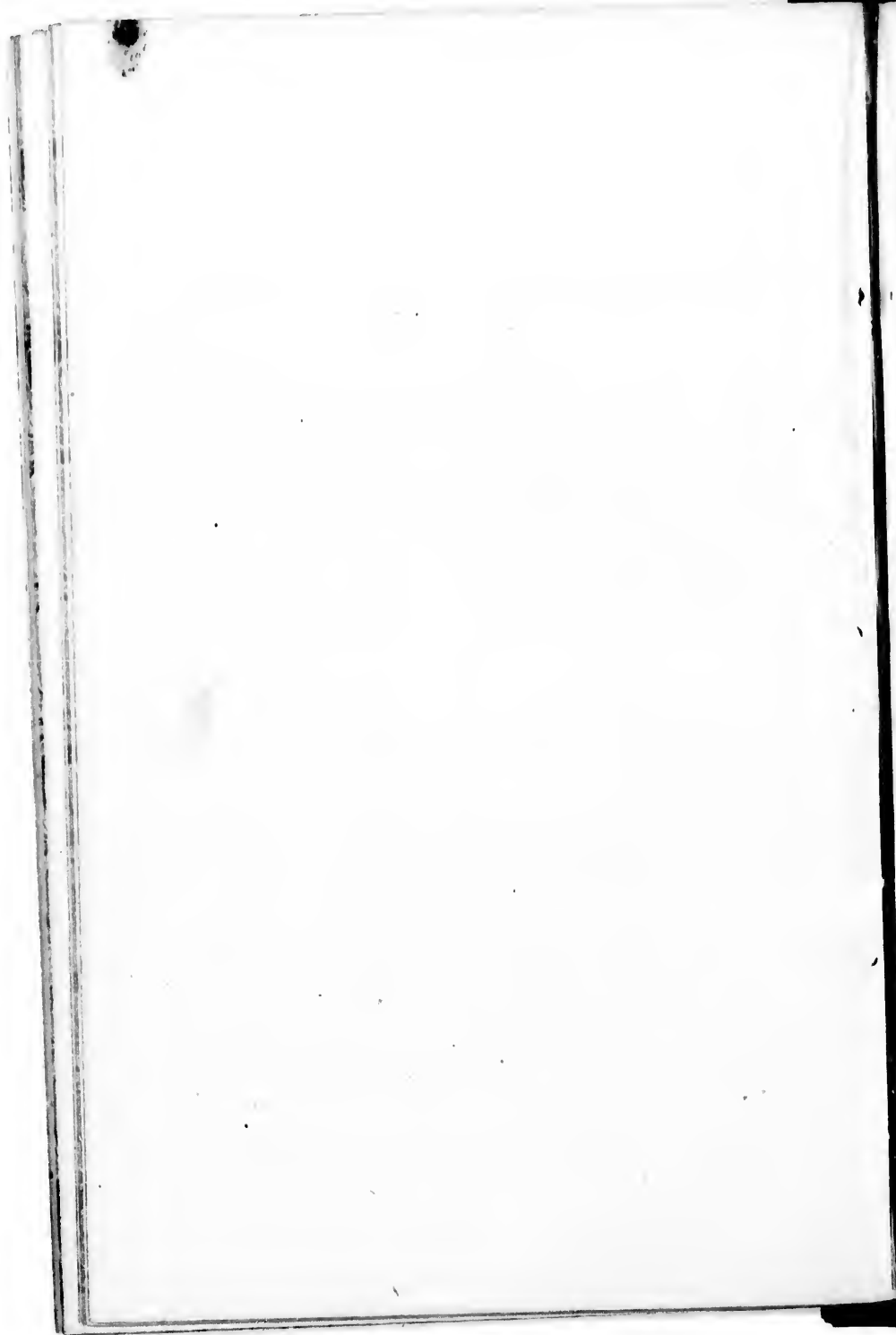
had come down pale as death, with wide, tearless eyes that seemed to be looking beyond this world; how he had wrung her hands without speaking, and gone away like one walking in his sleep.

The child slumbered peacefully. Perhaps her guardian angel fanned her pure brow with its soft wings; for no dark shadow of parting crept over her sweet, smiling face, as Abel Winter knelt by her bed like a statue of stone, his elbows resting on her pillow, his hands pressed against his temples, his wide, tearless eyes devouring her face. How long he knelt there he never knew; for he seemed to have changed into a being capable only of one sense, and that, intense suffering. He had sunk below the region of tears, or risen to a sublimity of grief that could find no expression in outward emotion. At last, the clear, musical chime of Bow Bells struck upon his ear, and recalled him to himself. It seemed like a summons to his martyrdom. With

one heroic effort he struggled to his feet, clasped the sleeping child in a long, frenzied embrace, pressed kiss after kiss upon brow, lip, and cheek; and then, laying her back half awake on her pillow, without another glance, he rushed from the room, leaving her to sink back into peaceful slumber.

The next morning, in the early dawn, the ship sailed away. The rising sun gilded her full sails; and, like a joyous bird that spreads its wings toward heaven, she went out into the great unknown, bearing with her, her freight of human happiness and woe. She sailed away; and, alas! no eager, watchful eye ever greeted her return. She sailed away, and the world knew nothing more of her fate.

Top and Violet sleep side by side in Kensal Green, but only the ocean with its ceaseless sobbing was wide enough to entomb the great heart of Abel Winter.



A WOMAN'S STORY.

"Ton souvenir est toujours là,
O toi que ne peux plus m'entendre!"

My poor Raoul, when he furnished this pretty apartment in the Avenue Montaigne, did not think that I should one day sit alone at the writing-table he bought for me, sad and desolate, dressed in widow's weeds, striving to find some distraction in making this little sketch; though for whose eyes besides my own I cannot tell, since the only eyes I should care to read it have been closed for nearly two years.

It was a long while before we could marry. Raoul was *sous-lieutenant* in the *Garde Nationale*; and I, the orphan of a poor physician, had not a relative in the world besides an uncle, who was both father and guardian to me. I had only a slender *dût*, and Raoul had nothing but his small pay. Therefore, although we loved each other devotedly, it was thought best by older and wiser heads than ours, that we should not unite our lives until something had been put aside toward beginning our little *menage*.

We were both young and ardent, and at first it seemed hard to comply with these practical restrictions to our happiness. However, time went on. Raoul was almost always absent with his regiment in some of the provincial towns, while I passed my dull days in the peaceful house of my uncle, situated in the pretty suburbs of Passy. It is true that there were a few gala days to brighten my seven years of waiting; and these were when my handsome soldier obtained leave of absence to

pass a week in Paris, or, perhaps, I should say, in Passy; for he spent the most of his time with us, and a happy time it was. My uncle was very fond of Raoul; and I was so much like a daughter to him, that I don't believe the dear old gentleman ever thought that he was a bachelor and childless. Gentle heart! he had had his romance before I was born; and there was nothing left of it but a grave in the cemetery of Montmartre, with the name, "Silvie, aged 18," cut upon a simple stone. From my earliest childhood, the first day of every June I went with him to cover the spot with roses, and I might say with tears also; for I always cried with him to see him sobbing over her grave.

As I was saying, he liked to see us happy; for he remembered how death had robbed him of his future, and, therefore, he trusted only the present. Looking back to-night, from my desolate heart, from my silent room, those sweet days that cheered my seven years of waiting seem like a tender, peaceful dream of childhood. Though often dull, I was never unhappy, while preparing my simple *trousseau* with my own hands, and attending to the uninteresting affairs of our household. At last the day came when my soldier rushed into our little *salon* with glowing cheeks, happy and handsome, and, throwing into my lap his papers of promotion, he cried in a glad voice, "Now, *ma chérie*, I am captain; and we can marry." A few days after, that long-looked-for event was quietly solemnized. We passed a very happy week together; then Raoul went back to Lyons to

join his regiment, and I remained still with my uncle, only seeing my husband occasionally, which was certainly a great trial to me; but for many reasons he could not get exchanged to Paris; and my uncle thought it best that I should remain with him until Raoul was permanently settled somewhere. So outwardly there was very little difference in my life, except that I was called "madame," and sometimes went out without our maid.

One morning, more than two years after our marriage, Margot, our maid, rushed into my room, crying, "Monsieur Henri is dead!"

I followed her into the *salon*; and there, just as I had left him the night before, sat my dear uncle, his head leaning against the back of his chair, a smile of great contentment on his face, and his thin cold fingers clasping a lock of brown hair. Yes, he was dead. Raoul came, and we buried him by Silvie, and put up another stone, with the name, 'Henri, aged 60,' inscribed upon it. Eighteen and sixty! What a chasm of years between to bridge over with tears and sighs!

After my uncle's death, I was so miserable that Raoul would not leave me, with only Margot, in the dull house in Passy. He was then expecting to be exchanged to Paris at once; and as his pay, with what my uncle left me, fully authorized a little expenditure beyond our usual economical way of living, he hired this apartment where I am now writing, and arranged it quite elegantly, by adding a few luxuries to the neat furniture which had been familiar to me from childhood, and which I loved too well to change for newer.

I have passed the same number of years since my marriage that I passed in waiting for my Raoul, — seven years; and I now am thirty-two, and wearing widow's weeds, with God only knows how many more years to wait before I shall be united to him again. Those seven years were very long when I had hope to uphold me; now what am I to do with, perhaps, six times that number to live, and nothing to look

forward to? But should I say *nothing*? I am ungrateful and sinful to speak so vaguely of the future. Although I have not always been as good and patient as one should be, yet I am sure I shall see my darling again, — only the sorrow is in the long waiting.

You all know of the dark days that fell upon us, during which a nation was drenched in blood and tears, and beaten pitiless into the very mire; but, thank God! she is rising up again, and shaking off the stain of her defeat. My France, cleansed with her own blood, is still a nation for the world to envy; and I am proud to have given my all toward the cleansing.

Raoul was in Lyons with his regiment when the trouble began; and, fearing I should be anxious, he came to me for a hasty visit. In the evening we had a few friends, as we always did when he came home; and some one sang the *Marseillaise*. My woman's heart was faint with fear for him. With eyes full of tears, and my hands cold and trembling, I drew him into our bedroom, and said, while my soul was shrinking with shame, "Raoul, *mon ami*, give up your commission before war is declared. You must not go to fight, and die away from me! I have no courage to bear it."

"*Lache!*" he cried sternly, putting my clinging hands from his neck, while he looked at me with dry, burning eyes. "You! a soldier's wife! You! a Frenchwoman! *Quelle honte!*"

"Pardon, pardon," I implored, falling on my knees at his feet, for in that moment I adored him as I never had before. He seemed to me a king, and I a disgraced subject, a traitor to my country. "Go, *mon ame*, go; and if you die for France, I shall rejoice in my widowhood, even though my heart breaks." Then I pressed my lips to his feet, and wet them with my tears. He raised me gently, and held me close to his heart, kissing my eyes, and whispering, "I shall go; I shall fight like a man; and, if I die for my country, I shall die like a soldier. Have no fear for me, *cherie*, think

only of our France, and pray for her as women pray who love honor more than life."

It was enough. I had made my sacrifice. I wiped away my tears, and followed my husband into the *salon* where they still sang. There, for the first time, I joined in the *Marsellaise* with a clear voice and a strong heart. But do you suppose I never regret? Ah, *là, là!* I am a woman; and there are times when I do not see France for weeping. Nights when I turn on my pillow, and put out my hand for a warm face that used to lie close to mine, and, instead, I seem to touch a cold, wet wound, and I shudder and think that I, too, am drenched with his blood; and I am alone, and the night is so still and dark! O God, how dreary, with no human heart to weep upon! Then I wish—but perhaps I should not say it—that my Raoul had been any thing rather than a soldier, and that France had not needed his life. Well, as I said before, our nation has been purified with her own blood; and should I feel so proud to-day of my country if I had escaped the crimson baptism?"

The next morning Raoul bade me a tender but hurried *au revoir*; he did not think it was *adieu* no more than I; nor did the faintest foreboding tell me that I had seen him for the last time, as I watched him turn from my sight into the *Cours-la-Reine*, with his quick, soldierly step, and tall, upright figure. I could not see his face; yet sometimes I think that perhaps it was wet with tears, and dark with the shadow of coming sorrow, for I remember how he told me once that he never wept until he was out of my sight. Poor darling! we had to part so often during the few years of our married life, that he began to look upon it as a part of his lot, and seldom ever complained; still, I know that his heart ached each time as much as mine did. Although my eyes were full of tears as I turned from watching him, still I had no premonition that he had gone from my sight forever. I did not know that his regiment would be ordered to the frontier in a few days, and that I

should hear nothing of it until after he had gone. I may be wrong; but I like to think that perhaps God in his pity ordered it so, to spare us the pain of parting.

I did not begin this simple story with the intention of telling you only of my own troubles; but unknowingly one is egotistical, and it is so natural, when one object fills the memory, to speak of that, rather than another. Although I have been so stricken, and although Gravelotte and Sedan are burned upon my heart and brain, and I am haunted forever with a horrid red wound across the white forehead of my Raoul, and a wider, redder wound in the earth, where he was thrown with hundreds of others, yet with it all there comes before me the beautiful face of one I loved like a sister, and with it another face, darker and more brilliant, that I sometimes wish I had never seen; not that I loved it less than hers, not because of my own regrets, but for her dear sake who was hidden away from my sight only yesterday.

I did think that my own history, uneventful though it had been until the last few years, would have lengthened out to a number of pages; but now it seems to me that I have told it all in these very few, and that I must introduce my other characters at once to make any thing of a story. Certainly, any one will know that, though the greater part of my life was passed in dull tranquillity, the last few years must have been tragic and stormy enough, and that I might fill almost volumes by describing minutely my own feelings; but, if I should do so, the paper on which I write would be so wet with tears as to make the characters entirely illegible. Therefore I prefer to speak as little as possible of myself, while I tell, as intelligently as I am able to do, something of the romance of Aglaé Thévénot's life. Indeed I could not write more particularly of the dreadful scenes through which I have passed, of my bereavement, of the misery which fell upon our country, without speaking of her, so closely has she been interwoven with it all.

On the very day when Raoul brought me to look at my new apartment, as we ascended the stairs slowly, — for it seemed very high to me after our cottage in Passy, — the door of the *entresol* opened, and a lady came out, followed by her servant. Her lovely, intelligent face, and sweet smile, interested us both; and, as soon as we were well out of hearing, we said in the same breath, "I wonder who she is." A few days after we were established, Margot informed me that the lady, with an aged aunt, occupied the *entresol*, and that she was called Madame Aglaé Thévenot. So much for Margot's ability in discovering who our neighbors were. After that, we met often on the stairs, going in and out; and her graceful salutation was always returned by me with one as cordial as her own. Gradually we fell into speaking; and one day, feeling emboldened by her kindness, I asked her if I might come and make her a little visit *sans ceremonie*. She seemed delighted with my proposal, and told me with the most winning smile, that, as I was the elder, she had been waiting for me to make the first advances toward a friendship. It is true I was her senior, but not by as many years as she thought; for she was twenty-six she told me, and I was not then thirty: yet I am so serious and plain, that I appear much older than I am.

When Raoul came home at the end of the month, he found us fast friends; and he soon learned to like her as much as I did. During that time, we had had many confidential talks; and I had learned from her that she was an orphan, as well as myself. Oh! how I pitied her when she added, "And a widow!" She noticed my *naïve* expression of sorrow, and said with a little, sad laugh, "Why, my dear, you should congratulate me; for my four years of married life were the saddest years I have ever known. I was married at seventeen, and my husband was more than sixty."

"Then you did not love him?" I asked, with a feeling of trouble that I could not conceal.

"Oh, no! not in the least. I never saw

him but three times before the day of our marriage. Aunt arranged it while I was in school. You see I had no *dût*; and so I could not expect to marry for love. He was rich, and it was thought to be a very fortunate thing for me; but the worst of all was, that he was not kind to me. He was as jealous and as cruel as a Turk; and so miserly, he never allowed me a *sois* that I did not account to him for. I can laugh even now at the ridiculous rage he went into when I once spent a franc for *bon-bons*. I don't think our personal annoyances and disappointments are the worst features in our system of marriage. What I despise most are the deception and sin which are so often hidden under a form of duty. Perhaps, had I been of a different character, I might have consoled my aching heart as other poor women have done; but, as it was, I struggled through with no serious self-condemnation. However, it was a great relief when he died. I received with the utmost propriety the condolence of my friends, wore widow's weeds the prescribed time, and erected a handsome monument to his memory in *Père-la-Chaise*. What more could I do? A few months ago I laid aside my mourning with a feeling of freedom I never before experienced. Therefore I am not at all a subject for your gentle pity, although I have had my disappointment."

"But you are young, lovely, and rich," I said, still feeling very sorry for her: "you can now make a marriage of affection."

"Oh, no!" and she sighed sadly. "I must always remain his widow: his jealousy and avarice fetter me to him even now. He left his fortune in such a way, that, if I marry again, it will all go to a distant relative, whom he always hated and neglected; but, as much as he disliked him, he would rather he should have it, than that I should be happy with another after his death. What a contemptible character he had! I dislike even to speak of him. But don't think that I am dissatisfied with my present condition, or ever wish to marry again. Oh, no! I have never yet seen the man for

whom I would resign my dearly-bought freedom."

"He is in the world, and he will come," I said with a strong conviction. "I have always believed that there is some one created for every person, if they are only so fortunate as to meet; and it is not at all impossible to find the right one, since I with my few attractions secured such a prize as Raoul."

She laughed, and replied, "I am so fastidious, that any one in the least inferior to him would not suit me; and he is so excellent that I am sure I shall never find his like."

It was early in the month of June, two years after we went to live in the Avenue Montaigne. I remember the time perfectly, because it was the eve of Raoul's *fête*, and he had come to pass it with me, as he always did before and after our marriage. The weather was very warm for the season, and after dinner Aglaé and I sat on the balcony. The windows were all open, and the *salon* was full of flowers; our friends had brought a great many; and the others Aglaé had selected that morning at the Madeleine, and arranged with such skill that the room looked like a bower of roses. I thought it all very pretty, and I was so happy because it was done for Raoul: but, as much as I admired the flowers, I admired Aglaé still more; she looked unusually lovely, in a soft, white dress, a cluster of scarlet *œillet* mixed with *reseda* fastening the broad collar that turned gracefully away from her throat. Raoul had gone to invite a brother officer to dinner with us the next day; and we two chatted alone until the soft twilight gathered around us, and the music from the *Champs-Élysées* sounded clear and sweet, mingled with the voices of the passers. Margot was bringing in the lamps, and the *salon* door was open. I turned, and saw Raoul entering with a gentleman whom I had never seen before. Somewhat surprised, I came in from the balcony, followed by Aglaé; and my husband presented "*M. Rhadi Effendi, attaché près l'ambassadeur de Turquie.*" I was very much impressed

with the foreign title, as well as with the appearance of the young man who stood before us, bowing low in the Oriental fashion, all eyes and teeth, as I said afterward. I had never seen such a brilliant face as his: its beauty quite startled me. Before he had well finished his salutation to me, his splendid dark eyes fell upon Aglaé with a look of unmistakable admiration. Raoul then presented him to our friend; and I fancied a flush passed over his clear olive cheek as he turned toward her.

"Is it possible," I whispered to my husband, while our visitor was talking with Aglaé on the balcony, — "is it possible that he is the Turk of whom I have heard you speak, — the one who watched poor Victor through his last illness? Victor was a cousin who had died of a malignant fever that spring; and I had often heard Raoul speak of this young man's devotion to him during his dreadful sickness.

"The very same," replied my husband, while he assisted me with the tea to drown our conversation, which otherwise might have been heard on the balcony; and don't you think him very elegant, as well as remarkably handsome? As I was walking up the *Champs-Élysées* he was walking down: we stopped to speak a moment, when he reminded me of a promise that I had made him to introduce him to you; so I brought him up. Invite him for dinner to-morrow, *chérie.*"

I gave M. Rhadi a cup of tea with my own hands. He took it, thanking me very prettily; and while he sipped it, talking gayly at the same time, in excellent French, to Aglaé, I studied him a little. He was considerably above the medium height; slight, with well-shaped, muscular limbs, small feet, and slender, nervous hands; his shoulders were square, and rather broad; his neck and head finely shaped; his beautiful dark eyes looked out steadily and frankly from under a pair of heavy brows; his skin was of a pale, clear olive; and his mouth, perfect in form, smiled as sweetly as a woman's, with a little expression of bashfulness that was very winning. I am aware

that this imperfect description can give you but a feeble idea of his brilliant and striking beauty; still it is the best I can do, as I never had any gift for word-painting, and the most expressive terms I can use seem pale and poor when I think of him as I first saw him; therefore I will leave it to your imagination to fill out the faint outline I have given you. The more I studied him, the more I wondered that he could be a Turk; and the old saying, "Cruel as a Turk," the same that Aglaé had used in speaking of her husband, came into my mind. "He does not look cruel," I thought; "and yet I should scarcely like to see him angry." I glanced at Aglaé. She was lovely: some new emotion beautified her. What if she should learn to love him? The possibility filled me with forebodings of sorrow; and I pressed Raoul's hand with such a strong clasp that he looked at me inquiringly. Perhaps if I had told him of my fears then, that which happened afterward might have been prevented; for I am sure, if we could have looked into the future, we never would have encouraged an acquaintance by asking him to dine with us the next day.

After tea the conversation became general; and some remark led M. Rhadi to speak of himself. "I am a Persian," he said; "or, rather, I was born in Persia, of Turkish parents. When I was a child, my father, through the force of events, became an officer under the Sultan; and I was educated a Malommedan, or as nearly as one can be who believes in God, and does not believe that Mahomet was his prophet."

"Then you are a Christian?" said Aglaé with sudden interest.

"I profess no creed, madame," he replied with a low bow. "I worship God; I worship the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all that he has made beautiful."

While he spoke, his face was so brilliant with animation and intelligence, that one given to fine language would describe him as an Eastern Apollo, a child of the sun, a passionate Persian, overflowing with the romance and poetry of the Orient. To me, simple as my fancies are, he seemed like a

prince who had stepped for a moment out of some Arabian tale into the homely reality of our every-day life.

After he had gone, Aglaé remained silent for some time, apparently lost in thought, while Raoul and I watched her with interest. Suddenly she started from her reverie, and said with some confusion, "A Turk! 'Cruel as a Turk' cannot apply to all Turks; for he does not look cruel, does he?"

"Not at all," replied Raoul, smiling. "What an idea to associate with him!" I know he was thinking of poor Victor when he added, "I am sure he has a kind heart."

"One would think so," she said absently, as Raoul opened the door for her to go down; for it was late. Then, as she went out, she looked back, smiled, and kissed her hand to me, but without saying a word; which was strange, seeing she had been so animated all the evening.

My husband laughed, and said, "She is pleased with Rhadi, and he is pleased with her. It is easy to see how that will end."

I did not like him to speak so lightly, for something told me that there was a fatality in their meeting. Although I have been much ridiculed by sensible people, I still believe with the poet in —

"A divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

and now, knowing their sad fate, I am more than ever impressed with the belief that some influence other than that of ordinary events brought about the meeting between Rhadi Effendi and Aglaé Thévénot.

The next day our guests were all waiting in the *salon* some time before Aglaé came up. She was late: whether from capriciousness, or whether from taking more than ordinary pains with her toilet, I do not know; however, it was past the time announced for dinner, and I noticed that M. Rhadi's eyes sought the door anxiously, while a shadow of disappointment passed over his expressive face. At last, when even I, as much as I loved her, had grown impatient at the delay, she entered the *salon* as indifferently as though she had

been the first to arrive instead of the last. She looked exceedingly pretty, but a little paler and graver than usual. M. Rhadi saluted her with a profound reverence, while his face changed as suddenly as does a dark cloud when a ray of sunlight flashes upon it. She bowed to him a little coldly, but greeted our other guests with more than usual effusion. His expression of delight turned instantly to one of chagrin; and, drawing haughtily back, he looked out of the window in moody silence. I, seeing that he was annoyed, and wishing all my guests to be at ease, very injudiciously asked him to take Madame Thévénot in to dinner. He did so, and they certainly seemed very well satisfied with the arrangement; for they laughed and talked with the freedom of two happy children. I think it was a pleasant dinner to all excepting myself; for there was one little incident that marred my enjoyment,—so little, that perhaps I should not mention it. Rhadi Effendi had filled a very delicate Venetian glass, and was raising it, with a compliment for Aglaé upon his lips, when suddenly it fell from his fingers, and shivered to atoms on his plate, spattering the wine right and left. His hands, as well as Raoul's, who sat next to him, were covered; and it looked like blood. There was something disagreeable in the sight; and I fairly turned cold when I saw a large splash crimson crimson Aglaé's white dress just over her heart. I suppose we were all too polite to show any confusion. M. Rhadi excused himself gracefully, while he wiped the wine from Aglaé's dress with his own handkerchief. Jean removed the plates, and served the next course as though nothing had happened; but I,—I could not keep my eyes off the red stain on Aglaé's dress. Besides, I felt very sorry for the loss of my glass, which had belonged to my dear uncle; and, it being the only Venetian glass I owned, I had placed it for M. Rhadi, as he was our most distinguished guest.

We took our coffee in the *salon*: the evening was very warm again, and the windows were open. Our guests were all

friends of long-standing except M. Rhadi and Aglaé. Some attraction seemed to draw them together, away from the others; and they stood side by side on the balcony, engaged in earnest conversation. I wish I were a poet, or an artist, so that I could describe them as they appeared to me at that moment. I am sure I have never seen any thing more lovely in art; but why should I? for is not nature always more beautiful than art? The dark trees in the *Champs-Élysées*, the clear sky, and the full moon, made a very pretty background for the white figure of Aglaé, who stood with her face turned towards us: as she leaned against the railing of the balcony, her fingers were idling with the leaves of an exquisite rose that had adorned the button-hole of M. Rhadi's coat a few moments before. Her eyes were cast down, until the long lashes almost rested on her slightly flushed cheeks, while a smile that spoke eloquently of entire contentment played around her mouth, and softened her face into almost childish beauty. Her companion leaned over her, a striking contrast to her fairness,—graceful, persuasive, elegant: his splendid eyes seemed to devour her face.

"What if they should love one another?" I whispered to Raoul.

"How can they help it?" he replied. I hoped he would say something more, for I was full of uneasiness; but just at that moment Madame Aubert began to sing, and of course we were silent.

That happy evening came to an end, as all happy evenings must. I often wonder why time seems so much shorter when we are happy. Without doubt happiness is only an emotion, the same as is sorrow; and I cannot understand why one should make the hours fly, and the other make them drag. I am no philosopher, neither am I the least clever in finding out reasons for things; yet I have thought much on this subject, and have come to a conclusion, which, after all, may not be the right one,—that sorrow is only selfishness; that, while we are unhappy, we are thinking of

ourselves; and that while we are happy, we are thinking of some one else. Aglaé did not know she had betrayed her secret, nor confirmed me in my simple theory, when she said afterward, "I never knew so short and so happy an evening in all my life before." It was as though she had said, "I thought only of M. Rhadi, and never of myself." Poor child! it was the beginning of a happiness that she had better never have known.

Well, to go on with my story: from that day, Rhadi Effendi became an almost constant visitor; and, as Aglaé was with me a great deal, she saw him very often. I believe I have not mentioned before, that her aunt, on account of a lameness, never left her room: therefore the poor girl was very much confined, not having an older person to go out with her. I call her a girl; for she still seemed so young, although she had made that marriage, which I, with my old-fashioned notions, could never think any thing but unfortunate. You cannot wonder, then, that my cheerful *salon*, and the charming society of Rhadi Effendi, was a most welcome distraction to her, when she had so little to amuse her: not because she could not receive in her own home; for being rich and young, as well as handsome, she could have surrounded herself with visitors, which would have been quite natural under the circumstances. Still, she often told me that she did not like general society; and that she did not encourage attention, because she did not wish for it. In that respect, she had a superior character, for, although she was so lovely, she was not in the least coquettish; and for that reason, I was certain that her evident liking for Rhadi Effendi was not a mere capricious fancy. Week after week passed away, until I began to count by months the time since their first meeting; and yet a word had never been said by either explanatory of their true feelings; still I saw, as plainly as two eyes can see, that M. Rhadi was deeply, passionately, devoted to Aglaé. Indeed, it did not need words; for every change in his expressive face told it

more clearly than the most eloquent language. His sudden clouds, his equally sudden smiles, his nervous restlessness when she was absent, his excited joy when she was present, were all first symptoms of his absorbing passion. Then succeeded strange abstractions, gloomy broodings, tender, almost tearful regards, a slavish devotion to her slightest wish, a watchfulness, a patience and gentleness, that were quite pathetic. He grew pale and thin; his eyes glowed under his contracted brows like smouldering fires; his mouth seemed drawn and sad, and sometimes I fancied his white teeth looked almost cruel, until he smiled: there was something wonderful in his smile; it seemed to illuminate his whole face with a sort of divine light, driving away instantly every shadow that rested there. At other times he would be haughty, defiant, sceptical, scornful, almost brutal, in his remarks, until, suddenly, a strange expression would pass over his face; and he would clasp his hands, and cry out, "*Mon Dieu!* I hate myself!" then, rushing impetuously from the room, he would leave Aglaé and I looking at each other in astonishment. Often she would say with a sigh, "I almost fear him: in these moods he seems possessed with a demon; and yet how sweet and gentle he is at other times! Ah me! how will this end?"

I had often asked myself the same question, therefore I was unable to answer hers; and perhaps I was even more perplexed than she with it all. Because I was not blinded by love, I saw more plainly the danger, and yet could discover no way to avert what had already arrived. Aglaé too, about this time, was most uncertain in her behavior. For several days in succession she would be feverishly gay; and this unnatural frivolity was sure to be followed by a period of gravity that was almost solemnity; when she would go about like one smitten with a heavy grief, absorbed in her own serious thoughts, from which all my little devices were powerless to arouse her. Again she would be as fretful and capricious as a child, weeping

sullenly, and refusing all my efforts to console her. I pitied them both, and waited patiently, hoping that she, at least, would voluntarily make me a confidant of her feelings. The time came at last. One afternoon Rhadi had been sitting with us. He had brought a volume of poems written by Jami, a Persian poet of the fourteenth century; and, to give us some idea of the literature of his country, he had read one aloud, in his own musical and majestic language; and afterwards had gracefully translated it, — so gracefully, that I think it did not lose any of the beauty of the sentiment, which was a regret for a lost love; not a dead love, but a living lost love, which to me is the most pitiful of all losses. The harmony, glowing color, passion, and pathos of the complaint softened my feelings, so that I, unsentimental as I am, almost wept, while the tears rolled slowly over poor Aglaé's face. She had grown suddenly pale, — paler than I had ever seen her. Rhadi did not notice her emotion; for before he had finished the poem, she had regained her usual composure: and when he closed the book, she told him with a smile, that he had read it so exquisitely as to make her forever in love with Persian poetry. He bowed low, with his hand on his heart, and went away directly, more silent and grave than ever. When he had gone, suddenly — so suddenly that it startled me — she clasped my neck, and cried out in a voice I shall never forget, "I love him, I love him! and in that poem he has read his fate and mine."

"But why," I asked, trying to soothe her, "why his fate and yours? You are both free, you love him, and there can be no doubt of his love for you: then, what cause is there for unhappiness?"

"It is because he loves me," she said between her sobs, "that we must part. I cannot marry him: every thing is against it. My position, his religion, his very nature; for I fear him as much as I love him. No, no: I would not dare to become his wife, for I should only be his slave; and I cannot sacrifice the liberty that I

have bought at such a price. It is impossible: we can never marry, and Platonic love will not satisfy such a nature as his. I must be all to him or nothing. I have known it for some time, and I have suffered so much; and yet I have no strength to deny myself the dangerous pleasure of seeing him."

Before giving her any counsel, I tried to calm her; for she was very much excited, and very wretched at the dismal thought of giving him up forever. I must confess that I did not see the necessity of it; for I believe that love should overcome every obstacle, and make every sacrifice, to attain its end: this I told her as clearly as I could, at the same time advising her to listen entirely to the dictates of her own heart and conscience, instead of the promptings of worldly interest. Before I had said half to her that I wished to say, a visitor was announced; and she left me, and went down to her own room. In the evening I went to her, and was told by her maid that she had gone to bed with a severe headache. I did not disturb her, but sat alone all the evening, thinking sadly of both; and perhaps I felt more pity for Rhadi than for her: for to me her conduct seemed inexplicable, if not selfish. If Raoul had only been there, that I could have talked it over with him, I should have felt better; but as it was, I went to bed with a very heavy heart.

The next day M. Rhadi came; and, not finding Aglaé with me, he went down to ask after her health. He came back almost directly; and, throwing himself into a chair, he said with a heavy sigh, "She is ill, confined to her room. I could not see her, and she did not even send me a kind message. She might have sent me a kind word: I know nothing at all of what this means." He spoke impatiently, and there was an ugly shadow on his face which I did not like to see there. I had grown to love him dearly: he seemed like a brother to me. There was so much sweetness and frankness in his nature, in spite of its mystery and contradic-

tion, that no one could be indifferent to him; and, besides, Raoul loved him. I watched him some time, while he sat with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the floor, wondering what was passing in his soul, when suddenly he started like one aroused from a dream, and cried out in the same way as Aglaé had done the day before, "I love her, I love her!" Then, covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears, and wept so passionately that I was frightened as well as surprised. Ah, me! I can see him now sitting there, his pride completely crushed, his handsome head bowed, and the great tears falling in drops between his fingers. I never saw Raoul weep; and I am thankful I never did, for the thought of it would break my heart now. I loved poor Rhadi too well to see him so distressed without trying to comfort him, and in that way I became his confidant also. During an earnest conversation of more than an hour, he told me of all his struggles and anxieties, — how he had loved Aglaé, from the first moment that he had seen her, with the only love of his life, — a life that had been any thing but happy. He spoke sadly and briefly of his father's death, his lonely, neglected childhood, his conflicts with destiny, that seemed at first all against him, his efforts to gain the position that he had at last secured through the kindness of the ambassador, who had been like a father to him, and to whom he owed every thing. "At first," he said, "although I knew I loved Madame Thévénot, I could not decide to ask her to become my wife, because such a step would be ruin to my future prospects; and I had not the strength and courage to resign all for love, even to the affection and patronage of my pasha, who wishes to marry his only daughter to me, as soon as she is of age, and in that way to strengthen the bond of interest already established between us. I love him; I owe him every duty: he will be deeply, and perhaps justly, indignant at my ingratitude, and will cast me off without the least hope of reconciliation; yet I have decided to endure it all for her

love, to resign for her an honorable and brilliant future, an alliance with the daughter of one of the most powerful princes in the Ottoman Empire, and, more than all, the love and confidence of the man who has been a father to me. Now you can understand a little what this decision has cost me, — what a strife there has been between my heart, my duty, and my worldly interests: my nights have been sleepless, my days a torture. I have been torn to pieces by conflicting feelings. The honor and wealth that has been my lifelong desire, on one hand; her love, her beauty, her goodness, on the other. Ah, dear madame! how could I decide but in favor of my own heart, my own life, and happiness? and hers also; for she loves me, — am I not right?"

He stopped speaking, and looked at me anxiously, while he wiped his forehead; for he had told his story with so much feeling, so earnestly and so rapidly, that great drops of sweat had gathered like rain on his face. I pitied him beyond expression: he seemed almost exhausted with his mental conflict, and I knew it was not over; for I remembered my conversation with Aglaé the day before, and saw that an obstacle, perhaps more serious than any, was still to be overcome. I admired him for his noble sacrifice, and in my heart I blamed her for what seemed to me only selfishness; yet I was sure she loved him. So what could I say other than to give him that assurance? As he went away, after a little more conversation, he said, "To-morrow I shall come to know my fate. I can sacrifice every thing for her; but does she love me with the same devotion?"

I could not answer; and so I said nothing, but pressed his hand encouragingly.

The next day Aglaé came up looking pale and very sad; and I thought I detected an expression of firm resolve around her mouth that did not predict a favorable reception of Rhadi Effendi if he came. She did not speak of him; neither did she refer to the conversation of the day before, but

talked absently on indifferent subjects. We heard the bell. She turned dreadfully pale, and looked around as though she would like to escape; but at the moment Margot announced M. Rhadi Effendi. He entered with a grave almost stern face, more elegant in his dress than ever, and it seemed to me more refined in every way, even to the faultless linen, pale gray gloves, and faint Oriental perfume which always betrayed his presence. (To-day, while looking over a desk of Aglaé's, I came upon a package wrapped in Turkish paper which emitted that same perfume. I will not interrupt my story to speak of its contents now: later, when all is finished, I will tell you why I wept over it, and then laid it away reverently.) I welcomed him warmly, but I think my face was not free from anxiety; and Aglaé half rose up, extended her hand a little fearfully and coldly, and then sank back into her chair without a word.

After the usual commonplace remarks, M. Rhadi turned to her, and said, very slowly and seriously, "Madame, I have something to say to you of the greatest importance. It must be said to-day. Will you do me the favor to hear it?" She bowed slightly in reply to his question; and he went on, in the same formal way, to make his explanation. "As I came up, I stopped at your door: your maid told me that you were here. Will you do me the favor to descend? or will you allow me to speak in the presence of madame, if she will kindly permit it?"

I did not wish to be present at a moment so trying to both: therefore I arose to leave the room, when Aglaé seized my hand, and said in a voice that betrayed much uneasiness, "Remain, remain! What can M. Rhadi have to say that you cannot hear? Whatever it be, I prefer that you should hear it."

That was how I came to be a witness of the interview that decided their whole destiny. It makes me tremble even now to think of it. Ah! if I had had the power to arrest the fatal words that destroyed their happiness forever; but, if it had been given me, would I have dared to use it? Per-

haps not; for I could not have been sure that I should have saved her: one knows so little of what is for the best.

Rhadi looked at Aglaé earnestly, flushing and paling while she spoke; and when she said to me, "I prefer that you should hear it," he exclaimed impetuously, "Madame has already heard it. I have told her of my love for you, my adoration, my consuming passion. It is useless to repeat it to you who already know it. I only wish to ask you whether you love me in return, and whether you are willing to become my wife at once."

Aglaé turned very pale, and I put my arm around her, thinking that she was about to faint; but, after a little trembling, she recovered her composure, and said firmly, "I love you: you must have known it for some time."

Before she had fairly finished the sentence, he sprang toward her with such an expression of joy as I had never before seen on any face; and, clasping her hands, he pressed them over and over to his lips, calling her his angel, his soul, his life, in tones that must have gone deep into her heart.

She looked at him with a warm, sweet smile,—a smile that seemed to transfigure her into a divine loveliness, but only for an instant; then a cold, hard stillness settled over her face. Struggling to withdraw her hands, she said rapidly, "Yes, yes, I love you: God knows I love you! my aching heart tells me I love you! but it is of no use to repeat it; for I can never, never be your wife."

Suddenly, as suddenly as though he had been smitten helpless, he let her hands fall, and started away from her with such a look as I can imagine Lucifer casting at the angel who hurled him from the battlements of heaven. It was terrible. I was trembling with fear; and Aglaé cowered under it as though it were a scorching blast. At length he spoke, but his voice was so changed that I should never have known it for his. "Is your decision irrevocable, madame?"

"It is," replied Aglaé in a scarcely articulate voice.

"I will ask for no reasons: it is enough that there are reasons. Pardon me for having troubled you: I will trouble you no more," and, bowing almost to the floor, he turned to leave the room.

I could not endure to have him leave Aglaé without any further explanation: so I laid my hand upon his arm, and said gently, "Do not go away angry: there is much to be said yet, much to soften the bitterness of this moment."

"No, no: nothing can soften it. I am not a child to be soothed with sweet words: there is nothing to be said. Allow me to go in peace."

"Listen to me," implored Aglaé, taking his hand and pressing it to her tear-wet face; "listen to me, Rhadi. Do not leave me in anger; do not condemn me unheard! I love you, — you know I love you!"

A scornful, sceptical smile flickered over his face, while he said coldly and cruelly, "No more, no more falsehood, I entreat, unhappy woman. Do not attempt to play a farce. I understand you too well: you cannot impose your follies upon me." Aglaé drew away, frightened by his violence, while he continued, more fiercely than before: "I have heard your profession of love; but something within me refuses to believe you. You swear you love me; you are free: and yet you will not become my wife, ha, ha!" his sharp, mocking laugh thrilled me through and through; and his teeth gleamed like an angry tiger. "I must confess I am more surprised at your folly than at your wickedness, if you think you can impose a caprice upon me, and make me believe it to be love. Be truthful, and say that your heart is of very little value; that one can easily touch its depths; that, when you have won your victim, you weary of him and desire another; that you bestow your preference on the first who comes, and withdraw it as easily; that you amuse yourself by deluding the confident, — in short, that you are a heartless coquette, and not the exceptional woman I thought you to be. Say any, or all, of these things; but do not

profane love by giving its name to your vanity."

"*Mon Dieu!*" I cried, aroused to indignation at his injustice and cruelty to Aglaé, who had fallen on the floor, almost at his feet, with raised hands, as if to ward off a heavy blow. "Remember to whom you are speaking; brutality is useless; your taunts and insults are misplaced: unhappily she loves you too much to defend herself with the same weapons. You will not listen to her explanation; there are obstacles" —

"Oh, yes, there are obstacles!" he interrupted passionately; "but what are obstacles when one loves? I tell you they are nothing. Have I not overcome the greatest? You know what I have put under my feet, and yet you talk coldly of obstacles. I am disappointed, — bitterly disappointed; my heart is bleeding, my head is troubled. Say no more. In pity allow me to go, that I may recover myself. I shall strive to be a man. I shall live; I shall eat and drink and laugh; but there will be a frightful void here;" and he laid his hand on his heart, while he smiled a ghastly, unnatural smile.

I did not like him then — no, I absolutely feared him; for in that moment he looked like a man capable of any thing; and I did not wish to see Aglaé abase herself to no purpose; so, whispering to her, I bade her rise, but she seemed neither to hear nor to heed me; there was a dreadful grief in her face, a longing and a fear in her eyes that I could not understand.

"You will not leave me forever," she sobbed at length. "O Rhadi! have pity: I suffer more than you. Come to me when you are calmer, and I will explain all."

"There can be no explanation," he interrupted harshly. "A word from you would have made me happy, — only a word: I asked no more. A thousand now can be of no avail. The wound is here in my heart, nothing but death can cure it. I love you. I shall never see you again: adieu!" And before either Aglaé or I could say another

word, he rushed from the room, leaving us in blank dismay.

For a moment there was silence; and then Aglaé laid her hand on mine, and said calmly, "I told you he was cruel,—do you remember,—cruel as a Turk. I said it after I had seen him for the first time. I knew it was his nature; still I did not think he could be cruel to me, and accuse me so unjustly. But he has betrayed his true character, and I fear him more than ever. It is over: he has gone; and now all that remains for me is to forget that I have ever seen him, to banish him from my heart entirely. But how? but how?" then her unnatural calm breaking down before a flood of memories, she sank into a chair, and sobbed bitterly.

I tried to comfort her by telling her that perhaps when he was calmer he would return, and that matters could be arranged, with a better feeling on both sides. Still, like a foolish woman, I added, "I wish you had never seen him."

"It is too late now," she said, with a wan smile; and then she fell a-weeping again, at the thought of all the happy hours that she had passed with him, hours which she well knew could never be restored to her as beautiful as they had been, with the freshness, the romance, the confidence, the grace, of a first love.

I cannot tell you in detail of the sorrowful days that followed this sudden and painful parting,—of the feverish, restless days when Aglaé wandered about from room to room, like an uneasy spirit, pale, silent, and tearless. Sometimes she would sit absorbed in long reveries from which I could only arouse her by suddenly pronouncing the name of Rhadi. Again she would lie for hours on the sofa in my room, her eyes closed, her hands clasped over her heart, while from time to time she uttered a sharp moan that seemed to come from the very depths of her suffering soul; or she would talk calmly, but in a pitiful, 'plaining voice, of the scenes in which Rhadi had been an actor with her. Recounting minutely each little event, dwelling fondly on every evi-

dence of his love, she would say, "Do you remember when he said this? or did that? Have you forgotten the evening when we sat and watched the moon rise behind the trees in the *Champs-Élysées*; how he said he would rather look at me than at the moon? Ah! his flattery was too sweet to me. I knew he was proud and sensitive; but I thought him so tender, so very tender. How quickly he would detect the slightest shadow on my face, the faintest change in my voice! How careful he was of my health! He feared the winds of heaven would touch me too roughly. He said often he envied the sunlight that caressed my hair, the earth under my feet. Every thing I touched seemed sacred to him. How often I had smiled at detecting him in the act of concealing some worthless thing that I had cast aside! A withered flower, a faded ribbon, a torn glove, a shred of silk from my embroidery, were all precious to him. What devotion, what care, what sweet and graceful attention! How can I live without him? how can I live to know that I have lost him forever?"

She seemed to have no thought beyond the time in which he had loved her; those few months comprised her life: before she had known him she had only half lived; after she lost him she seemed like a body without a soul, a pale shadow, a dead leaf driven by the restless wind of passion. "I am nothing," she would say, when I begged her to take some interest in life: "all is over for me; I have no aim, no desire, no hope." She never left the house: any society, save mine, seemed hateful to her; the noise of the streets worried her beyond endurance, the glare of the sunlight made her shiver. She wept freely at a glimpse of the sky, beautiful with moon and stars; the perfumes of the flowers they had loved and worn turned her pale and faint; music affected her to such a degree that I dared not touch my piano, or sing one note of a familiar song when she was present. Although she did not speak of it, I knew she was constantly expecting something; for, whenever the bell sounded, she would start

up with parted lips and eager eyes, only to sink back with a heavy sigh of disappointment. Nearly a month passed away in this state of mingled expectation and despair. In the morning she would say, "Perhaps to-day I shall see him, or hear from him." At night she would sob and moan, "I shall see him no more: he is gone forever."

Noticing her looked very ill one day, I questioned her about her heavy eyes, flushed cheeks, and languid movements; and she confessed that she did not sleep; that she had not slept since that dreadful day, only at short and rare intervals; that a fever was consuming her, a weakness gaining upon her to which she felt that she must soon succumb. At times the old pride and selfishness would flame up for a moment, and she would cry out regretfully, "I am insane to think of him! I am worse; I am a poor, feeble creature to suffer for one so cruel and severe. Is it not better to be free? I am free; and that should suffice." At other times, especially when she lay alone in the long spring twilight,—for it was spring again, and nearly a year since Raoul's birthday dinner,—she would sigh, and murmur as though she feared to have me hear her confession, "I am so tired! I am so wretched! If tears and prayers could give me back his love, I would go on my knees at his feet; but he is cruel and unrelenting: he does not love me now; for, if he loved me, he would not leave me to die. I am so young to die! I have no desire for death; and yet I cannot live without him."

I had written to Raoul, begging him to come home as early in the month as possible; for I thought that perhaps his presence might divert her a little from her sorrow. He came as soon as he could obtain leave, and was more shocked than was I at the change in Aglaé. "She will die," he said, over and over, "unless a reconciliation can be arranged. She is foolish, and more,—she is to blame for her selfishness. If she loves him so, why does she not renounce all, and become his wife? I

must confess I do not understand such a love."

"Neither do I," I remarked, thinking how easily I could make any sacrifice for Raoul.

"And, Rhadi, it seems so unlike him: I thought him all gentleness. Why, he was as tender as a woman to Victor."

"His pride is wounded, his confidence abused, and he has an unforgiving nature; besides, he does not believe in a love that is not entire abnegation," I said; for I liked him still so well that I could make excuses for him. "I pity Aglaé as much as I blame her; and I am sure, if he knew she was ill and suffering, his feelings would soften, and all might yet be well."

"It is unaccountable," continued Raoul, after a few moments of thought, "such an entire separation between two people who love each other to distraction, and for no cause that I can see. I will go this very moment, and talk Rhadi into reason; and you, *chérie*, bring Aglaé to her senses; for she must be a little insane to let trifles keep her from a man she is dying for." He took his hat, and went out, singing cheerfully, "*La Donna e Mobile*." Dear soul! he thought he could arrange it all so easily, and make them both happy by his mediation.

Before I had time to go down to Aglaé, he came in more sadly than he had gone out, saying with an air of great dissatisfaction, "I went to the Embassy to find Rhadi; and Rustan Effendi tells me that he is at Ems, taking the waters for his health."

"What! is he ill?" I cried in surprise. "It appears so; although no one seems to know what has happened, yet all speak of the frightful and sudden change in his appearance."

"When will he return?" "I could not learn. They have heard nothing from him. He does not write, although his friend has asked for news of his health. All seem surprised, and say that he has turned into a savage within a month."

I thought it best to tell Aglaé of what

Raoul had learned respecting Rhadi; so that she should not be worried any longer with constant expectation and disappointment. Strange to say, it seemed some consolation to her to know that he was ill; for from that moment she seemed to rally from her utter despondency, so much so as to give us the hope that with time she might overcome her unhappy passion. For myself another and a more intimate sorrow filled my heart. One day Raoul came in all excited. It was the day of his *fête*; and he told me that trouble was brewing between France and Prussia, — trouble of a serious nature, which would end in war. During the same evening the little scene occurred of which I have spoken before, when the *Marseillaise* was sung, and I was so base as to wish him to resign his commission. Thank God! that he did not listen to my shameful request; for to-day, instead of being his widow, I might be the wife of a coward, and a traitor to his country. Our dinner that day was a very different affair from that of a year before. We had a few friends, but it passed off easily enough; for all were pre-occupied with their own fears and anxieties, and all foresaw dark and sorrowful days for our poor country. Ah, me! out of the eight officers who dined with us on Raoul's thirty-second birthday, there are but two left; and one of them lost an arm at Sarrbrück, and the other is blind from a shot at Mars-la-tour. Nothing would induce Aglaé to make one of our party on that day. "No, no," she said: "it will remind me of too much; and I cannot expose my folly to strangers." After dinner I went down to her for a moment. It was almost such an evening as that of a year before, very warm and pleasant; but she lay wrapped in a heavy shawl, weeping, with a faded rose crushed in her fingers.

As I told you before, Raoul went back to his regiment next morning, and I was left alone with nothing but Aglaé's sorrow and my own anxious thoughts for company. Every day the political horizon became more clouded, and the warm summer air

was heavy with ominous shadows. People talked of nothing but war; bands of red-capped revolutionists filled the streets, and the *Marseillaise* was shouted in every key, from the shrill treble of childhood to the croaking bass of age. I knew the time was drawing near when my sacrifice would be required of me; and my soul ached within me. Still I made no complaint; for I had promised him to be brave and strong, and I did not mean that he should find me weaker than my word.

Aglaé was in my room one day, when Margot brought in the journal; and among the items I was reading aloud, I chanced to stumble upon the name of Rhadi Effendi. It was a brief notice that he had resigned his position in the ambassador's *suite*, and was then taking the waters of Ems in order to re-establish his health before entering upon his duties as secretary to the minister of foreign affairs at Constantinople. I expected Aglaé would make some exclamation before I finished, but she did not; and the only sign of emotion she showed was a sudden and death-like pallor, which never left her from that day. It seems to me, that, although she lived for so long after, she was struck with death then. It was certainly death to whatever hope she might have had; and she was not the one to live, as another could, when there was nothing to live for.

"You are very calm," I said a few moments after.

"It is not calmness," she answered, "it is despair."

The next day she did not leave her bed, nor for many days after; and I was wearied and worn beyond expression, not only with watching, but with my anxieties about Raoul, from whom I could not bear to be separated at that moment.

On the 15th day of July, a day that France will never forget, I went alone into the *Champs-Élysées* for a little rest and a breath of fresh air. Walking slowly and languidly toward one of the most retired spots, — it was the place where, one sweet night a year before, we had watched the moon rise be-

hind the trees, — I came suddenly upon Rhadi Effendi sitting on one of the chairs, his arms folded, his head bent, and his eyes fixed upon a cluster of scarlet *azillets* that blossomed at his feet. The change in him was so terrible that it almost startled me into an exclamation. He looked twenty years older. His face was of a gray pallor, his eyes sunken and lustreless, his mouth drawn and sorrowful, and his whole appearance that of one who had been well-nigh killed in a terrible conflict. So lost was he in thought, that he did not see me until I stood before him and said, "*Mon ami*, I am glad to find you here."

He started from his seat with trembling eagerness; and something of his old smile came to his lips as he seized my hands, and pressed them in his with a convulsive clasp.

I took his chair; and he drew another to my side, saying, "I scarcely know whether to remain or to go."

"You must remain," I said firmly. "I have something to say to you."

"For the love of God, spare me," he cried, covering his face with his hands.

"I cannot," I replied, urged to speak by the thought of Aglaé's pale face. "You must listen to me calmly, Rhadi. Aglaé is very ill; she cannot live long; she is dying for a sight of you."

His hands fell from his face, and a spasm of pain contracted every feature; but he said coldly, "If Madame Thévénôt is ill, she must find some other cure. I cannot see her to save her from a dozen deaths."

The cruel, almost brutal reply shocked and disgusted me; and, not knowing what I said, I poured out all the strength of my indignation upon him. He listened, smiling haughtily from time to time; but he never interrupted me until I said, "You are cruel; it is your nature to be cruel. It is a saying, 'Cruel as a Turk:' you are a Turk, and you are more cruel than any other of your nation."

I had scarcely finished these harsh words, before I regretted having said them; for such an expression of anguish passed over

his face that it almost made me weep before him.

"O madame, madame! be just in your anger. Who has been cruel? Who is cruel? Am I cruel because I will not plunge myself in the flames after having been once almost consumed? Of what use to see her? She cannot save me from torment and despair. Is it just to ask me to increase my misery to soften hers? I offered her all a man has to give, — my heart, my soul, my life: she refused them; and, from that moment, something was broken within me which is as irreparable as death. I am hopelessly ruined: there is nothing to be done, nothing to be said. There is no healing such a wound. She must bear her suffering as I bear mine, while waiting for death to end it."

"Then a reconciliation is hopeless?" I asked fearfully.

"As hopeless as despair. In a few days I leave Paris forever."

"I thought you had already gone. Aglaé thought you had gone; and since she has failed rapidly."

"I had left, not intending to return; but something brought me back: perhaps it was a desire to see this spot again. I regret the fate that led you here at this moment; for dearly as I love you, deeply as I reverence you, I would rather have suffered tortures than to have seen you. Ah, my God! If I could separate you from her, I might still have a friend; but I cannot. You both are so connected in my memory, that I cannot think of you without thinking of her. I cannot see you without seeing her. Forgive me if I am harsh and brutal: I am made so by pain. Do not try to attach me again to you, — try rather to forget me. Adieu! adieu!" And taking my hands in a tight clasp he pressed them to his lips, and wet them with the tears that covered his face. I never saw such tears: they fell from his eyes like the great drops of a summer rain. Poor Rhadi! my heart ached for him, yet I could say nothing to comfort him: his passionate defence had silenced me. He made a convulsive effort at self-

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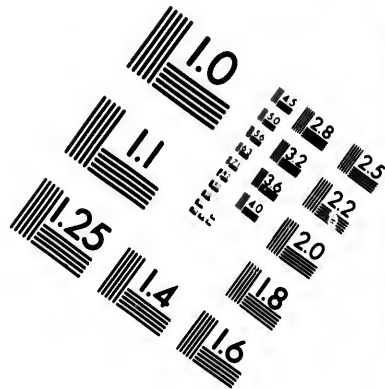
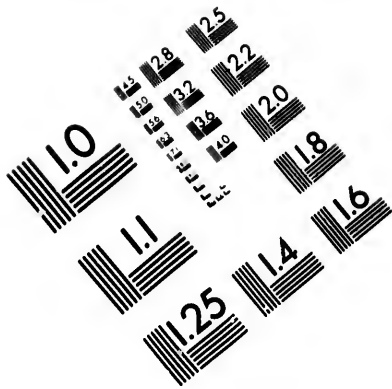
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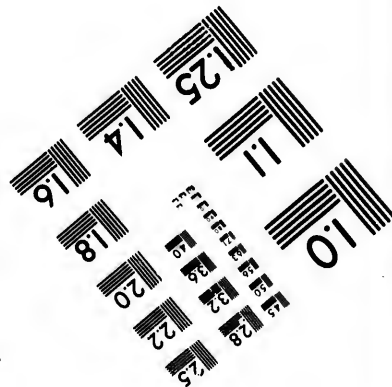
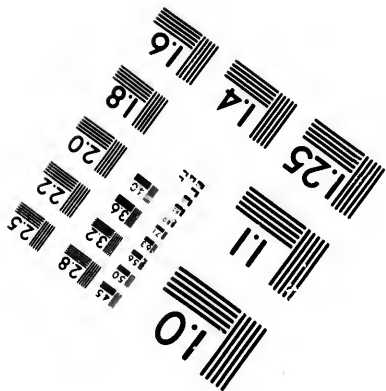
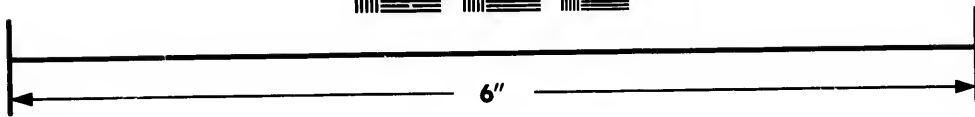
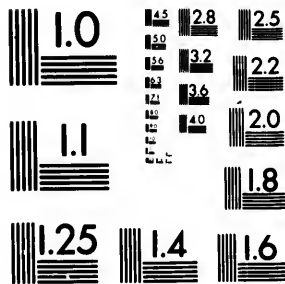
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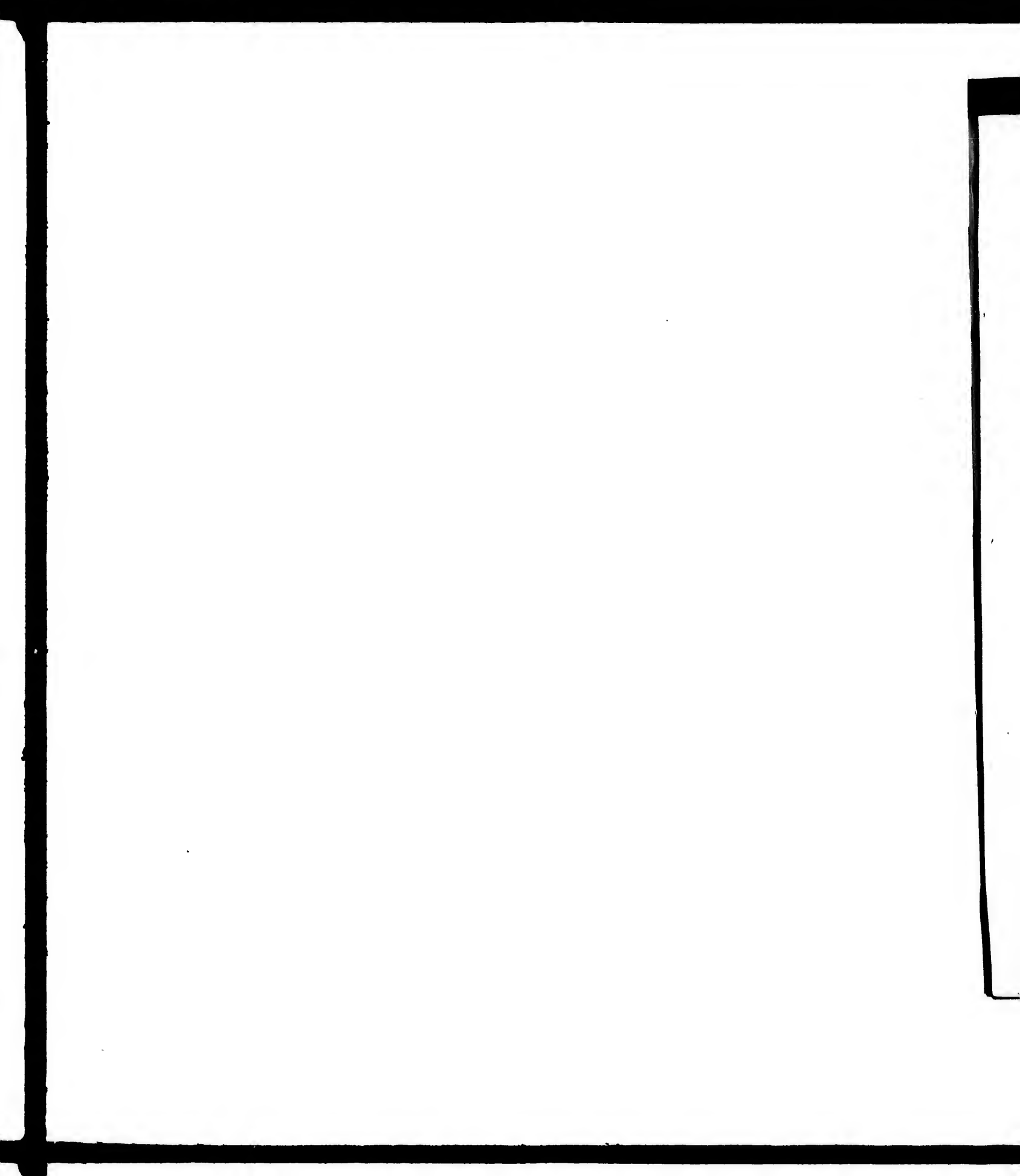
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control, dashed the tears from his face, gave his mustache a savage twist, and, bowing low with a forced and haggard smile, he left me, as I thought, forever, and walked down the flower-bordered path with his usual proud, firm step.

I sat there in deep thought until the lengthening shadows warned me that night was drawing near; then, unmindful of the signs of some unusual event, I drew my veil over my face, and turned sadly toward home. Two officers were just in advance of me; and their loud voices and half-frantic gesticulations attracted my attention. I listened to their words, and heard, "At the last he was unwilling; but the Chamber forced him to make the declaration. Now we will march straight to Berlin." Then I knew war was declared, and what I had feared was actually come. I felt cold and faint, and scarcely had strength to reach my room. When there, I closed my door, and prayed as I never had prayed before, all the while struggling with my tears and my own weak heart. At last I arose from my knees calm. My trouble was lifted from me like a great cloud that dissolved and drifted away, mingling with the other prayers that went up to God that night from the anxious heart of a nation.

In a little while I went down to Aglaé; but I did not think it best to tell her of my meeting with Rhadi Effendi. She was very weak and nervous, and I knew she had no strength to lose in useless excitement. I did not even like to startle her with what I had heard; but knowing that she must learn it soon, I said as calmly as I could, "*Chérie*, my trouble is coming. War is declared. Raoul will go, and I shall lose him."

She did not speak, but put her arms round my neck, and we wept silently together.

That same evening I wrote a long letter to my poor darling, often turning my head, that the tears might not fall upon the paper. I tried to write hopefully and encouragingly. I knew that he did not wish for war; but I also knew that when he saw it was inevitable he would be among the

first to give his life for our France. I poured out my whole soul in that letter. I emptied my heart into his: I told him how good and patient I should be, no matter what happened. I am sure it would have soothed his poor heart, which must have ached terribly at that moment: but I have no reason to think that he ever received it; for, before it could have reached him, his regiment was already *en route* for the frontier, and the first news I had of it was from a few hurried lines written an hour before he left. It was the last letter I ever received penned by his hand; for he was wounded in the arm, during a skirmish at Gersweiler, which prevented him from using his pen. Still from time to time I had news from him written by one of his officers. He was earnest, active, courageous; always at the head of his men in spite of his wound, which must have tormented him constantly. I never had one moment of peace, I never had a night of sleep, after I knew he had been wounded again through the shoulder at the terrible battle of Gravelotte, where the French stood their ground and died, and the Prussians stood their ground and died, both by hundreds; and he never flinched nor failed, until, fainting from loss of blood, he fell from his horse, and was dragged to the rear by one of his faithful soldiers. O my God! and I not there. How long he lay ill, I never knew. When I heard from him again, he was still fighting, although his right arm was useless, beside General de Wimpffen at Sedan. I did not learn, until months after, how my Raoul died. I knew he was killed at Sedan, and I never doubted that he died bravely; but I never knew how bravely until an officer who had survived that dreadful day said, "Ah, madame, your husband was a hero! It was he who followed General de Wimpffen when he rallied his forlorn hope, and rode out of the burning town against the serried ranks of the enemy, although he knew that he rode into the jaws of death. I shall never forget him, as he looked back at me and smiled just before a volley of Prussian balls: he smiled bravely, but his eyes were full of tears. I

never saw him again: he was swept away in that horrible tempest of shot, blood, and despair."

Oh, my husband! I loved him as well as any woman ever loved. I loved him so well, that I would have suffered a thousand deaths to have saved him from one. I loved him so well, that life is one long night without him; and yet I would not have saved him from so glorious a triumph. Thank God! that when he fell into the hands of the Prussians he was not their prisoner, as too many of our soldiers were. No: his brave, sweet soul was free forever.

During the terrible days that followed, God and Aglaé were my only consolations. His pitying love sustained me; and she forgot her own sorrow to comfort me. Day after day, night after night, while the siege guns rolled out their ominous warnings, we sat together before the scanty fire in our desolate house, where our only guests were cold and hunger. Aglaé might have left Paris before the gates were closed; but nothing would induce her to leave her aunt, whose lameness confined her to her bed, and whose weakness was so great that the least exertion might have been fatal to her. Besides, I think we were both too enfeebled by our troubles to make the necessary exertion for our safety. So, before we were aware of our dreadful position, we found ourselves shut up with thousands of others, to endure privations that have few parallels in the records of history. At first we did not believe, more than did others, that the siege could last so long; while fears of cold and hunger were the last anxieties that disturbed us. Still they came, slowly but surely; and there was a day toward the last of December, when we sat and looked hopelessly, each into the face of the other, so cold, so faint and weary, that life seemed to hang by a very feeble thread. Poor Margot, as well as Aglaé's servant, remained faithful almost to the last; going each day for their scanty rations, which they divided generously with us and the feeble old lady who was

dying for nourishing food. For ourselves, Aglaé and I, at first we did not care to eat meat; we were quite satisfied with rice and the little bread we could get: but at last nature asserted itself, and our empty stomachs craved animal food incessantly. I grew very selfish, being so hungry; and I am ashamed to confess it, I sometimes ate the little morsels that belonged to Aglaé, with the eagerness of a starving dog.

One morning Margot came in weeping bitterly, her cap and gown torn, her face scratched and bleeding, and her whole appearance most deplorable. As soon as she could calm herself sufficiently to speak, she said, "O madame! if we all starve, I shall go no more to the *bureau* for our rations. The *canaille* set upon me, beat me, and drove me away, calling me a servant of the aristocrats. I thought they would murder me, before a guard came to my assistance. We must starve, for I cannot go again. O *Mon Dieu!* when will this end?"

"God only knows, Margot," I replied, with a sinking heart. "We have borne it so long, we will bear it still longer without complaining. I, for one, would rather die than surrender." Although I was so hungry that there seemed to be a tiger gnawing at my stomach, although Aglaé was growing more feeble each day, and the poor old aunt down stairs was literally dying for nourishment, yet I could not say that I was willing to take food from our enemies. Margot had returned with an empty basket; and all we had in the house between us and starvation was a little rice and chocolate, against which our stomachs revolted. There seemed to be nothing but death before us; and to that eventuality, I was resigned; but something within my poor weak frame resisted, fiercely, the very thought of surrender. So I looked at Aglaé as encouragingly as I could, and said, "We will die together, darling, and it will not be long before."

"No, it will not be long," she replied, in a tone of such patient resignation, that it touched my heart to the quick; and I wept more weakly than a stoic who had

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long," she replied, nt resignation, that the quick; and, I n a stoic who had

just resolved to die should weep. After a moment she said soothingly, "Let us be calm: bodily suffering is not so terrible. I have lived through greater pain: and I have one thing to be thankful for, that is, that Rhadi is not suffering with us; he is safe, and he will never know of our distress. And perhaps when he learns I am dead, he will forgive me, and think kindly of me." Then she burst into tears, and we wept passionately together. She had not spoken his name for a long while; neither had I, for my terrible anxieties and sorrows had driven him almost from my thoughts; still, I knew by that outburst, that death was a consolation she desired as much as I did. There would have been nothing dreadful in death then; but one cannot die of hunger while there is the least thing left to sustain life; and the rice and chocolate, which we could not resist, did that, much to our regret.

Aglaé's servant had gone with the ambulance corps; it was useless to remain and die with us; Margot was too weak and frightened to leave the house; our last resources, the rice and chocolate, were gone; and yet we could not die.

One morning, driven by the keenest pangs of hunger, I went down to the *porte*, which had not been opened for some days, thinking I might see a guard who would be willing to sell his rations for the last hundred francs we had in the house. As I approached the door, some one rang the bell: it was a strange sound then; and I undid the bolts with eager, trembling fingers, thinking always that relief had come.

Almost before I was visible, a hungry-looking man thrust a small basket into my hands, and, turning, ran swiftly toward the *Champs-Élysées*, without having said a word. I was so surprised, that, instead of opening the basket, I stood staring after the man, who I was sure joined some one standing behind a fountain on the *rond-point*. At that moment a faint odor of meat from the basket attracted my attention; and, tearing off the cover, I cried, "*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*" in a voice that

reached Aglaé and brought her hastily to the stairs. "Here is meat! here is meat!" and, scarcely knowing what I did, I tore off a mouthful of the raw horse-meat that lay on the top, and devoured it eagerly. Aglaé seized the basket, and explored its contents, crying and laughing like a child, while she enumerated them, — one-half of a chicken, a length of sausage, a box of sardines, a pot of beef extract, a slice of bacon, and the cut of horse-meat I still held tenderly in my hands. Ah, my God! these little things gave us life and hope. What treasures! what joy! We had wished to die: we had thought we could die rather than yield. But in that moment we did not see our bleeding country: we saw before us food; we were starving, and we thought only of eating. The poor old aunt found strength to take a large basin of the beef extract economically diluted, and a slice of the chicken, which she devoured, although she was so weak, with the eagerness of a hungry laborer. Margot made a delicious *ragoût* of the horse meat; and we feasted sumptuously, forgetting in our selfishness those who were starving around us. Neither did we question as to where it came from: we only knew we had it, and that was enough.

There was something in that process of slow starvation that hardened and brutalized the best. Can we, then, wonder that the degraded and ignorant became like savage animals during that dreadful ordeal?

We were so hungry that we were not prudent, and devoured almost in one day the food which must have cost a small fortune, besides no end of trouble, to procure; so in a little while we were suffering again, and worse than before, because of the sudden stimulant our systems had received from the quantity of meat we had eaten in so short a time. In the very depths of our distress another basket came from the same mysterious source; and although the meat was of the poorest quality, and the smallest quantity, we welcomed it as a salvation from the keenest suffering. I often thought the most foolish things in regard

to this timely aid. Every one was more or less superstitious then; and the feeling that the dear spirit of my Raoul interceded with God in my behalf, took the firmest possession of my mind; for from what other source could assistance come? who was there in that doomed city who cared whether we lived or died? and how was it possible at such a time for any one to procure more than enough for his own needs?

Three times life and hope came to us in this mysterious way; three times we were saved from the keenest anguish by this Angel of Mercy, and still it seemed that we were set apart for the sacrifice, with hundreds of others who fell uncomplainingly at that harvest of woe; for one morning Aglaé came up at dawn of day with wild eyes and drawn lips, crying in piercing tones, "Aunt is dead! she died alone, while I slept like a beast. She died from hunger; and I shall go insane, or die before night, if I do not have food." We had eaten nothing but a little bread for six days. Margot's hunger had overcome her fidelity, and she too had joined the ambulance corps; so we two women were alone in this great, desolate house with our dead. All I could do was to pray silently while I said, "Be patient, dear! perhaps God will send us something to-day." Then, crying like a sick child, I followed her down to the room of her aunt, who now lay so placid and smiling,—she who had hungered and suffered but a few moments before. Already she had eaten of the bread of life; and her shrunken old face was full of contentment and satisfaction. While I looked at her, something sublime entered my soul; and I felt how little are the ills of life when a moment of death can cure them forever. So I drew Aglaé to my heart, and sat down patiently beside the dead, waiting for the desired consoler, who refused to come to us. We were ready, we were willing; and yet we could not die. Then one of those dreadful spasms of hunger came upon me, and I started up with a new strength born of my pain; drawing Aglaé after me, I cried, "Come, we will go

into the streets, we will go to the *bureau*; the people will pity us; we are women; we are starving: let us go while we have strength."

"No, no," moaned Aglaé, clinging to the cold hand of her aunt. "I am too weak: let me die here in peace."

Our misery had stupefied us: we had sat all these hours by the dead woman, and had made no preparation for her burial.

"It is useless to refuse: you must go with me to find an undertaker," I said with determination; "we cannot leave the poor body unburied; let us make the effort. I am too miserable for fear; and we may as well die in the streets as to die here alone." She followed me reluctantly; and, wrapping ourselves in our thickest mantles, we crept out shivering into the desolate streets. The cold wind pierced us through; the wild-eyed men and women appalled us; but still we struggled on with other starving creatures toward the barrier that kept the frenzied crowd away from the *bureau*. I shall never forget the curses, the cries, the moans, of hundreds of poor beings whose endurance had reached the last limit. Death was written on the skeleton forms of the women, dogged determination on the sullen faces of the men. "We must surrender," I said at last, "or the Prussians will have only a city of dead for their conquest."

"My God, my God!" cried a poor wretch close in my ear, "two of my children have starved, and I shall lose my last if I cannot get a morsel of meat to-day." The crowd pressed closer and closer to the barrier; and, in spite of ourselves, Aglaé and I were carried on with the others, only to be driven back by the stern-faced guards. As the morsels of meat were passed out to those who were fortunate enough to be near, the sight of it seemed to infuriate those who could not reach it, as the smell of blood is said to affect wild animals. Howls, shrieks, yells, and groans arose from a hundred throats, and a hundred emaciated hands were stretched forth, some imploringly, some threateningly. Suddenly a voice that sounded like the shrill ring of a clar-

ion, shouted, "*En avant!*" A strange thrill went through me as I turned and saw, at the head of a frantic mob, the haggard face, wild eyes, and fierce white teeth of Rhadi Effendi. Before I was fully conscious of what I had seen, before I could express my astonishment, he had leaped the barrier, and seized the hamper from which an officer was dispensing the rations; then with a triumphant cry, and a wild bound, he sprang forward almost into the arms of Aglaé. A guard darted after him: there was a gleam of steel, followed by a red stream, a cry of pain, a deathly pallor; he looked around like a tiger at bay, the food he had risked his life to obtain fell from his relaxing hold, and he sank helpless into our outstretched arms. The confusion, the struggles, the shrieks, were appalling. A dozen guards surrounded us, and forced back the mass of human beings who were fighting frantically for possession of the hamper that had fallen in their midst. Aglaé never released her hold on Rhadi. She had forgotten her weakness and hunger; and her face was full of courage, as she said to an officer, "For the love of Christ, do not let him die!" Something in her voice touched the heart of the man: he ordered a stretcher, and they laid Rhadi on it. Aglaé held one cold hand and I the other, the guard surrounded us, the crowd fell back, and we turned toward the Avenue Montaigne. Ghastly forms carried by on stretchers were a common spectacle then, and attracted but little attention. Indeed, the sight of death was rather welcome than otherwise, because there remained one less to feed.

The night that followed seems to me now like a ghastly dream. The guards were full of pity for us, showing their sympathy by sending us a surgeon, an undertaker, and what food they could procure. Ah! how terrible was our condition when these were our greatest needs!

All through the night Aglaé held the unconscious form of Rhadi in her arms, and the blood from his wound stained the whiteness of her breast. I think hunger

and fear had turned her brain; for she did not seem to understand that he had been wounded, and was dying. She talked to him incoherently of the past, never speaking of the dreadful present. She smiled on him, she kissed his closed eyes and cold lips; she buried her face in his hair, and wet it with her tears; and then, seeing how motionless he was, she implored him to smile, to speak: but there was no smile, no speech; and yet he lived.

There was no fire on the hearth, there was but the faintest light in the solemn room. The winter wind screamed and moaned around the windows, making a fierce treble to the hoarse bass of the cannonade, as the bombardment was continued without intermission. The skies rained shot and shell. Famine and despair preyed upon the doomed city, while I sat there looking with dull anguish on the ghastly face of Rhadi, the insane gesticulations of Aglaé. Suddenly there started up before me, in pitiful contrast, a picture of that radiant night when they stood together on the balcony, she looking at the rose in her fingers, he looking at her, his brilliant face beaming with happiness; and my Raoul was near me, full of tenderness, cheerful and contented; the voices and laughter of our friends, the bright light, the soft summer air, the flowers, the music from the gardens below,—my God! my God! how all have changed! My husband dead, my France dying, my friends dying; no light, no fire, no hope! Was it the same world? was I the same woman who had loved, who had been loved, and who had been happy? There was no hunger gnawing at my heart then; and yet I wept, and wished that I were dead.

When the dawn came, pale with fear at the sight of death and despair, Rhadi raised his heavy lids, and, recognizing the face bending over him, he smiled that rare, sweet smile, that makes sunlight in my memory even now, and murmured softly, "My darling, my adored! am I with thee at last?" Then, as his mind cleared, a slight shade passed over his face, and he said, "I have

never left you; I have watched over you through all; I wished to suffer with you; I gave all to procure food for you; I tried by every means, every sacrifice, but at the last I failed. I knew you were starving, and the sight of the food maddened me. Ah! I remember: I leaped the barrier; I seized it for you; I held life for you in my hand; then something pierced me through the heart, and I fell; but it is over now; the siege is ended; we are no longer hungry; we are happy, my beloved, we are happy!"

Agl   pressed him tightly to her heart, and said over and over, "Yes, yes, we are happy: there is no hunger no pain; we are happy."

Then I heard him say, like one talking in sleep, "Cruel! she said I was cruel; and yet I have given my life. I loved her as a Turk loves, — once and forever; through pain, through death. How long the night has been! but now my sun shines, my glorious sun that shone upon my birth; and he will set no more. I see his light, and I am happy." After that all was silent. The guns had ceased their sullen roar; the wind had sunk to rest; and I slept, overcome by weakness and fatigue. When I awoke, the sun was shining into the room. It was high noon. Rhadi slept, but never to awaken. Agla   slept with her cheek pressed against his hair, and her awakening was terrible.

On the 23th of January, while all Paris, relieved by an armistice just signed and the prospect of speedy peace, buried the wounds in their hearts and the dead in their graves, I followed all that remained of Rhadi Effendi to the cemetery of *P  re-la-Chaise*. Can you wonder that I was a real mourner, as I thought of what had passed since the night when Raoul brought him to us, so handsome, so strong, so brilliant, so full of life and hope? The dull gray face, in the coffin, that I had looked upon for the last time, bore little resemblance to the expressive features that fairly dazzled me on that happy evening. He must have suffered terribly before death came to his relief; for his beautiful hair was almost

white, and his face was ploughed with lines. I think his poor heart was broken long before it was pierced with the cold steel of the brutal guard. It must have been a welcome stroke that healed the deeper wound, and gave him peace at last.

Although it has been nearly two years since Agla   awoke to find Rhadi dead in her arms, she has never left her room, never ceased to weep for him, never ceased to pray for the peace of his soul; until four days ago, the last prayer was said, the last tear wiped away, and the penitent, purified spirit went to join his. Only yesterday I saw her laid by his side, not far from the tomb of Abelard and H  loise; and, in spite of my sorrow, there went up from my heart a prayer of thanksgiving that her waiting was over, that they were united forever.

I am very lonely now she is gone: my rooms seem full of shadows and sighs. Already scarcely a trace remains of the terrible conflict through which we have passed: The trees, replanted, wave in the *Champs-  lys  es* the flowers blossom, the sun shines, the voice of strangers, mingled with the strains of gay music, are heard as of yore; only here and there stands a blackened ruin, a mutilated statue, a crumbling wall. The heedless passers, the triumphant conquerors, the careless strangers, do not see the graves in the green bosom of our country, nor the graves in the sad hearts that beat under the black robes of many mourners who go about the streets.

Outwardly with me nothing is changed. I still sit in my room that Raoul arranged for me, listening for a voice and a step that I shall hear no more. Strangers are moving already into Agla  's vacant apartment. They will eat and drink and laugh in the rooms where the poor old aunt starved, where Rhadi died, where Agla   mourned, and will know nothing of what has passed there. It is well that walls are mute, and can never tell what they have seen.

All that remains to me of the dear friend who shared my bitter sorrows is a small desk she put into my hands an hour before she died. It contains a miniature painted

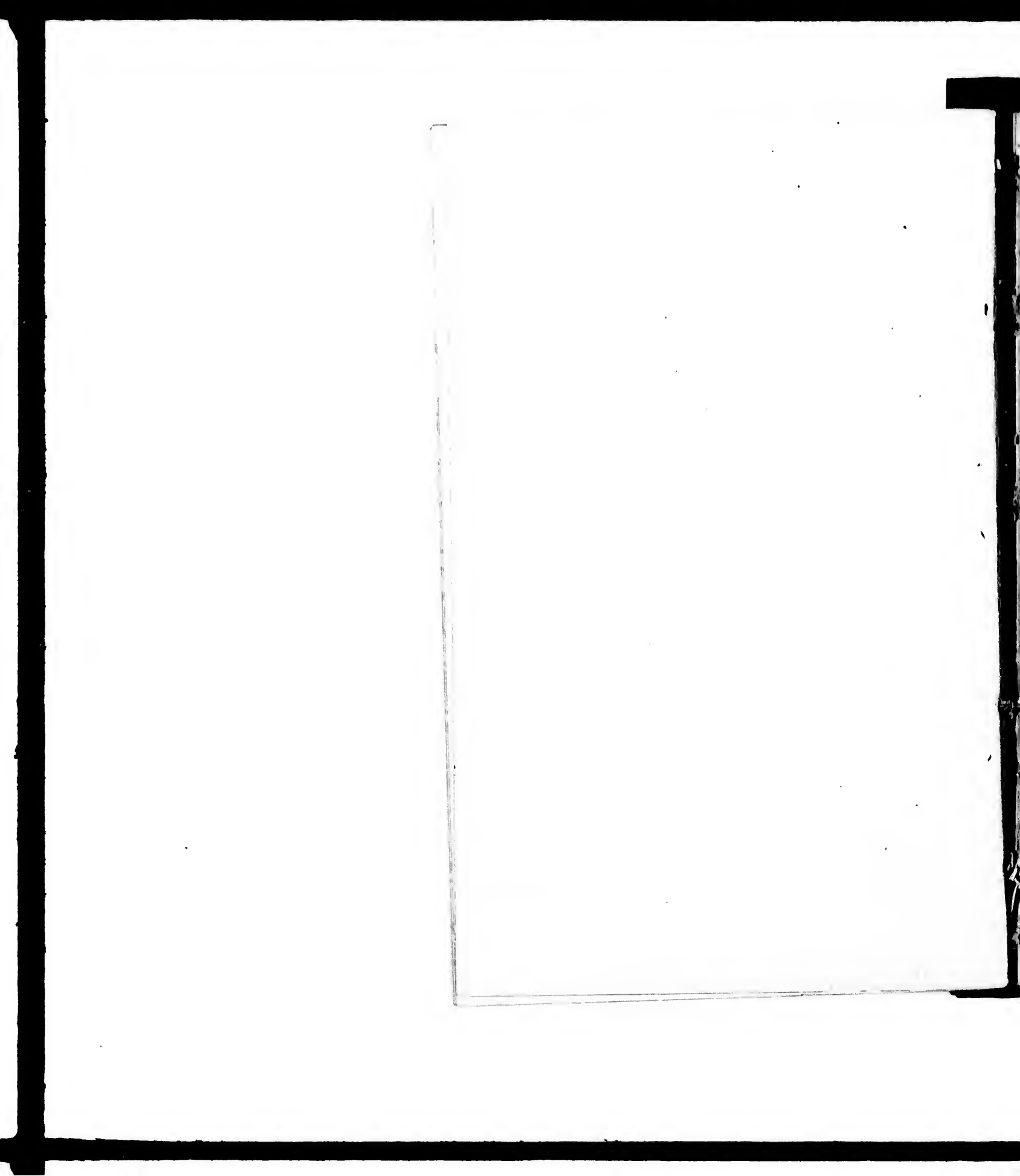
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for Rhadi, some jewels, a faded rose, and a package of which I have spoken before. There is nothing of value in that crumpled paper; but the wealth of the whole world could not buy it from me,—a small, white glove, a plain handkerchief, a sprig of withered *œillet*, these are all; but they are stained with his heart's blood. The surgeon found them on his breast when he dressed his wound. The glove and *œillet* Aglaé wore the night of our dinner; the handkerchief was the one Rhadi used to wipe the wine-stains from her dress. Ah, mo! how the faint Oriental odor about them reminded me of that moment when the glass fell from his fingers, scattering its crimson fluid on the three who are now gone. I felt then that it was an omen of ill. I am sure of it now; for did not the cup of his happiness fall and shatter before it reached his lips? and did not the red wine of his life stain her heart? I pressed those mournful relics of the saddest and sweetest scenes I had ever known to my lips with many a sigh, and laid them away reverently among my dearest treasures.

There are times when I regret bitterly that I ever saw Rhadi Effendi, or, rather, I should say, that Aglaé ever saw him; for, had it not been for that fatal passion,

she might have lived many happy years, although her physician says that her system was so weakened by the privations she suffered during the siege, that nothing could prolong her life. They talk well, and sometimes wisely; but I believe, if Rhadi had lived, she would have been here to-day, and I should not be alone. After the proof she had of his love and devotion, I think she would have married him without fear; for he must have had a noble heart and a faithful nature to love as he loved, and to endure what he endured by remaining in Paris through the siege, that he might be near her to save her from suffering. He must have gone hungry himself to have fed us; and he must have made almost superhuman efforts to procure the food which I thought could only have come from God. Well, did it not come from God through him? and was not Raoul glad in heaven to know that some one on earth was caring for us?

Poor Rhadi Effendi! to-day the grass grows green on his grave; and already the vines creep from it, and spread their gentle shade over the sod that covers Aglaé. He was passionate, proud, and unrelenting. He was a Turk; but was he cruel? I leave you to be his judge.



MRS. GORDON'S CONFESSION.

"WHAT! eleven o'clock, and I still sitting here dreaming? Why, I am insane, when I have no end of work before me," said the Rev. John Benedict, as he started from his comfortable chair before a glowing grate, and looked around his luxurious study with a most irresolute glance. It is true that he had much to do; but the bright fire, the quiet room, and his own reverie, were more inviting than the chilly vestry where the wardens of the church were then assembled to debate a matter of importance that required his attendance.

For some reason this usually active pastor was very indolent on this bright October morning; and instead of starting off, as he should have done after his exclamation, he dreamily let his watch slip into his pocket again, and himself settle back into his chair, while a pensive and thoughtful expression, that betokened some interior pre-occupation, fell again over his fine face. It was his thirty-fifth birthday; and, intermingled with his other thoughts and memories, many scenes of his past life came vividly before him. It seemed to him less than twenty years before that he had been a boy in a New-England village, guiding the plough with one hand, while he held a book in the other; or, lying under the elms during the harvest-noons, he had studied while the other laborers slept, — a delicate, thoughtful boy, orphaned and friendless, bound to a hard master, who had no sympathy for his hungry, craving heart. Loving knowledge, and thirsting for it as a flower thirsts for rain, he had drunk greedily every drop that he could obtain, no matter from

what source. What a drudgery his youth had been! None but God had known of his sorrows, his privations, his poverty, his struggles with "low birth and iron fortune." But he had conquered most nobly. Self-taught and self-made, he now stood firmly on the topmost height that his ambition had always aspired to. Entirely through his own exertions, he had gone through college, and graduated with every honor. He had passed his theological examination with marked success, and directly after his confirmation had been called to a thriving church in a small but wealthy town in one of the New-England States. There he had labored successfully for several years. Then a trip through Europe, and a year in a German University, had fitted him for a wider sphere, which was soon opened to him. A natural eloquence, a sincere nature, a fervent piety, a profound intelligence, and a tender, generous heart, united to an almost faultless person, a manner dignified, refined, and gentle, made him one of the most popular men of his time. He was the friend of the poor and suffering, the fearless defender of the oppressed, the eloquent denouncer of hypocrisy and gilded vice, as well as the welcome guest in the most refined and elegant circles. For three years he had presided over one of the wealthy and fashionable churches of New York. His salary was almost princely; and, in comparison with the poverty of his youth, his present prosperity seemed magnificent. His house was furnished richly, his servants were devoted and faithful, his congregation

adored him, and his church was always filled with intelligent, attentive worshippers. What more could he desire? Surely his lines had fallen in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage. Yet on this October morning, as he sat musing before his fire, he was not altogether contented; and for what reason? He was not conscious of having been remiss in any duty. His sermon of the previous day had been listened to with the closest attention; he had preached from his soul to his hundreds of hearers; he had emptied his heart into theirs, and he knew by the earnest faces and rapt devotion of many, that his words had not fallen on insensible ears. He had been very active during the past week in his charitable work. He could remember with pleasure the gratitude of several poor sufferers whom he had raised from the depths with his timely aid and encouragement. A volume of his sermons which had just been published had met with marked success. The most captious critics had dealt gently with him, and the most just had found nothing to condemn in the dainty little book that lay on nearly every study table. The day before he had asked two thousand dollars of his congregation for mission-work, and they had given him three. Every thing that he had undertaken prospered; success crowned every effort. Then, what cause had he for dissatisfaction? One might naturally think that he had none, and yet his thoughts were not entirely of a pleasant nature. In the first place he was discontented with himself. He feared that his prosperity was spoiling him, that he was becoming less earnest, less self-denying, less active in his Master's work. Was he not one of those who had come out from the world? Then, was it right that he should spend so many hours in fashionable circles, listening too often to the senseless twaddle of manœuvring mothers and ambitious daughters, when there were human woes to relieve, weeping eyes to dry? Was it not his duty to spend that time in seeking for his Master's lost sheep? Was it right for him to live

in luxury when thousands were hungry? In fact, was it right for him to spend his youth, his health, his strength, in the feeble and enervating routine of a fashionable church, when there were wide seas to be sailed, wildernesses to be penetrated, burning sands to be trodden, that the Lord's truth might be sounded in the ears of all nations? Was it not his dream once, — the dream of his suffering boyhood, — to become a missionary, a pioneer of the gospel, a standard-bearer in God's army? And here he was at thirty-five, settled down in silken ease, in gilded prosperity, the flattered leader of a fashionable religion, — a thing that in his younger days he would not have believed; yet he had drifted into it, he had thought that it was his place: this morning he felt that it was not. Something stirred within his heart, the memory of his boyhood came strong upon him; he felt again the damp air of the early dawn when he leaned from his window to catch the first rays of light upon his book; the hot breath of the summer noon, while he lay under the trees and read; the free, wild winds that frolicked about him as he drove the cattle over the hills; the scent of the sweet hay that he had mowed, and turned, and raked, drifted across his face, and with it the vision of a little blue-eyed girl, the only thing that he had ever loved, that had ever loved him in those dreary days. His eyes filled with tears when he remembered how he had carried her home in his arms from the hay-field one hot July noon, her feverish cheek pressed close to his, her little, hot hands clinging around his neck. And then the great loneliness in his life when she sickened and died. He had loved nothing so well since. "If she had only lived," he had said so many times; and this morning he said it again with a heavy sigh. "Ah! I was better and stronger then. What am I now? What shall I become in a few years, if I live this life of ease, and luxury?" Then another subject intruded itself, not a new one, for he had often thought of the same thing before. Why he had never married. There were dozens of lovely

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girls in his church, rich, accomplished, and fashionably pious, who looked at him with soft, beseeching eyes, and who met him with delicate and flattering attention; but none of them had touched his heart, where dwelt always an ideal woman, the reality of which he might never find, — a strong noble soul, a stately figure, with the innocent face of a child.

There was a tap at the study-door, and his servant, entering, said, "A lady to see you, sir: shall I show her in?"

Mr. Benedict started like one from a dream, and replied indifferently, "A lady: what name?"

"She didn't give her name, sir: she said you didn't know her."

"Very well, she may come in." He glanced at his watch, and thought of his vestrymen waiting impatiently for him. "I hope she will not detain me long," he said, pushing back his hair, and raising himself to a more dignified position. Then his eyes wandered toward an exquisite bouquet of rare flowers that stood near him; a rosebud was drooping, it did not touch the water; he leaned forward to arrange it, thinking still of the little flower that had perished so early, when the door opened and the visitor entered. Rising, he went toward her. Something in her face startled him, and, almost trembling, he gave her a chair. It was his ideal woman who stood before him, — a beautiful, stately figure, with the innocent face of a child. At a glance he understood that she was richly but simply dressed, and that she had the ease and self-possession of one accustomed to the refinement of life. She took the offered chair, bowing gracefully, and said with a slight tremor in her voice, "Pardon my intrusion: my errand is a very simple one, and will not detain you long. I have a small amount to use in charity: I wish you to tell me how I may expend it to the best advantage." The soft, gray-blue eyes looked at him steadily as she spoke; and there was a grave earnestness about the mouth that had appeared so childishly sweet when she entered.

Mr. Benedict's heart had never before beat more quickly in the presence of a woman: now it seemed as though he would suffocate; and he could scarce control himself enough to say calmly, "I am very glad if my advice can be of any use to you; but first tell me, pray, whom I have the honor of addressing."

"My name is Gordon, — Mrs. Gordon. I am a stranger in New York. Yesterday, by chance, I drifted into your church: your sermon interested me, and awoke in my heart a long-slumbering desire to do something for others. I have plenty of leisure; and I can spare something from my income, if you will kindly tell me how I am to begin."

"With pleasure; but first, if it is not presuming, may I ask you a few questions?"

"Certainly," with a little touch of grave reticence in her voice which Mr. Benedict did not fail to notice. Still he was possessed with as strong a desire to know something of this woman as though his whole destiny was to be left in her hands.

"Pardon me, if I am too curious. Are you an American by birth?"

"I am, but I have lived for a long time abroad."

"I thought so from your manner and speech. Did I understand you to say that you were a stranger here?"

"I have no acquaintances," she replied a little sadly. "I am living at —," mentioning a private hotel of the greatest respectability; "but I have not met any of the families residing there. I suppose they look with some distrust on an entire stranger."

"I am sorry to say that it is often so," he replied hesitatingly, for he scarce knew what to say; "but you must not remain without friends: your life will be very lonely. Cannot I introduce you to some whom I prize very highly, and who are most attentive to strangers?"

"But you know no more of me than others do," she said, with a faint smile; "and I have no credentials of respectability."

A sudden fear seized his heart. After all, who was this woman that interested him in such an unusual manner? She was married. Was she a widow? He was determined to know, so he said rather awkwardly, "And your husband?"

"I have no husband." She replied so coldly and curtly that Mr. Benedict felt that he had touched an unpleasant subject, and he could have punished himself for his want of tact. "I am a rude brute to question her in this way," he thought; "but I am determined to know, and I must know."

There was a moment's silence; then she raised her eyes, and, looking him in the face, she said earnestly and frankly, "Mr. Benedict, I have come to you because I need a friend. I am respectable; there is not the slightest stain upon my character; but circumstances over which I have no control have isolated me somewhat from society. I feel that I must say this to you to explain my lonely position. I need friends: will you take me on my own recommendation, and present me to your family, your church?"

"I have no family, madam; but my church, I am sure, will welcome you warmly."

"No family," she repeated, with some surprise in her voice; then a faint flush spread over her face, and she arose to leave. "Perhaps, when you know of something in which I can be of use, you will be kind enough to inform me," she said, giving him her card. "I fear I have intruded too long; thanks for your kindness," and she turned toward the door.

Mr. Benedict followed her in a tremor of agitation. He did not wish her to leave so abruptly; he had a great many more things to say, but he could not detain her; so, as he opened the door, he only murmured the usual conventionalities about being very happy to be of use; and, before he was quite conscious of what he was saying, she had bowed her "Good-morning," and was gone. For a moment he stood quite still where she had left him, thinking, "I have

always dreamed of such a woman: how lovely! what a soul in her face! what truth in her eyes, and yet a mystery! Who is she? I must see her again: I must know more of her. Then he took his hat mechanically, for the vestry meeting intruded itself into his dazed mind. He knew it was long past the hour, and that nothing could be determined until his arrival: but he might as well have remained in his study; for his usually clear mind was incapable of grasping the most simple detail. So, after an hour lost in useless discussion, the meeting adjourned until another day.

Mrs. Gordon hastened down the steps, into the clear October sunlight, with a very heavy shadow on her face. "Heavens!" she thought. "What a mistake I have made! What will he think of me? Why did I take it upon myself to suppose he was married? Because clergymen at his age almost always are; and so I thought he was. Now see what my desire for action has led me into! Why was I not contented to sit in my room alone, and let my life flow on as it would, without any effort to change its current? I feel the need of friends: I thought that I might find them in his church. I thought he was a great, noble soul, above the little suspicions and follies of society, who would accept me for what I appeared, and take me into his family and church as a lonely, sorrowful woman should be received by those who profess to follow Christ's example. But he has no wife, no family! What will he think of me? To say the least, it was most indelicate to present myself in that manner to an unmarried man. And he will never know that I thought him married. Perhaps he will think it was a plan of mine: but I am foolish; he is too noble for that; I will think no more of it. I presume by to-morrow he will scarce remember that he ever saw me. He will not need me: there must be plenty to do his charity work. I will go back to my lonely life that this absurd idea has disturbed for a little while. Ah, my God, what a destiny! no home, no friends, wandering from place to place; treated with suspicion and indiffer-

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ence, if not with cruelty and scorn; and for no fault of my own. Grace Gordon, there is nothing for you but patience and courage." She had intended to banish the recollection of this visit; to think no more of it; to forget that she had been so foolish as to present herself before this stranger, with the double hope that she might do some good to others, and receive some good for herself: but she could not, she was so angry and mortified in thinking of the wrong construction that might be put upon an act in itself most innocent of any scheming. She was very proud, this poor, lonely, friendless woman; and her isolation was owing, in a measure, to her pride. The second day after calling on Mr. Benedict, she sat alone in her room, copying with exquisite skill the "Melancholy" of Domenico Fetti from an ivory miniature. It represents a woman kneeling, her left hand supporting her head, while she considers a skull attentively; at her feet is a palette, brushes, and the fragment of a statue; behind her, on a stand, are a globe and a clepsydra; in the back-ground, ruins are seen. Whether it was the subject of her picture, which was certainly suggestive, or her vexed feelings, I know not; but more than once she wiped away the hot tears as she continued her work. She was surrounded with the evidences of a rare and refined taste; copies made by her own hand of Raphael, Fra Angelico, and Perugino, with carved Florentine frames, ornamented the walls. The wing-footed Mercury floated from a bronze pedestal; a marble copy of the Farnese Minerva, and another of the beautiful Capua Psyche, rested on antique brackets; a vase of choice flowers stood near her; and books bound in old Roman and Venetian lay on the tables. A cabinet piano stood open, and one of Beethoven's sonatas lay upon it as though she had just left it. It was evident this morning that her heart was not in her work. It did not seem to please her; for she corrected it impatiently here and there, and then looked at it critically with knitted brows. At last she laid down her palette, went to her piano, played a few

bars, and then walked restlessly around the room, taking up different objects and laying them down again with no definite purpose. Finally she selected a book, and settled herself to read, when a tap at the door startled her, and a servant entered with a card. She took it, and read, "Rev. John Benedict." "Ah!" she said with a little surprise in her voice, "you may show him in."

Mr. Benedict entered her presence with more discomposure than he liked to acknowledge to himself. She received him kindly, but he thought a little coldly, and said, when he was seated, "I am very glad to see you. I feared you would not have time to comply with my request so soon; for I may conclude, may I not, that you have found something for me to do?"

"I have," he replied, smiling; "but to tell you so is not entirely the object of my visit. I wish, if you will allow me, to become better acquainted with you."

"You are very kind," she returned with a slight flush. "It is pleasant to find any one who desires my acquaintance."

"Are you not a little in fault yourself?" he inquired gently, as he glanced round the room. "Do you not find these companions more interesting and absorbing than your fellow-creatures? You are an artist; you live in an ideal world of your own; you keep aloof from the common interests of life, and then complain because they do not come to you."

"Oh, no! you are mistaken," she returned warmly. "I am not morbid nor exclusive. I love my fellow-creatures, and court their society. They have wounded me cruelly sometimes, yet I love them all the same. My books, my music, my paintings, are dear to me, it is true; but I should devote the smaller portion of my life to them, if I had some human interest to occupy the other part."

Mr. Benedict remained silent for a few moments. His heart was full of the desire to know all of this woman's history, to have her whole past laid before him; but he dared not question her, and he felt that her con-

fidence would not be voluntary. At last he said, noticing that her face was very sad and anxious, "I hope later, when you know me better, you will speak more freely of your sorrows."

"Perhaps so, when I have proved your friendship; but at present you must accept me without explanation."

"I will do so freely," he replied with deep earnestness in his tones, "contented to wait if I may hope in time to win your confidence. I have known what it is to be friendless, misunderstood, and neglected. Do not fear to trust me: if you are unhappy let me try to make you happier."

The tears started to her eyes; and she said in a voice tremulous with emotion, "It is a long time since I have spoken so freely to any one, a long time since I have listened to such kind words; and I have been so hungry for sympathy." Then she made an effort to regain her composure, and added, with forced animation, "But tell me, please, what am I to do? When am I to begin my work, and where?"

"I have thought over the matter seriously," replied Mr. Benedict; "and it seems to me that the most feasible plan is for you to become a member of our Charitable Association. In that way you can make the acquaintance of the ladies of my congregation. The society meets once a week in the vestry of the church. Tomorrow is the day. If you will come, I will introduce you to some of my best friends, and bespeak a warm welcome for you."

"Thank you," she said gratefully. "You are kind to think of that; but are you sure that I can be of any use there, where so many are interested? Would not some work alone be better for me? One poor family, for example, whose children I might teach and clothe."

"Under the circumstances, I think not; because in that case you will be as friendless and isolated as now. I want that you should make friends who will understand and appreciate you."

"Your intention is kind," she said with some hesitation; "but it is not so easy to

make friends when one is situated as I am. Women do not receive each other with open arms when there is the least mystery or circumstance unexplained."

"But I shall present you; and I hope the confidence they have in me will establish you on the right footing."

"You are very good. You mean to do what is best for me; and you think this is best because you do not know what I have suffered before in trying to win the confidence of society: therefore I pray you to be careful how you expose me to fresh insults." She spoke rapidly, with flushed cheeks and angry eyes; then she added more gently, after a short silence, "But I will trust you; I will make one more effort; and if I fail now I shall never try again."

"Let us hope for the best," said Mr. Benedict kindly. "Say you will come tomorrow, and that will be the first step toward a better state of things."

"I will come, then, with the determination to put aside my pride, which is a terrible enemy to my peace; and I will be very gentle and patient, and submit to be suspected at first if I may but win confidence afterward."

"I am glad to hear you speak so sensibly. Well, then, at one o'clock: I shall be there to meet you."

"I shall not fail," she replied. Then they shook hands like old friends; and Mr. Benedict went away more interested and more puzzled than before. She is young and lovely; she is alone and needs friends. I would stake my life on her goodness, on the purity of her character, and I am seldom deceived: then why should I not befriend her? Suddenly his own years, his celibacy, his position, the construction that the world might put upon his conduct, all came into his mind. "Nevertheless," he thought, "if I can do any thing to make her happier, I shall do it."

The next day Mr. Benedict entered the vestry-room, where the ladies were assembled, chattering like magpies over a table covered with garments of every size, color, and material that could be used for charita-

ble purposes. Singing out an elegant-looking elderly lady with a sensible benevolent face, he said, bowing smilingly to all as he spoke, "Will you come with me for a moment, Mrs. Wynton? I should like to introduce you to a friend."

Mrs. Wynton, who was president of the society, laid down the report she was about to read, and followed her handsome pastor willingly.

As they crossed the vestry, Mr. Benedict said, "The lady for whom I wish to bespeak a kind welcome is a friend of mine, and an entire stranger, having lived abroad for a number of years. She wishes to engage in charity work. I hope you will receive her cordially, and make her feel quite at home among you."

"How can you doubt it, Mr. Benedict? Are not your friends always welcome to me?"

Mr. Benedict thanked her warmly, as he opened the door of his study where Mrs. Gordon was waiting.

Nothing could be more friendly and cordial than was Mrs. Wynton's reception of the stranger. Much to the satisfaction of Mr. Benedict, she at once took Mrs. Gordon by the hand; and, leading her to the vestry, she presented her to every one as a friend of Mr. Benedict's who had just returned from Europe.

The lonely woman was somewhat astonished when she found herself "taken up" at once. Every one paid her the most marked attention, she was so stylish, so elegant, so refined, there was such an Old-World air about her; and, besides, she was a friend of their dear pastor. Was she a widow? No one knew; but they left that question for the future to answer. It was a new and not unpleasant experience to her: she watched with interest these extravagantly dressed women, who scarce ever took a needle into their jewelled fingers to work for their own families, sewing so industriously on these coarse charity garments, and listening with the deepest attention to the details of some new case of poverty. Mr. Benedict glanced at her

from time to time: she was sitting between two ladies, her head was bent over the work which seemed to absorb all her attention. The lady who sat on her right, languidly stitching a flannel petticoat, was the widow of Mr. Van Ness, "one of our old families, you know," whispered Mrs. Wynton, as she introduced her. She was clothed in crape, the depth of the most profound grief; yet she cast sorrowfully longing glances at Mr. Benedict, who, she said, had been a great comfort to her in her affliction. "He is just perfect; and my dear husband was so fond of him," she whispered confidentially to Mrs. Gordon, whereupon Miss Laselle, who sat on the other side, a dashing beauty, whose active benevolence deceived no one, drew up her mouth and smiled significantly. Mrs. Gordon did not like either of these women. The widow was too soft and cat-like; the young lady too bold and flippant. "Still they are of the best society," she thought; "and I must not presume to criticise them."

Once Mr. Benedict came to her, and said pleasantly, "You see I was right: you are already quite at home."

"Yes, for the present," she replied; "but it will not last long." Yet from that day a new life opened before her. The church received her. The ladies visited her, invited her, consulted her, and envied her. The gentlemen admired, praised, flattered her, and overwhelmed her with attention. She had work enough to do,—charity-visits to make, committees to consult, fairs to attend, concerts to patronize,—in fact, every thing that a lady of wealth and leisure engages in. She sang, she painted; and her talents were always in requisition for some charitable object. Then there were dinners and *soirées* and receptions and assemblies; and she was so popular, so much the fashion, all the season, that such success as hers would have completely turned any other head: but she went on her way serenely, not too much puffed up by her triumph; for she felt that to a certain extent she was sailing under false colors. Sometimes she said

sorrowfully to Mr. Benedict, when he congratulated her on her changed life, "Yes, I am too happy: it cannot last. It is always so: I allow myself to be happy; and then I suffer terribly after." The winter was almost gone, and these two persons had met somewhere nearly every day. They had had many long and earnest conversations which had approached closely to confidences; but yet no word had been spoken that could throw any light on her past history.

One day Mr. Benedict called upon her, and surprised her with red eyes and sad face. "Are you not happy?" he inquired; and she replied, "No, not altogether. One cannot forget the past, and live only in the present."

"The past is dead," he returned; "and it may be folly to remember too much. Your present life must satisfy you: you have friends in abundance."

"Friends!" she said scornfully. "I have had just such friends as the most of these before; and I know what they are worth. Wait until something happens, and then see who will stand by me."

"But nothing will happen," he returned encouragingly.

"Yes, there will: I know it. I am sure some trouble is approaching: I am never happy long; but you, my best friend, you will never desert me, no matter what comes?" Then she covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

Mr. Benedict was more distressed than surprised; and his tender soul was full of love and pity for her. In that moment he felt that nothing could separate them; so, taking her hands in his, he said firmly, "I promise you, by the God I love, that I will never forsake you." Then he would have said more: the words were on his lips that he had been longing to speak for some months; but she drew her hands away, crying earnestly and imperatively, "Go, Mr. Benedict; go, or I shall lose my only friend!"

He looked at her imploringly, his heart too full to speak; but she only insisted the

more, and he went away very miserable.

It was Miss Laselle who first said to Mrs. Van Ness, "I'll bet my new saddle-horse against your phaeton, that Mr. Benedict will marry Mrs. Gordon. My Kate has a sister who is a servant in the house where she lives, and she says that Mr. Benedict is there half of his time."

Mrs. Van Ness turned as white as her widow's cap, and then laughed a little soft laugh, "Oh, my dear! you are late with your news. I saw how that would end from the first, and told Mrs. Wynton so. I believe they were engaged in Europe."

"Then some of my friends have wasted their time in fishing for him all winter," returned Miss Laselle spitefully.

"Yes, I have thought so," said Mrs. Van Ness, with treacherous calm. "However, she has secured the prize: nothing succeeds so well as a little mystery. Who of us know any thing of this Mrs. Gordon, who she is, where she came from, and whether she ever was married or not? She never speaks of her husband, when he lived, or when he died. No one knows any thing of her except Mr. Benedict, and he is as impenetrable as a sphinx."

"I have wondered, more than once, at our set taking up a person we knew so little of. In my opinion Mr. Benedict is no better acquainted with her past than we are. I had it from the best authority, — Miss Laselle's coachman got it from Mr. Benedict's servant, — that Mrs. Gordon presented herself at the rectory an entire stranger."

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Van Ness, full of righteous indignation, "how we have been imposed upon, and by Mr. Benedict too! I must go and tell Mrs. Wynton at once, so she will not waste her kindness on an adventuress."

"Bah!" said Miss Laselle scornfully, "she knows it. I told her my opinion; but she thinks her perfect, and won't believe a word without proof. For Heaven's sake, Fanny Van Ness! don't say a word until after to-morrow evening. I want her to

sing at my reception: after that the *expose* may come, for all I care. She sha'n't impose upon us, even if Mr. Benedict does marry her."

The next evening Mrs. Gordon, all unconscious of the storm that was brewing, walked serenely through Miss Laselle's reception-rooms to the hostess, who stood with her father, receiving their guests. "How lovely she is this evening!" was whispered on all sides; and indeed she was lovely. She wore a dress of amethyst-colored velvet, trimmed with rich white lace; amethyst and pearl ornaments; and a heavy coronet of purple and white pansies on her hair. Mr. Benedict felt a thrill of pain as he looked at her: she was lovely, she was pale and sad, and she wore colors of purity and sorrow. Why had she selected that dress for such an evening? Was it accident, or was it design? She sang more exquisitely than ever; unconscious that it was the last time she should sing to these hypocritical flatterers, who gathered around her, charmed in spite of themselves. Later in the evening, she stood quietly talking to Mr. Benedict, who, almost forgetting the argus eyes of society, had hovered around her all the evening. She was very happy for the moment: she had floated away from her old sorrows, and now resigned herself to this new breeze and tide of happiness. Mr. Benedict loved her, — his every act, look, and tone told her so. And she? A woman must be silent until a man speaks. He had just said softly, "May I come to-morrow, at three? I must speak with you alone," when Mrs. Van Ness led up a gentleman, saying, "Mrs. Gordon, may I introduce my friend?" Their eyes met: the *man* flushed crimson; *she* turned deathly white, and instinctively put out her trembling hand for Mr. Benedict, who had turned away at that moment, without noticing her emotion. So she stood alone in the face of her enemies; and, knowing it, she called up all her pride and courage, drove back her trembling and pallor, and addressed the disagreeable intruder calmly. Mrs. Van Ness's snaky eyes were fixed upon her; but

she bore their gaze without flinching; talking with her usual grace and ease, as long as etiquette demanded.

A half hour later Mr. Benedict looked among the crowd for Mrs. Gordon; but she had gone, and gone without a word to her host and hostess.

It was Mrs. Van Ness, who, the next morning, said curtly and cruelly to Mrs. Gordon, while she looked her full in the face, "How long since you lost your husband?"

Mrs. Gordon started like one who had received a blow, turned pale and red by turns, hesitated, and then replied in a hard, constrained voice, "Eight years."

"Eight years! you were a widow very young."

"I was married at seventeen."

"Where did your husband die?" continued Mrs. Van Ness, looking triumphantly at the face that seemed to be settling into stone under her gaze.

Mrs. Gordon did not reply to this refinement of cruelty; but, rising suddenly and haughtily, she said, "Excuse me, Mrs. Van Ness: I believe our business is finished. I wish you good-morning;" and before the widow had recovered from her surprise, she had left the room.

"It is true; yes, it is true," exclaimed Mrs. Van Ness joyfully, as the door closed upon her visitor: "I knew she was an adventuress."

Poor Mrs. Gordon walked out into the sunlight like one blind. She had expected this; yet, when it came, it shocked her as it always did. She was one of a purchasing committee with Mrs. Van Ness; and some days before, she had made the appointment with her for that morning, which she did not fail to keep, in order that she might know the worst. If this man had betrayed her secret, she would know it at once. She did not remain long in doubt; for Mrs. Van Ness's manner, when she entered the room, told her more plainly than words that she knew all. They had arranged their accounts, and finished their business, before Mrs. Van Ness put the questions that shat-

tered all her hopes at one blow. She went home, and went to bed with a sick and sore heart. Mr. Benedict came at three: she could not see him. What right had she to see him? How dare she love him? She could not see him again. Her happiness was over. Every thing was over. She must go away, just as she had gone away from so many other places. So she wept and moaned through the day, and scarce slept until dawn. It was late when she arose, and the morning of their charity-school. She would go as usual, and see if they all knew her secret. But she had not been there ten minutes before she was sure that every lady who had been her friend was informed of her past history. Mrs. Van Ness turned her back upon her; Miss Laselle looked her steadily in the face, without making the least sign of recognition; and the others drew away from her, and whispered apart, as though she were infected with some contagious disease. She had a class of little German girls whom she taught to sew: they loved her dearly, and gathered around her with kisses and smiles. This morning she drew them closer, and tried to get some comfort from their innocent affection. "Ah, little Gretchen, how happy you are!" she said to a flaxen-haired child. The pretty creature leaned lovingly against her shoulder. Mrs. Gordon laid her cheek on the soft curls, and almost sobbed in her distress. Mr. Benedict was not there: perhaps he would not come; perhaps she would never see him again. However, she was too unhappy to stay; so she kissed the rosy little faces, and went away, leaving a tear on more than one soft cheek. But she had scarce gone, when Mr. Benedict came. Looking around, and not seeing her, he feared she was ill; so he went straight to a side room, where Mrs. Van Ness sat with a group of ladies, and asked rather excitedly, "Has Mrs. Gordon been here this morning?"

Mrs. Van Ness drew herself up haughtily, and replied, "Yes, Mr. Benedict: the person who calls herself Mrs. Gordon has been here."

"Calls herself—I do not understand you," and he looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"Come with me, Mr. Benedict," said Mrs. Wynton, turning towards the door. He followed her, filled with surprise, to a small room known as the pastor's study. There Mrs. Wynton closed the door; and, looking him full in the face, she said, "Did you know any thing of this woman when you presented her to us as your friend?"

"If you refer to Mrs. Gordon," he replied sternly, "I did: I knew that she was a noble, good woman, who had suffered for no fault of her own; and she is my friend,—a friend whom I love and esteem deeply."

"O Mr. Benedict! how you have been deceived!" cried Mrs. Wynton wrathfully. "She is an impostor, an adventuress. Her name is not Gordon, and she is not a widow."

"How do you know this? How can you prove it?" said Mr. Benedict, almost beside himself.

"A friend of Mrs. Van Ness, who knew her years ago, recognized her last night at Miss Laselle's reception. He spoke to her, and she almost fainted. Mrs. Van Ness could not get the whole story from him, but he told her enough. He says she is deceiving us all"—

"I cannot believe it, I will not believe it," interrupted Mr. Benedict. "I will stake my life on her goodness, on her truth. You are a noble-hearted woman, Mrs. Wynton: do not condemn her until you know all. Wait until I hear her history from her own lips. I pray, I entreat, that you will remain her friend until you hear from me. I am sure she is innocent; and I will convince you, if you will only stand by her in this trial."

Mrs. Wynton loved her pastor dearly: besides she was, as he had said, a noble-hearted woman; so, seeing him in such a terrible state, she tried to soothe and comfort him, telling him that she would believe every thing he wished, and that in any case she would stand by the poor thing.

The afternoon of the same day, Mrs.

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the same day, Mrs.

Gordon lay on her sofa, pale, sorrowful,
and anxious, trying to arrive at some de-
cision respecting her future. "In any
case," she repeated over and over, "I
must go away. I cannot remain here: I
can never see these people again. Oh,
what folly for me to imagine that I might
be happy! My misfortunes follow me every-
where; and there is no real friendship in
the world. All those who appeared to love
me, who flattered and admired me, have
turned their backs upon me as though I
were a criminal." Then she thought of
Mr. Benedict, and an unbidden tear rolled
down her pale cheek. "Will he remain
true? Will he keep the promise he made?
I think he will; but to retain him as my
friend will injure him in the estimation of
these people whom I have deceived. It is
true I have deceived them; but how could
I help it? how could I help it?" Then
she burst into tears, and wept freely; after
which she was calmer. She had asked
herself twenty times through the day, if he
would come; and at last, when she had
almost ceased to hope, he came. He was
very grave, and resolved to know all, even
a little severe in his determination; but
when she raised her soft blue eyes to his,
with their childish, innocent expression, a
thrill of tenderness went through his heart.
A smell of new-mown hay, the dreamy
languor of a July noon, a hot little cheek
pressed to his, smote him to weakness; and,
before he well knew what he was doing, he
had seized her hands, and was vehemently
pouring out the story of his love. He
called her Grace, his adored, his cherished:
the only woman he had ever loved, the
only woman he ever could love; and she
listened pale and terrified. At last she
wrenched her hands away from his clasp,
and cried, "O Mr. Benedict! stop, I im-
plore you! You must not speak these words
to me: I must not hear them. I have
deceived you; for aught I know, my hus-
band is still living."

Mr. Benedict started up, stunned, con-
fused, almost stupid, and stood looking at
her as though he scarce understood her

words. At last, sighing heavily, he turned
toward the door.

"Ah, you will go!" she cried, "my con-
fession will drive you away; you, too, will
desert me, as all the others have, — remem-
ber you promised by the God you love."

He stood irresolute, terrified by the
strength of his emotions. "It was a sol-
emn promise," he thought: "no, I will
never desert her." Then he sat down
near her, and said as calmly as he could,
"No, Grace, I will never forsake you: I can
still be your friend. Now tell me all."

"I must go back," she said with a gasp,
"a long way back. I was so young when I
married, only seventeen, and neither father
nor mother!" she looked at him appeal-
ingly. "You know what it is to be without
father and mother. Besides, I had a little
fortune, and you know also how that
attracts. I met my husband at a ball. He
was older than I, but so handsome! so ele-
gant! I loved him: yes, I am sure I loved
him then. In less than a month after I met
him, we were married. I lived with him two
years, — two years of fashion, luxury, and
folly, and I only a child. My fortune was se-
cured to me in charge of a guardian until I
was twenty-five. My maiden name was
Grace Gordon Barrett. My husband's name
was Edward Tremlett."

"Edward Tremlett, the bank defaulter!
Is it possible?" cried Mr. Benedict in
astonishment.

"I see you remember the sensation of
eight years ago. You know how he dis-
appeared with his ill-gotten gains, no
trace of him ever having been discovered.
Then he died to me; and I, deserted,
heart-broken, and ruined, died to all my
former friends. My only uncle, who was
my guardian, took me abroad; and we
lived for four years in Germany. There I
adopted my middle maiden name, that
I might the better conceal myself from all
who had ever known me. While my
uncle lived, I was as happy as one could be
after such a terrible experience; but when
he died, four years ago, and left me alone,
my troubles began. I was too young to

wander about the world, with no one to protect me; and wherever I went I created suspicion. Even my change of name told against me; but how could I retain a name that had been so dishonored? In the most unexpected places, at the most unexpected times, some one would appear before me who recognized me as Miss Barrett. Again another who knew me as Mrs. Tremlett. For that reason, I could not remain long in one place. I grew weary with wandering, and at last decided to return home. I hoped that eight years had changed me so that I would not be easily recognized. I shunned the society that I had associated with as Mrs. Tremlett, and tried to make friends in another set. You must not think me better than I am. When I went to you, it was not so much from a desire to engage in some charitable work as to make friends through your influence. I have been very happy since I knew you, until night before last, when I met face to face an intimate friend of my husband, who recognized me at once, but who was pitiful enough not to expose me on the spot. I felt instinctively that Mrs. Van Ness, in spite of her kindness, was an enemy. I saw her silent exultation when she discovered my confusion, and I knew that my secret was in bad hands. Now I am convinced of it; and the others, not knowing the circumstances, look upon me as a criminal. They, and perhaps you, will accuse me of falsehood, because I left the impression that I was a widow. I told you that I had no husband. I have none: he died when he deserted me with an odious stain upon his name. Mrs. Van Ness asked me impertinently, how long a time it had been since I lost my husband. I replied 'Eight years;' and that also was true. I lost him more entirely than though the grave had hidden him from me. But perhaps you will see only equivocations in all that. Now I have nothing more to confess. You are the first person to whom I have laid bare my heart since I lost my uncle. Explanations often are of little use. Each one prefers his own construction to

the most lucid information; but I believe you to be an exception. I have told you all because I still desire your friendship, your esteem: but love,—there can be no love for me; you must never speak of it again." Then she covered her face, and sobbed bitterly.

Mr. Benedict took her trembling hands in his, and said very gently and calmly, though his heart was bleeding within him, "My dear child, I thank you for your confidence. It might have been better if you had told me all before. I believe in you, and trust you, as I have done from the first moment I saw you. There is but one thing to blame,—the mistake which you have allowed because you thought it best. Had I known your true position, I never should have encouraged a passion which I fear I shall find it difficult to conquer. However, with God's help, I hope to do it in time,—to become only your friend, your true friend, your father, your brother,—what you will. I shall never change towards you; but outwardly I cannot be the same. I cannot see you at present as often as I have done: I cannot expose myself to the pleasure of your society."

"I know it, I know it," she interrupted. "What shall I do? Where shall I go?"

"Nowhere: remain here, and live this down."

"That is impossible. I have not a friend besides yourself."

"Mrs. Wynton will be your friend: she has promised."

"Out of kindness to you: that cannot be. I must go where I am not known."

"Do nothing rashly. Remain here for the present; and I will explain what is necessary. There are some who will be kind to you."

"No, no," she cried passionately. "I have done no wrong: I will not be the object of their commiseration."

Mr. Benedict talked with her for some time, trying to strengthen and encourage her. When he left her, promising to see her again in a few days, she appeared calmer, and more resigned to her position.

The night that followed was a night of severe conflict to the noble-hearted man. He loved this woman with the first, the only love of his life; and she was separated from him by an insurmountable barrier. It was a sin to think of her with love. The necessity of giving her up, of crushing his new-born hope to death, was not the most painful thing to him. It was the thought of her loneliness, her suffering, her great need of friends; and he could not even offer her the sympathy that filled his heart because of the wicked and suspicious world. He thought of her with infinite sorrow and pity. He thought of his own disappointment with regret, of his future struggle with anxiety. "After all," he said, "compared with the lofty aim of my life, a disappointed love is but a little thing. I will try to do my duty, and leave the result to God."

The next day he had a long conversation with his friend, Mrs. Wynton, during which he explained all the peculiar circumstances of Mrs. Gordon's life; and she was satisfied with the explanation: having no selfish motive in her affection for her pastor, she was prepared to be just toward the friendless woman. "Trust all to me," she said kindly to Mr. Benedict as he was leaving: "I will see that all mistakes are rectified. She shall never need a friend while I live." Mr. Benedict pressed her hand gratefully, and went away happier.

Mrs. Wynton was not idle. In three days she made quite a revolution in Mrs. Gordon's favor; put Mrs. Van Ness down, and silenced Miss Laselle so effectually, that both were almost ready to receive her as they had done.

"Ah! you are a powerful champion," said Mr. Benedict thankfully to Mrs. Wynton, who had come to the rectory to impart her success to him. "I must see the poor child, and tell her of your goodness: it will comfort and encourage her." While he spoke, a servant handed him a note. He opened it, and read with a blank face the following lines from Mrs. Gordon:—

"I cannot go away without thanking you

for your kindness, without saying good-by. Your advice for me to remain here was, perhaps, good; but I cannot feel so at present. It is best for both that we should meet no more. I go to hide my sorrow and disgrace among strangers. If, in the future, I know myself free, I will come to you again; until then, think kindly of me, and pray for me." Without a word he gave the note to Mrs. Wynton; and, sinking into a chair, he burst into tears.

A year passed away,—a long, weary year to Mr. Benedict, bringing no news of Mrs. Gordon, no cure for his love, no forgetfulness of her. He thought of her constantly when alone and unoccupied. He had tried in vain to discover her retreat. He longed intensely to see her again, if only once. He had grown so thin, pale, and melancholy, that his church, not knowing his secret, thought him overworked, and proposed a trip abroad for the next summer. Mrs. Gordon had already dropped out of the memory of nearly all who had known her; but she still reigned supreme in his heart, and he had no power to banish her. He worked with more zeal, more energy, preached with deeper meaning and force; went less into fashionable society, and more among the poor; was as popular as ever, as successful, as prosperous: but something had gone out of his life. He felt as he did after he lost the little blue-eyed darling of his boyhood,—an inexpressible loneliness and dreariness. One evening, late in March, he sat before his study-fire, dreaming, as he often did, of his lost happiness, when a servant came to say that he was called to see a dying man at a neighboring hotel. The person who had come for him was waiting in the hall as he went out. "I could not go, sir," he said, "until you went with me; for I promised the poor gentleman not to come back without a minister."

"Has he been ill long?" inquired Mr. Benedict, as he hurried into the street.

"I can't say, sir. He was brought to the hotel yesterday from a South-American steamer."

"Has he no friends with him?"

"No, sir: he says he has not a friend in the country."

Mr. Benedict entered the silent, dimly-lighted room sadly; for a lonely death-bed had a sorrowful meaning for him.

The dying man, who was emaciated to a frightful degree, and ghastly pale, turned his dull eyes toward Mr. Benedict as he approached the bed, and said in a weak, but thankful voice, "I am so glad you have come! I suppose it's childish, but I can't bear to die alone." Then he motioned the servant to leave the room, and added, "Come nearer: I want to tell you who I am; but first take my hand, and promise me that you will stay with me until all is over."

Mr. Benedict did as he requested.

"Now," he said, "hold my hand tightly in yours, and pray to God for me; for I am a great sinner, and I want to be forgiven: but how am I to ask for it?"

"If you had offended a dearly-loved father, you would know how to approach him. Go to God in the same way," replied Mr. Benedict gently.

"I have so little time! I am cold: my sight is failing. O God! can you hear me? But first I must confess all to you. Do you remember the bank defaulter, who, eight years ago, ruined hundreds?"

Mr. Benedict bowed his head silently.

"I am he, — Edward Tremlett. Can there be mercy for one who wronged and ruined so many?"

Mr. Benedict was almost overcome by this revelation; but he said with calmness, "Yes: there is mercy for you, for all. You are weak, you are helpless, you need strength; then lean hard on God."

"I have tried to find forgiveness. I have suffered and repented. I have longed all these years to return, to give myself up, to restore my ill-gotten wealth; but fear and pride have prevented me. At last I knew I had but a little time to live, — the fever of remorse has consumed me; and I felt that I must return, throw myself on the mercy of those I have wronged, restore what

remained, seek forgiveness of God, and die in peace. I thought to have lived longer than this: now I know another hour will end all. In my trunks are papers that will explain every thing: see that they are given into proper hands. I hope those whom I have injured will forgive me when I am dead, and pity me for what I have suffered. My memory is leaving me: there are other things that I would say, but I cannot think now. Oh! show me how to find God before it is too late."

"I will pray for you; pray with me for yourself;" and sinking on his knees, while he still held fast to the damp, cold hand, Mr. Benedict poured out his soul in pleading for the dying man. All night, alone and silent, he sat by his bed, the thin fingers clutching his tightly. He slept. Would he ever awake? Would he be conscious again? Would he speak of his wife? Would no memory of her disturb or bless his last moments, — the woman who had loved him, and whose life he had ruined? Toward daylight there was a change, and Mr. Benedict knew that the last moment was drawing near: for he started out of his long stupor; and looking up with wide-open clear eyes, and a smile that made him almost beautiful, he said, "Forgive me, Grace." Then he sank back on his pillow; and great tears welled slowly from under his lids, and rolled down his face. He tried to speak again, looked thankfully at Mr. Benedict, clasped his hand tighter, and dropped away without a sigh.

It is needless to say that Mr. Benedict did all the dying man had requested, — saw him laid peacefully in the family tomb at Greenwood, and then took such measures as were necessary in regard to the restitution he had intended to make, managing every thing so quietly, that the public knew nothing of the death of the man whose defalcation, eight years before, had caused such a sensation throughout the country.

It was some time before Mr. Benedict allowed himself to think of Mrs. Gordon as a widow, — as a woman whom he might marry. But when at last he admitted the thought, he

was possessed with the desire to discover her retreat. Perhaps she had gone again to Europe. He caused the registers of the steamship companies to be examined; but among the names of passengers who had sailed during the year, hers was not to be found. He advertised cautiously in the different journals of the principal cities. He wrote to prominent clergymen in every part of the country, asking information; to physicians; even to State registrars and police officials; but in vain: such a person did not seem to be in the country. Then his hope failed, and with it his health. He lost his interest in his Master's work. Study was impossible: his sermons were badly prepared, and badly delivered. Nevertheless his church was most indulgent, attributing the change to overwork and ill health. "He must have a vacation," they said: "he must go abroad, and travel until he is better." So a meeting was called, and a fund was raised which he was begged to accept with his dismissal for a year. He did not refuse the dismissal, although he did the money; for he had intended to resign at the end of the year, feeling that he required a new sphere of labor, new scenes, and new interests, to distract his mind from the one absorbing subject. He had long desired to visit Palestine, the theologian's Mecca; now he was resolved to go; but, before he went, he felt an ardent longing to see again the New-England village where he had passed his boyhood, and where the blue-eyed little girl had fallen asleep.

It was late at night when he reached E—. The landlady of the little inn gave him a comfortable bed, where he slept more peacefully than he had done for a long time. When he arose the sun was shining into his window, and the swallows were beating the blue air with light wings. He leaned from his casement: the sweet scent of new-mown hay drifted across his face, dew drops sparkled on every leaf and shrub; the songs of the birds, the tinkling of the bells, and even the mower whetting his scythe, sounded like the sweetest music to him. "Oh, how lovely the country is!" he

said. "Perhaps I should have been happier, if I had staid here and followed the plough." Then he felt a pang of remorse at his ingratitude for all the blessings showered upon his life. He had received every thing but this one gift of love. "And yet," he said, "without that all the rest are worthless." He knelt down at his open window with his face toward the rising sun. The soft air touched his forehead as gently as a mother's kiss. God's sweet day beamed on him. Was not life glorious and beautiful? Thinking this, he bowed his head, and prayed for one thing only, and that was resignation. All through the summer day he wandered over the old farm where he had toiled and studied and struggled through his boyhood. Lay at noon under the elms, and watched the mowers swinging their glistening scythes, listened to the drowsy hum of the insects, and the murmur of the wind among the leaves, until he felt as though all the intervening years were blotted out; and he was again the farmer's boy waiting under the trees for the blue-eyed child to bring him his homely dinner. It was nearly night when he started to walk back to the inn,—one of those calm, sweet nights that fill the soul with gratitude and peace. The road was lonely and deserted, save now and then a few cattle driven by a tired boy. Here and there a white cottage gleamed from its embowering foliage; and the sound of a child's voice, or a mother singing her baby's lullaby, came softly to his ear. A pretty little dog ran down a shady garden walk, and leaped among the flowers. He looked up, and the spot was so lovely that he looked again. The house was small and low, and almost covered with climbing roses. The windows were open; and he caught a glimpse of white curtains waving to and fro, pictures, flowers, and books that seemed strangely familiar to him. On a balcony of one window, nearly hidden by a trellis of vines, sat a lady; her elbow on the railing, her chin resting on her open palm, and her eyes fixed steadily on the distant heavens. There was no mistaking her profile, the

graceful turn of her head. It was Mrs. Gordon. With one bound he cleared the low fence, and stood trembling, almost fainting, at her feet.

When her eyes fell upon him, she started and uttered a little cry; and then ran down the steps to meet him. "O Mr. Benedict, I am so glad!" she almost sobbed.

"Grace, my Grace, how cruel you have been!" was all he said.

Then he led her to a garden-seat; and there, holding her hands in his, he told her briefly of the death of Edward Tremlett.

She listened with sad face, but dry eyes; and when he had finished, she said gravely, "I regret his unhappy fate; but I cannot mourn for him, for I have never loved him since I lost him."

"We will speak of him no more. The God that has taken him has led me to you. You are free, and I have found you: are you mine forever?"

"Forever," she answered softly; and the soft evening wind echoed again and again, "Forever."

Then they talked together in the moonlit summer evening, with grateful, happy hearts.

"Why did you come here?" inquired Mr. Benedict.

"Because it was the place where your boyhood was passed. I wished to seclude myself from the world that had treated me so cruelly. I knew you loved this spot; and I believed that you would return here to find me if living, to weep over my grave if dead."

Then Mr. Benedict told her of all his sorrow, all his efforts to find her, all his loneliness and hopelessness. "But now, thank God! it is ended. You are mine, and we will work together for the loving Master who has united us at last. Here I lost the sweet little girl who was all my happiness in those old days: here I find the dear woman who will be all my happiness in the future. God is good. Life is sweet. Look up, dear love, to the heavens filled with stars, like angels' eyes, that beam on us tenderly."

Mr. Benedict sailed the appointed day, as he had intended, on his long proposed visit to the Holy Land; but he did not go alone. When some of his most intimate friends went to the steamer to see him off, they were greatly astonished to find Mrs. Gordon leaning on his arm, whom he introduced as his wife.

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EVERY STRING BROKEN.

My friend Horatio says that these three leaves from my journal, with the MS. of poor Giulio Patrizio, will make a very pretty little story. Pretty! what a word to use! Tragic, I should say was the proper expression; but Horatio is something of a "spoon," although he is gray, and uses the tamest and softest words to represent the most striking things. However, I won't find fault with my chum; but I'll copy the three pages from my diary, and lend you the MS., written in little, cramped, nervous, Italian characters, which, with the bad English, you may find difficult to decipher. When you have done with it, I hope you will return it safely to me, so that I may keep it always in the case with the "Stradivarius;" for one would be of no value without the other.

COPIED FROM MY JOURNAL.

Jan. 20. — There goes that confounded violin again! Is the man mad that he makes that horrible instrument scream and groan in that way? Is there some demon imprisoned in it, or is that little ugly Italian possessed with the Devil? I don't wonder they thought Paganini in league with the Evil One, if he evoked such sounds from his "Cremona." I came to this house to find peace. I thought because it was down town, not fashionable, and not dear, that I never should hear music. I don't like music. — I never did: I've lived too much in boarding-houses, and heard too

much practising on juggling pianos. When I came here I asked the landlady if there was a piano in the house; and she said "no," as if she were sorry; but when I remarked that I was glad, she added that she didn't like them herself, thought them nasty, disturbing things; yet a week after she put this mad fiddler right over my head, and he practises eternally. Sometimes he fairly drives me out of the house with his infernal enterwauling — yes, enterwauling's the word, although it's vulgar; for I declare, if any one didn't know, they'd certainly say there was a convention of cats in the room over my head, going through every tone of their diabolical gamut at once. I don't think I'd mind it so much through the day, if he didn't keep it up half the night. Often I can't sleep; and, if I do fall into a doze for a few minutes, when he seems to have finished scraping, suddenly he wakes me with the most unearthly yelling that ever was heard out of Pandemonium. I'd complain, and have him turned away; only my landlady's told me a pitiful story about his being poor, and in feeble health, and having to get his living by playing off nights in the orchestra at Niblo's. I suppose he has to practise; and it would be confoundedly mean in me to prevent the poor devil from earning his daily bread. Still, it's hard to bear patiently; and these last few nights he's been worse than ever. I could swear that he's been playing lately on only one string, and that stretched to the utmost tension, and worn to the finest attenuation. It

must be a wonderful violin to make so much noise. I shouldn't be surprised if it was a real "Cremona." Ah! there he goes again; and there's something in it that I can't bear to-night as well as usual. It seems as though a human soul, imprisoned in it, was wailing and entreating to be free. Good God! it's like the voice of some one in agony. If it wasn't for the fearful storm, I'd rush out of the house, and never come back. I'm afraid of the diabolical thing. I believe the Evil One stands at his elbow, and urges him on. Midnight, a January tempest beating at my window, shaking the sa-hes, and screaming down the chimney; my fire out; and that awful music in the room above, — that wild, weird, unearthly music. Now he produces the most discordant notes; now succeeds a gush of delicious melody that laps me in Elysium. What is he trying to do? I've never heard any thing like this: it surely can't be fiddling. Angels, instead of demons, stand at his elbow now, and I could cry like a child; but I won't: no, I declare I won't be a fool. Ha! ha! ha! this is a carnival of mirth: I am convulsed with laughter. I think the Devil is trying to bewitch me. I must get out of this, or I'll lose my senses. Now his violin bellows like an enraged bull. Is he playing on one string, or a hundred? What a tempest! What groans, sobs, roaring thunder, screaming wind! What a clashing of combatants! armies are contending, and above all I hear shrieks of laughter like mocking fiends rejoicing over the ruin of a world. The armies flee, the fiends pursue, the winds rush after; and this tornado of sound fades away into silence and distance. Now it changes, and resembles a placid, rolling river, which dies into a thin transparent tinkle, mystical and sweet as the silvery tones of a lute. Again it rises, wild, beautiful, passionate, pleading, — the outcry of a longing, hungry soul, a reaching up to the Infinite, the Eternal; a current of melody, bearing the unresisting spirit up, up, into the divine ether, the limitless expanse of heaven. What am I? Where am I? Have I been

in a trance? Have I been bewitched, and by music too? I believe I have; but don't tell me that I've written all this trash while I've been listening to that horrible violin. I've a good mind to tear it out: no, I won't. I'll leave it, because the whole impression was so curious. I think I was half asleep. I don't know whether I was or not; but any way, I lost myself in the midst of that unearthly fiddling, and went through all sorts of fantastic sensations. I'm absurd: I dare say my dinner hasn't digested, and it's that instead of the music. However, I had a new experience. I wonder if people who are music-mad feel as I did. I thought I was going straight up to God, sins and all; and I wasn't afraid either. That smooth, clear stream of sound seemed to carry me away into infinite space. I was as light as a bird, and as free as air; when suddenly the one string he was playing upon snapped with a noise like the report of a pistol, and I came back to earth as heavily as an old lead block dropped from the steeple of Trinity Church.

It's nearly two o'clock: there is a lull in the storm, and a deathly silence in the room above. Poor fool! he's broken every string: he can't scrape any more, and so he's gone to bed; and I'll go too, though I don't believe I'll sleep a wink after having my nerves so worked upon.

Jan. 21. — This morning my landlady rushed into my room, without her teeth and back-hair, as pale as parchment, and as wild as a maniac, crying, "O Lord! O Lord! he's dead." — "Who's dead?" I inquired in a very unsympathetic way; for I thought she meant her nasty poodle, that always barked at me when I came in, and I was secretly glad. "Why, that fiddler, that poor man up stairs: he's sitting in his chair stone-dead." I must say her words gave me a shock, a fearful shock! and, scarce knowing what I did, I followed her up stairs. The morning sun shone into the dingy little room with wonderful brilliancy, and lay like a golden halo on the upturned forehead of the dead man. I had always thought him an ugly, insignificant

creature, when I had met him on the stairs, going in and out; but, now, ennobled by death, there was something positively sublime in the expression of his face. His head was thrown back against his chair; his wide-open eyes looked up with infinite longing and passion in their fixed gaze; his lips were parted in an enraptured smile; and his long, thin fingers held in their rigid clasp the wonderful instrument that worked such a spell upon me last night. As I looked at him, I could not but feel that there was an awful mockery in that cold, still face; those sightless eyes staring into vacancy, with their eager questioning; the glowing sun kissing his brow; the parted lips smiling at death; the violin clenched in his powerless hand, silent and tuneless, with every string broken. In a moment of ecstasy, death must have touched him into painless repose. With the mystery of another existence close upon him, he had played himself into eternity. When the last string broke, the last cord of his life snapped asunder; and master and instrument became silent forever. I took the violin from his rigid grasp: it was an antique of exquisite workmanship. On the back was the name, "Stradivarius," and the date,—1782. Being frightfully emaciated, he was as light as a child; so I took him in my arms, with a strange choking in my throat, laid him on his bed, and tried vainly to close his wide-open eyes with their haunting, inquiring gaze. Then I sent the landlady for a doctor, although I knew it was useless; and, while she was gone, I looked around the room to see if I could discover any thing to explain the mystery that seemed to surround this strange man. The attic was poor and dingy, with not a comfortable article of furniture in it; there were no clothes in closet or drawers, and those he had on were much worn; he had no watch, no jewelry, no money about him; and there did not seem to be a thing in the room of the least value, except this almost priceless "Stradivarius." On the table lay a few sheets of music, an English dictionary and grammar, and a sealed paper,

addressed, strange to say, "To the gentleman in the room below." I took possession of this document, so unexpectedly thrust upon me; and, when the landlady returned with the doctor, I came down to my room and read it with a feeling of awe and pity.

THE MS. OF GIULIO PATRIZIO.

When I am dead, some one will bury me, some one will take possession of my "Stradivarius;" and I wish it to be one who will understand the value of the treasure I leave to him. Therefore I take the liberty of addressing this to my fellow-lodger, whose benevolent and intelligent face has impressed me favorably in the few times that I have had the honor to meet him passing in and out.

My name is Giulio Patrizio. I was born in Cremona. My father was a violin-maker, and his fathers before him were pupils of the Amatii and Stradivarii. At an early age I displayed quite a remarkable talent for music; and my father allowed me to quit the workshop and study with Savori. For a while I made very good progress, but I never cared to study closely: what I learned, I learned with very little trouble. I lacked application; and, without that, one can never reach real excellence. Before I was twenty I grew discontented with my home, which was very unhappy, owing to a domestic trouble, and joined the army without my father's permission. I served with a savage energy for three years: then peace was restored, and I received an honorable discharge; but my career as a musician was ruined. My father, disappointed, poor, and unhappy, died of a broken heart, leaving his "Stradivarius," which was an heirloom, and all he possessed, to me his only child. With my treasure, and nothing besides, I left my country, determined to see the world. I played in different parts of Germany, in Paris, and London, but met with little success, owing to the popularity of Vicuxtemps, who was

then at the zenith of his fame, and my own lack of influence, besides my ignorance, and the diffidence which I could never overcome. Some years passed away in the unsuccessful struggle; and at last, thoroughly discouraged with my European experience, broken in health and spirit, I decided to visit America, which I looked upon as the artist's Eldorado.

Less than a year ago I arrived in New York, alone, friendless, and with very little besides my violin, which should have been a fortune to me, but, instead, I have almost starved; for with my talent, the instruction of the divine Savori, and my matchless instrument, I have never succeeded in getting an engagement, but have only existed as second or third violin in the orchestras of the different theatres.

A few months ago I was playing off nights at Niblo's; and a new actress was turning the heads of all the orchestra with her talent and beauty. I scarce ever noticed the different women who played their parts more or less badly, decked with paint and tinsel as false as their rôles. Neither did I visit the green-room, nor associate with the artists; because I never was liked, not being of a social or convivial character. And no one seemed to notice me, unless it were to laugh at my bad English, odd looks, and awkward manners; therefore I only got through my parts indifferently enough, for I had no inspiration, no motive, to call forth the soul of music that still slumbered within me. This evening, which decided my destiny by conducting me at last to the end of all things, I sat in the orchestra, scraping away gloomily enough at my part. Almost hidden by the instruments and players, I could not see the stage three feet beyond the footlights; still, I knew that the new actress had appeared by the storm of applause that greeted her. It was some time before I saw her; and, when I did, she was standing almost over me in a full blaze of light, the most glorious, the most divine beauty I had ever seen, or dreamed of: not the false, glaring beauty of the stage, but Nature's own matchless perfection. As

she first appeared to me, she appears to me now, here in the darkness and silence of night. When I close my eyes she stands before me, as she stood before me then: her great passionate blue eyes, like violets wet with dew; her matchless brow, her smiling mouth, her sparkling teeth; her waves of golden-brown hair, such as our old artists loved to paint; her neck and arms of perfect shape and dazzling whiteness; the shimmer of her pale blue robe; the regal light of the gems that decked her brow and bosom,—made her a vision too glorious for me to look upon face to face. I forgot where I was, I forgot every thing, and gazed at her entranced, with the wide-open eyes and rapt expression of one who suddenly sees something supernatural before him. There was a pause in the orchestra; but, unconsciously, I played several bars after every other instrument was silent. The effect of those single shrill strains was electric. The audience burst into a roar of laughter; the musicians were convulsed with mirth, as I dropped my violin in the greatest confusion, and looked wildly around. Then her sweet eyes fell upon me, and I fancied there was an expression of pity in their gentle glance. I could have wept tears like rain; I could have knelt at her feet, and kissed the dust under them; I could have worshipped her as devout Catholics worship the mother of God. From that moment I adored her; my soul went out from my own keeping, and lay trembling before her; I saw nothing beyond her; she was light and life to me. I was no longer a sullen, impassive man, void of desire and hope: a new life awoke within my veins, and throbbled in every pulse. My genius, that had long lain dormant, stirred and quickened into a glorious resurrection. My violin spoke to me in new and wonderful tones. I poured out my soul to it, and it answered me in impassioned floods of melody. I longed to play before her, that she might recognize the divine hidden under my forbidding exterior. She seemed to me the embodiment of every perfection, an angel shrouded in flesh, a sacred thing, the hem of whose garment I

dared not hope to touch. I only lived when she was before me. I followed her like a shadow, that I might not lose the least glimpse of her. I resigned my place in the orchestra, that I might hang around the door of the green-room to be near her when she passed in and out, to feel the air from her dress, to catch the faint perfume from her waving hair. Sometimes her lovely eyes turned upon me for a moment, indifferently, carelessly, it is true; for what could that radiant, happy creature see in the little, dark, shabby man who lingered in the path where she walked triumphantly, followed by a crowd of adorers. One night she passed very near to me; and I heard her say to the gentleman upon whose arm she leaned, "What glorious eyes!" Whose eyes did she mean? Not mine, surely; and yet she looked at me. For more than two months I haunted her steps, consumed with this ardent passion. I could not sleep; I could not eat; I could only count the slow moments until night, when I could go and worship her; and my only consolation during these hours of waiting was my violin. I poured out all the story of my love, my adoration, upon its sympathetic string, until I had a composition perfect enough to express to her what I felt, when the time came that I should play in her presence. Sometimes I was tortured with jealousy. I envied the actors who played with her: every fibre of my being resented the necessary familiarities of the stage. I trembled and grew cold when the mock lover knelt at her feet: when he pressed her hands to his lips, when he poured his passion into her listening ear, my blood ran like liquid fire through my veins. In every part she acted, I was with her, and went through every gradation of feeling even as she did. My heart wept when tears fell from her eyes; when she represented mental suffering, my whole being was in agony, not imaginary, but real; when she smiled, I was softened to tears; when her face wore a shadow, black darkness settled around me. I lived but in the light of her eyes. I showered flowers upon her in a single night that cost

the labor of weeks; and, when I had spent all, I sold every thing I possessed, to carpet the stage with roses. Once she dropped her glove almost at my feet. Several stooped to pick it up; but I threw myself upon it with such violence that I attracted the attention of all, and made myself the butt of their ridicule. Again, one evening, while I waited in the dimly-lighted corridor, two gentlemen came out of the green-room, and one of them spoke insolently of her as he passed. In an instant I was upon him, lashing him fiercely with my cane. Then both turned: one said, "It is the crazy fiddler;" and the other, a tall, powerful man, struck me between the eyes, and knocked me senseless against the wall. I lay there for some time unconscious; but at last I returned to myself, remembered where I was, and struggled to my feet just in time to see her pass leaning on the arm of the man whom I had struck; and he looked at her, and spoke to her, in a way that made me mad with jealousy. That little adventure cost me a very ugly mark on my face, which lasted for some days, and prevented me from appearing before her, though I watched her in secret. Another night I stood near the door when she came out. It had rained; and the pavement between her and her carriage was damp, — too damp for her satin-shod feet to touch. I saw her glance of perplexity; and, quick as thought, I threw my mantle on the ground for her to step upon. She looked at me with the sweetest expression of gratitude, and thanked me cordially, bowing, and bowing again, as the carriage drove away. Then I was inexpressibly happy. I was encouraged. I even dared to hope that I might yet be allowed to play in her presence. I felt confident, that, if she only knew of my desire, she would grant it. I was sure that she was so kind she would not refuse me. All night I lay awake thinking it over; and at dawn I commenced a carefully-worded letter, telling her of my past disappointments and sorrows, my present experience, and my ardent desire that she should hear me play; and finished by im-

ploring her that she would grant me permission at her earliest convenience. This note I concealed in an exquisite bouquet which I sent her that night. Then I waited day after day for an answer, but none came. At last I could endure my suspense no longer, and resolved to make one bold stroke — to succeed or die, to speak to her, to receive either permission or refusal from her own lips. I was sure, if I could but gain her ear, I could make my "Stradivarius" speak to her heart, and compel her to acknowledge the divine superiority of genius. At last my chance came, after much waiting and watching. The door of the green-room was partially open; and she sat quite alone, with a half-pensive smile on her lips, waiting her call. Holding my heart in a tight grasp, and struggling hard for composure, I entered quietly. She did not see me until I stood before her. Then she rose up haughtily, and looked at me with stern inquiry; but my agitation evidently disarmed her, and moved her heart to pity, for she said gently, "Are you aware that you are intruding?"

"Yes, madame," I stammered; "but sometimes unfortunate subjects are obliged to resort to stratagem to present a petition to sovereignty."

She smiled half compassionately, half scornfully, and said, "Well, what is your petition?"

"That I may be allowed to play in your presence."

"Ah! I remember: you are Signor Patrizio, the violinist who sent me a letter in a bouquet."

I could only bow: my emotion choked my voice. Still she looked at me with clear, searching eyes, and a smile of mingled pity and curiosity. "Sit down," she said at last, pointing to a chair, "and don't look as though you were afraid of me. Am I so dreadful that you should tremble in my presence?"

"No, madame," I almost sobbed: "you are too good."

"Do you, then, play so well that you

think it will be a pleasure for me to hear you?"

"You must judge of my merit yourself: that your judgment may be favorable is my only hope."

"Perhaps you wish for an engagement through my influence?"

"No," I replied, gaining courage from her gentle tone. "I wish to speak to your heart through my violin."

"Ah!" she said, smiling softly, "then you are a troubadour as well as a knight-errant?"

I started with astonishment. How had she learned of the mad attack that had resulted so disastrously for me? She noticed my confusion, and smiled indulgently. "Your motive was good, no doubt; but you are too impulsive: don't expose yourself to ridicule. We must all submit to many things we can't avoid."

"O madame! I would give my life for you, and count it a joy," I cried, looking into her eyes with all my passion concentrated in a glance.

She returned my gaze fixedly, while an inexplicable expression flickered over her face, and ended in a light laugh, as she said, "Nonsense, my poor enthusiast! the days of chivalry are passed; and it is no longer necessary to die to show your devotion. Be reasonable and prudent; that is the better way to prove it."

A great ball seemed to rise in my throat; rushing waters surged in my ears; my heart froze with fear and suspense. Would she refuse me? All my destiny depended on that moment, all my future weal or woe. At last my strength failed, something seemed to break within me; and I was on the point of falling at her feet, when the door opened, and a call-boy entered.

"I must go," she said, rising, while her glance still lingered upon me.

"Then I cannot see you again? I may not play for you?" I cried desperately.

"Yes, yes! be calm," she said softly: "you may come to my house Sunday evening at nine o'clock; but learn to control yourself, and don't act like a madman,"

then she held out her little white hand as she turned away. I seized it almost savagely, and pressed it over and over to my burning lips. O my God! even now, in the cold and darkness, struck with a mortal chill, at the thought of that soft warm hand touching mine, the blood rushes through my brain with the force of seething lava. For a moment she allowed it to remain in my clasp, like a trembling, imprisoned bird; then she drew it gently away, with a look that left me blind, dizzy, and faint, and passed through the door without another word. For a moment I gazed after her stupidly; then I turned, and rushed wildly out, making my way through the crowd in the corridor almost at a bound. Many looked after me, and many cried, "He is mad;" but I did not heed them. In an instant I was in the almost deserted streets. I do not know what passed that night between the wind and me: my feet did not touch the earth, my body seemed to mount to the sky, and turn, and float in a whirlwind of bliss. The stars looked at me as though they knew my secret, and rejoiced with me. I saw the promise of my happiness written upon the heavens in letters of fire. All night long I drank in the vapors and the wind to cool my fever. I bared my head to the cold dews, and wandered I know not whither. When the dawn came, chill and gray, I found myself at my door, and in my room, where I threw myself on my bed, and slept stupidly for hours, exhausted by my emotion. When I awoke I was cool and calm; my frenzy was subdued, and reason asserted itself; yet I never asked whether this woman had a heart or not, whether she felt, or acted a part toward me. In fact, I did not stop to think, I only knew that I adored her: the delicious tones of her voice, the transparency of her color, the dreamy shadows that floated in her lovely eyes, her smile full of mysterious sweetness, enchanted me to such a degree that I saw and felt nothing beyond; and to merit my happiness, I was capable of any thing, — any madness, any folly. I felt an imperious need to

serve her, to perform some impossibility to show my devotion, to die for her if I might; for, from the moment when I loved her for the first time, I felt that I was no longer master of myself; that I was conquered and enslaved, fallen into a servitude from which I could never again be free.

She had said that I could come on Sunday evening, and this was Friday. What an eternity it seemed until then! However, I passed the time in rehearsing over and over the composition that I was to play, — the song without words, that was to express all my adoration, all my passion. At last the moment came when I stood trembling before her door, with my violin pressed close to my heart, that it might listen to its wild beating, and interpret it aright. She was alone, and how lovely, — how angelically lovely, in the subdued light of her room! Flowers bloomed around her, and filled the air with their intoxicating perfume; soft carpets deadened the step; golden silk and creamy lace covered doors and windows; and she, the saint of that quiet shrine, smiled upon me as I entered, — I the poor, ugly man, pale, embarrassed, and shaking like an aspen with suppressed emotion. For a moment I thought my agitation would overcome me; but she said sweetly, "Do not fear," and I was strong in an instant. At first timidly and hesitatingly my instrument confessed my admiration, then my devotion, then my adoration: it expressed every shade of feeling from the moment when I had first seen her, until, beside myself with joy, I had rushed from her presence to pour out my rapture to the winds of night. I went through every phase of passion, pensive, tender, dreamy, voluptuous, sweet and delicate as a silver rivulet flowing through wind-shaken reeds; then, rising and gathering strength and force, I concentrated all my soul, my heart, my desire, my life, into one frenzied, passionate outburst that left me weak and trembling before her. Through all, my gaze was fixed upon her face; and with every change, every gradation of sound, I saw her eyes grow dreamy, or light up with enraptured fires, her lips quiver, her bosom heave

her color come and go, until at last her head sank forward on her breast, her hands fell languidly, the lids drooped over her sweet eyes, tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, and a faint, suppressed sob fell on my ear. I had worked my spell: the mysterious power of genius had conquered. I had spoken to her heart, and she was mine. In an instant I was on my knees before her, kissing her feet, her dress, her hands wildly. In a fury of rapture, I clasped her unresisting form to my heart: I could have stifled her in my embrace. I was mad to confound her with myself, her breath with my breath, her life with mine. She did not resist: she loved me; and the truth was more than my feeble mind could endure. Suddenly the violence of my transport gave place to a sorrowful tenderness. My sleeping reason awoke with a terrible bound, and I saw myself as I was: her angelic goodness overwhelmed me. What was I that she should love me? Humiliated and crushed beneath my unworthiness, I fell at her feet, and, leaning my head upon her knees, I buried my face in her robe and sobbed aloud. At that moment a harsh, mocking voice cried close to my ear, "Ha! ha! ha! another Rizzio. By my faith, Helena, when will you be done with this cursed folly?" Before I could turn my head, a strong hand jerked me violently to my feet; and I stood face to face with the man I had struck in the lobby of the theatre.

"What pantomime is this?" he cried in a voice hoarse with rage. "What are you doing at this lady's feet, you black, foreign rascal? Do you see the door? Then take your devilish fiddle, and march, or I'll break every bone in your body with it."

Then a voice as musical as a crystal bell, broken with a ripple of laughter, said half imploringly, half scornfully, "For Heaven's sake, Charles, let the poor fellow alone! he's doing no harm, and he plays like an angel. His music made me forget where I was. I declare, I don't know whether he was at my feet or not."

"No: you never know, nor care, Helena,

as long as you have your foot or some one's neck: it's all the same to you whether it's a mad fiddler or a prince, if he only has a heart for you to crush. I am tired of this folly: I swear, I am."

Then that mocking laugh smote my ear again, and a frenzy took possession of my soul: mad, blind with rage, I threw myself upon the man, and dashed him to the floor as though he were a wisp of straw, seized my violin, pressed it to my heart with a crushing embrace; and crying at the top of my voice, "Come, my only mistress, let us leave this accursed place: death and damnation to the false-hearted and cruel!" I rushed frantically from the room, and never stopped until I reached the open air.

After that, I cannot tell clearly what happened. I have a vague recollection of tearing wildly through the streets, my violin pressed to my heart, without seeing, without knowing, where I was or whither I was going. Some one called, "Stop thief!" and grasped me by the skirt of my coat. I broke away, and sped on, hearing but not understanding. I thought only of that woman, whose kisses still rested upon my lips like a smarting burn: neither frost, nor wind, nor rain, could cool them. And I cried with piercing tones, in a sort of savage transport, "I held her in my arms, I kissed her lips, and I have had enough of poison: her tears were poison, her kisses were poison." The sound of my voice restored me to consciousness. I paused, and leaned against a wall. Accidentally I touched a string of my violin: it wailed pitifully, as though I had hurt it, and then died away into silence with a lingering plaint like a human being in pain. Where was I? Who was I? There was once a Giulio Patrizio who had worshipped music and fame and country, — who had loved a woman with a divine love; but I was not he. This man had hoped with the eternal courage of a man's heart, had trusted with a holy trust; but I, who stood alone under the night, did neither. I was not he: I was a black shadow, hurled here and there by

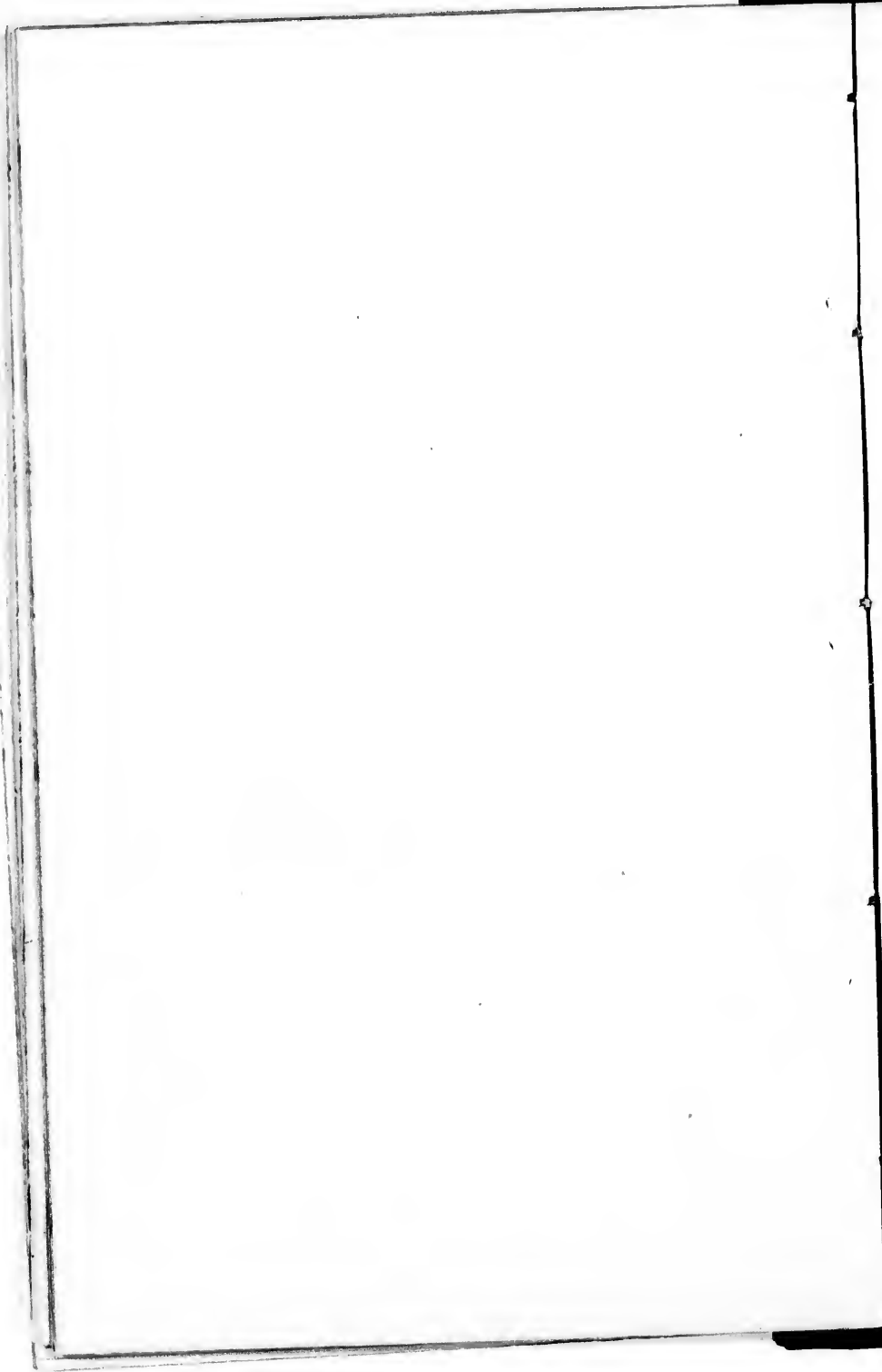
a tempest of passion. Something passed in the air: a voice seemed to say, "Your country! you have still a country." And I answered aloud, looking at the stars, "Giulio Patrizio is dead." A windmill seemed to turn ever and ever before me, and its sails were tresses of golden hair; and, looking at it, I said again, "Giulio Patrizio is dead." I cannot be he: it is impossible. The streets, the passers, the sky, the stars, my thoughts, my recollections, — all seemed impossible; and nothing that I saw within or beyond myself seemed real. The world was but a hideous harlequin, that changed shape and color each moment. Then I laughed loudly and bitterly, and said again, "I am not Giulio Patrizio." A few nights before, I had wandered until dawn, wild with joy, restless with a new-born hope, believing that the promise of my happiness was written upon the heavens in letters of fire. Now the glowing characters are blotted out, and a pall hangs between me and the stars. A man cannot change in a moment; the world cannot change in an hour; and, after all, I am not he: I am not Giulio Patrizio.

It has been three days since, and I have walked and talked like other men. I have remembered all with a wonderful distinctness, even to the minutest emotion that has stirred my heart. I have written this clearly and calmly, without a flaw or break in my memory; and yet I am not myself. I am not Giulio Patrizio: his soul is in his violin; and it has wept, and moaned, and raged with sorrow. It has throbbed with such passion, that every string but one is

broken, and on that last cord hangs my life: when that snaps, my heart will break, and all will end. You will say that it was a folly to love her: if so, it was a sublime folly; for it was her beauty I worshipped, and that was real and divine. I was not more unfortunate than others in being deceived: the misfortune was in knowing it; for all the world is deception, and all mankind self-deceivers, inasmuch as they believe in such a sentiment as truth. They thought I was mad: I may have been; for who can tell whether he himself, or all the world besides, is mad? Surely I was not like others. Is it, then, a proof that I was mad? I do not know; I cannot say; and, after all, I am not Giulio Patrizio.

COPIED FROM MY JOURNAL.

Jan. 24. — I have just returned from following that unhappy man to his burial, and my heart is sadder than I like it to be at the death of a stranger. I have given him a most respectable funeral, — a rose-wood casket, flowers, and carriages; Horatio and I as mourners; and a grave in my own lot at Greenwood. I have done this, not only out of pity for the poor fellow, but because I felt obliged to in return for the "Stralivarius," which I shall always keep just as he left it, with every string broken. It seems to me too sacred for other hands to profane with a touch. To-morrow I shall move. I cannot remain here any longer; for every night I fancy I hear that strange, unearthly music in the room above.



A DOMESTIC TRAGEDY.

DR. WARDEN sat in Jane Herbert's cosy breakfast-room, waiting for her to come down. It was early, the morning was damp and cold, and he was a little cross; therefore he did not like to be detained, although the fire was bright, and the "Times" lay temptingly near. "I thought she was an early riser," he said soliloquizingly; "and here it's nine o'clock, my patients waiting, and my lady not yet out of her chamber. I would have come after dinner, and probably it would have done just as well, if she hadn't sent for me to be here the first thing this morning. Mary says she isn't sick; then, what in the world can she want of me so early?" Just then the object of his thoughts entered the room,—a little plain, pale woman; with yellow hair, gentle blue eyes, and long, light lashes: she was dressed in a gray wrapper, with a white breakfast-shawl folded around her as though she were cold. Although she was plain, she was not uninteresting,—a mild, delicate creature, with a sweet voice, and timid, appealing glance.

"Ah, doctor! how good of you to come so early!" she said, giving him her little thin hand, which he crushed like a rose-leaf in his strong clasp. "I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting: I didn't intend to," she continued deprecatingly; "but Mary didn't wake me, because I had rather a sleepless night, thinking of it all. I hope you won't mind: you can take your breakfast while I tell you."

"Thank you. I breakfasted nearly two hours ago," replied the doctor gruffly. "It's my patients I'm thinking of: they suffer

from my waiting, not me. But what in the world is the important news? Tell me as quickly as possible, for I must be off."

"You could never imagine," she said with a little shy smile. "It's such good news, so very good! I had a letter last night. It was ten o'clock when it came: that's why I sent so late for you to come this morning."

"Strange! very strange," grumbled the doctor, "for you to get a letter; and stranger still, to send at eleven o'clock at night to tell me to come here this morning to be informed of the fact."

"O doctor! don't laugh at me," she said imploringly; "but you won't, when you know who it's from. It's from Allen," she added triumphantly: "he's got his discharge, and he's coming home."

"A—h!" and the doctor's countenance fell suddenly: "you call that good news, do you?"

"Certainly," she said with a little surprise. "Why, I've not seen him for six years; and I've not heard from him since father died."

"More shame to him, then, the good-for-nothing scapegrace!"

"O doctor!" cried Jane, holding up her hands, "pray don't speak so of him."

"It's the truth: it's God's truth!" returned the doctor wrathfully. "I say his very silence and indifference helped kill your father. I know more about it than you do. Didn't he take that boy, only a cousin's child, and bring him up as though he were his own son; educate, and care for him with a most remarkable interest: and

when he got old enough to be an honor and comfort to him, what did he do?"

"He was so young then!" pleaded Jane.

"So young! I don't call a man of twenty-one a child by any means. He was too old to lead a life of dissipation, to squander money as though it were dirt, and to get into all sorts of scrapes. I say, if he was a child, he should have had the tastes of a child. Think of what it cost your father to pay his debts, get his dishonorable deeds covered up, and start him fair in the navy. You don't know whether his life's been honorable or not these last six years, because he's been in foreign service all the time. However, as we've heard nothing against him, we'll give him the benefit of the doubt."

"I know he's changed," cried Jane eagerly: "he's been very different since that last scrape."

"You know a great deal about it," returned the doctor grimly, "when he hasn't even taken the trouble to write to you since your father died; and didn't write to him when he was living, which made the poor soul miserable in his last hours. Didn't he know your father was breaking up, and that his letters would have been a comfort to him? I declare, it made me hate him, when I used to hear the poor dying man ask until the very last, 'Any letters from Allen?' then his pathetic look of disappointment, when he was told 'No' over and over. I never can forget it, and I don't want to. I want to remember such ingratitude and heartlessness."

"Please, don't say he was heartless," cried Jane imploringly: "he never was heartless: he was only thoughtless; and he was so far away, that he didn't understand how ill father was."

"Yes; you can make excuses for him, as you always did. You have a tender spot in your heart for him even yet."

"Oh, no! pray, don't say that. It's all over: it was over long ago. I love Allen as a — as a brother now."

"Jane Herbert, I'll tell you the truth.

It's a duty I owe to you and to your dead father. It's a solemn duty to tell you the truth before it's too late. That scamp is coming back to wheedle your fortune out of you. Now your father's gone, he's sure that it's all yours; and he remembers what a soft heart you had for him. God knows, I had hard enough work to keep it from him. If I hadn't watched your father as sharp as a cat watches a mouse, he would have changed his will at the last, and left him the half. Although he squandered more than you have, before he was twenty-one, I am convinced that your father had such a weakness for him, that he would have given him the remainder if I hadn't looked out for your interest."

"I think he should have had something," said Jane stoutly; though she was frightened the next moment at having dared to disagree with the doctor.

"You do, do you? Well, then, give him all; and the sooner he spends it, the sooner you'll get rid of him. Give him your money, and marry him besides, if you like; you're your own mistress; but don't say I didn't warn you."

"O doctor! how can you be so cruel?" cried Jane pitifully. "You know I will never marry him now: once, when I was younger, I might, if he hadn't been so wild; but now I'm too old, — I'm thirty-five in a month, and he's only twenty-seven."

"No more difference in your ages than there ever was: you're older, he's older; you're wiser, you're richer; he will take that instead of youth. If he can't get your fortune into his hands in any other way, he'll want you to marry him: you love him as well as ever, and you'll do it."

"No, no: you're mistaken, you're unkind; you don't like Allen; you never did; and you're prejudiced against him," returned Jane hotly. "What would you have me do? close my doors against one I love like a brother, and after six years' absence too? Remember how father loved him. Why, he would be angry in heaven, if he knew I did such a thing; and, besides,

I consider that Allen has a right here, as your father's adopted son."

"Just as you please," said the doctor coldly, as he took up his hat and gloves.

Jane eyed him askance. He was angry, — very angry. It frightened and distressed her to quarrel with her best friend, her father's best friend, her tried counsellor and guide. They had never disagreed on any subject save this. Allen was coming home, Allen must come; but Jane did not wish him to come in the very teeth of the doctor's opposition. She wished to smooth the way, to soften his prejudices, to get his consent, if not his approbation. Now she saw that she had gone too far in defending her cousin so warmly; that the doctor was seriously displeased, and that she must use a little feminine tact to conciliate him. So, as he was turning to go, she laid her hand on his arm, and said, while she looked into his face appealingly, "You're not going without telling me what to do? You've only blamed me, and I wanted your advice."

"No, Jane; I've not blamed you, and, by Heaven! I never will, let what may come," cried the doctor in a strangely agitated voice. "It's because I don't want to see you wretched that I speak so strongly. I tell you, if he comes here, he will rob you and break your heart. My advice would be to close your doors against him, and never see him; but I can't reasonably expect you to do that, for, after all, he's your cousin. Still, I warn you against — doing any thing for him, against marrying him."

"I shall never marry him," interrupted Jane resolutely. "I shall never marry him. Now are you satisfied?"

The doctor smiled sceptically: then, taking her hands in his, he looked at her long and tenderly, while something like tears dimmed his eyes. "Poor Jane, poor little woman!" he said at length: "you mean it now, no doubt; but you'll not be proof against his handsome face, his fascinating tricks. You know my interest in you is sincere: don't blame me because I want to save you. O Jane, Jane! if you only cared

for me one moment, — but what am I saying? What am I thinking of? By Jove! where are my patients? They'll all die before I get to them. I must be off. Good-morning. We'll talk this over again when I've more time;" and, crushing her hands until she almost cried with pain, he rushed out of the room, leaving her to wonder at his sudden and strange departure.

It was early morning, about a month after the conversation recorded above, and Jane Herbert sat alone in her breakfast-room. She held the "Times" in her listless fingers, but she was not reading; for her mild eyes were fixed reflectively upon the glowing coals in the grate, and a smile half-sad, half-happy, hovered round her gentle mouth. The table was spread for breakfast. It was nearly ten o'clock, and yet Jane had eaten nothing. Was she waiting? or was she absorbed in a pleasant reverie? She was waiting and thinking, both. Waiting for Allen, who never came down early, and thinking how happily the time had passed since he had been with her. Just as the clock was on the stroke of ten, the door was thrown open, and my gentleman entered briskly.

Jane looked up with a sweet, warm smile as he came behind her chair. "Late again, you naughty boy."

"Yes; I am always late, Jennie; but don't scold;" and, leaning over her, he took her face between his hands, and kissed her affectionately.

Jane looked like any thing but scolding, as she let her little hand rest on his head with a caressing touch. "The rolls are cold, and the coffee is spoiled."

"Never mind: I can't eat, and I won't eat until you've answered the question I asked you last evening. I've not slept all night thinking of it. Jane, why will you torment me when I'm so anxious. Come, dear, say 'Yes' at once;" and he slipped down on the stool before her, and took her hands tightly in his. "See, here, I am at your feet; and here I shall remain until you say you will be my wife. Now,

do say it at once, Jennie, because I want my breakfast."

Poor Jane! the long light lashes hid the mild eyes; the little thin hands trembled like frightened birds in his bold clasp. She loved him; she had always loved him; and the cries of her heart drowned the deep, quiet warning of reason. He was so handsome, so persuasive, so affectionate; he was all she had in the world; her tender heart longed for some one to lavish its wealth of love upon. Since her father died she had no one. Allen was every thing to her. She had told the doctor that she loved him as a brother: she had tried to think she did; but now she knew that she loved him with the "love of love." Her heart said "Yes;" her reason, "No;" but, looking into his handsome face, she closed her ears to the deep, quiet voice, and listened to the louder cries of her heart. "Speak, Jane," he urged, pressing her hands still more closely.

"What can I say, Allen?" she said at length, in a trembling, irresolute voice. "You know I love you dearly, that I've always loved you; and I believe you love me: but is it best that we should marry? Think of the difference in our ages, in our tastes and habits."

"These are weak excuses, Jane. What does a few years more or less matter to me? It's all the same whether you are older or younger. I love you as you are. Six years ago there was the same disparity. You did not think of it then: why should you now?"

"But I've changed so since then. I've grown so old, so very insignificant and plain."

"You're not plain: you never were plain; and you never will be plain to me." Jane looked at him gratefully. "Haven't I loved you faithfully? Think how many years I've loved you. And you know it was your father's dearest wish."

"Yes," said Jane earnestly, "it was: even when you were so wild, he thought it might be: he thought if you were married you might settle down."

"I've settled down without, Jennie. I'm a changed man. Before I didn't know what an angel you were; now I know how to appreciate you, and I swear I'll make you happy."

"I don't doubt it, Allen; I'm always happy with you: but can't we be happy as brother and sister?"

"No, we can't. The world won't let us. We don't want to be brother and sister; and, by Jove! I'm glad we're not. How long, do you suppose, before people would be gossiping about us if we don't marry? No: I can't stay here unless you're my wife; and you don't want to send me off again to wander about the world alone, do you?"

"No, Allen, I don't, and I won't," she said, her eyes filling with tears as she bent over him. "I'm a poor, little, plain thing, to be the wife of a splendid fellow like you; but, if I can make you happy, myself, and all I have, is yours."

Poor little woman! she didn't suspect that it was "all she had," and not "herself," that he wanted. When she sent for Dr. Warden, and told him with fear and trembling, that, in spite of her promise, she had resolved to marry her cousin, the doctor turned very pale, like one who had received a mortal blow; and, sinking into a chair, he covered his face, and remained silent for a long time.

Jane looked at him greatly troubled. "Are you angry?" she said at last.

"No, no, Jane; I'm not angry: I'm hurt. But I'm a fool to feel it so, when I knew it would come; though I suppose a blow doesn't hurt any the less because we're prepared for it. It's the end of you. It's the end of every thing for me. But don't say I didn't warn you. God knows, I'd have saved you if I could."

"O doctor!" cried Jane entreatingly: "pray, don't speak so! one would think I was about to sacrifice all my future happiness."

"That's it; that's just what you're going to do. I tell you if you marry him your future's ruined. But I said, before, all I

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could say; and it was useless. You will listen to your heart, Jane, and not to reason. So there's only one thing for me to do. I sha'n't bother you with any conventional wishes for your happiness; but, my child, if ever you're in trouble you'll know where to come, won't you? Now, little woman, good-by, and kiss me once before I lose you forever; for you'll never be the same to me again."

Jane was about to reply; but he clasped her tightly in his arms, and kissed her over and over with passionate fervor. Then, before she could speak, he was gone, and she was alone. Long after she remembered that moment, — how brightly the sun shone into the room, the scent of the mignonette that Allen had piled into a vase on the mantle, the crackling of the fire, the song of a robin outside, telling that spring had come, mingled with the voice of her cousin who sang a few bars of "The star-spangled banner," in the adjoining room, — a strange medley of color, sound, and feeling, that smote her overburdened heart, until it ached beyond endurance! She could bear no more; and, throwing herself on a sofa, she burst into tears, and wept long and bitterly.

The beautiful days of summer had come. It was now the last of June, and they had been married nearly three months. How like a dream of happiness the days had passed to Jane! Not that she had been entirely free from fears and anxieties; not that she was entirely confident in her future; but because she had been always with Allen, and he had been kind to her, she had been more than contented. He had not grown cold, nor had he been less devoted; but perhaps his love was a little spasmodic, a little like one who, suddenly remembering that he has a part to act, in his haste rather overdoes it. He was less inclined to be frank and confidential, more inclined to reserve and thoughtfulness. "He is married now," said Jane ex-cus-ingly, "and married to an old wife; so he must be more dignified, more serious." Still, sometimes she sighed, though she

would not acknowledge it to herself, for a little of the boyish eagerness and demonstrativeness that had been so winning in the first days after his return. Nor had she quite as much of his society as formerly; but perhaps a woman should not expect a husband to be constantly at her side. It was not reasonable, and she had determined to be reasonable from the first. A few days after her marriage she had said to Allen, "Now, dear, we will begin with every thing fair and square. You are my husband, and I have boundless confidence in you. I'm at best but a poor business woman, and there are many things that need looking into: so I want to give every thing into your hands. Now that I am your wife, all I have is yours; though, for that matter, I've always considered that half belonged to you. Father never would have cut you off, if he hadn't been influenced" — she had scarce said the words when she was angry with herself for allowing a hard thought against Dr. Warden, — "but he knew he could trust to me to make it all right for you; and, if I hadn't married you, dear, I always intended to give you your share just the same." "Good little soul!" said Allen, pressing his lips to her faded cheek with well-assumed fondness. Jane looked at him worshipfully, and then went on with her plans. "Now we will arrange it once and for all, and never speak of it again; for I hate business, and you must take all the care from me. All is yours, — houses, lands, bank-stock, railroad bonds, government securities, and all. In that desk are all father's books and papers: my lawyer made the transfer before we were married. I would have it so: it's all there; and here's the key."

Allen hesitated; but she thrust the keys into his fingers, and patted him, and kissed him, and was the proudest and happiest of women. She never knew nor felt that she had made any sacrifice. Innocent and trusting, she thought he loved her, and not her fortune. Then, if she belonged to him, was not all she had his? Perhaps her confidence might have been a little

shaken, if she could have known the true state of things, — of the long list of debts, debts of honor, he called them; of the shameful record of his last six years of folly and reckless dissipation. But she suspected nothing; her own soul was so white and pure, that she could not imagine another's to be so dark and stained. If she had known half the poor infatuated father knew, she never would have designated that time of his life thoughtless and wild, which was little less than criminal; and the last six years had been almost a repetition of his former sins. Then, how could such a man settle down quietly and contentedly as the devoted husband of a woman older and less attractive than himself? As soon as her fortune was firmly within his grasp, he began to consider his true position: his marriage bonds pressed upon him like chains; he constantly wished for change, freedom, amusement, any thing to break the monotony of his too-peaceful life; but Jane, so happy herself, thought him equally so, and suspected nothing.

As I said before, the long days of summer had come. Dinner had been over an hour. Allen sat on the balcony smoking, his handsome head resting against the well-cushioned back of a lounging chair, and his legs extended to the full length of that comfortable piece of furniture, enjoying the cool of the evening in indolent ease, when Jane came out from the drawing-room with an open letter in her hand. "It's from Ethel," she said, "and she's coming."

"Ah! How soon?" inquired Allen, with more interest than he had shown in any thing for some days.

"She will be in New York to-morrow. You must go down in the morning train, and bring her up. She comes as far as there with friends, and expects some of us to meet her; but if you don't care to go, Allen, I will send Thomas for her."

"You needn't send a servant, Jane, when you've a husband ready to wait upon you and your fair *protégée*; and, besides, I should

like to run down to New York on business."

"You're very good, Allen; I shall be glad to have you go; and I hope you'll like Ethel," continued Jane, as she glanced over the letter with a thoughtful air.

Allen watched her for a few moments curiously; then he threw away his cigar, and drew her to his side. "Sit here, Jennie, a little while," he said, "and tell me about this girl. Although you've spoken of her so often, I know nothing of her history."

"It was my finishing year at Maple Grove, and I was nearly eighteen, when she was brought there, a lovely little thing of four years, in deep mourning for the mother she had just lost. She was from New Orleans, and spoke French as well as English. From the first she called me her *petite maman*, and I loved her dearly. She slept with me; I dressed, and combed, and bathed her: in fact, I took nearly all the care of her; for she was so sweet and gentle, and seemed to cling to me as though I were indeed her mother. Before she had been there six months, the dreadful news came that her father, in a fit of despair at the sudden loss of his fortune, had taken his own life. No one came forward to provide for the child: she seemed to be left alone in the world, friendless and destitute; and I could not desert her, she loved me and clung to me so. I wrote to papa, telling him the pitiful story, and asking him to allow me to do something for the dear little thing out of my own small income left me by mamma. He at once consented; and the principal of the school, who was very fond of her, agreed to keep her until she was sixteen, if I would defray half the expenses of her tuition, and provide her with clothes. This papa allowed me to do. She finished her education, and came to me about a year after you went away. We were all so fond of her, papa loved her dearly, and Dr. Warden petted her like a child. She was a great comfort to us, and we really needed her; when most unexpectedly a letter came from an aunt in New

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Orleans, who had not made herself known when Ethel was a helpless child, asking her to come and live with her. Dearly as we loved her, we could not keep her from a relative; so she went, unwillingly at first, though now she is quite contented with her life there. Her aunt is very gay, and she meets more society than she could in our quiet home. Every summer she spends three months with me; with that exception, I have lost her altogether."

"Rather selfish of her to go off just as soon as she was old enough to be a companion for you," yawned Allen.

"I have thought so myself sometimes," returned Jane sally. "I made a great many sacrifices for her; and I loved her so dearly that I hoped she would never leave me. Still, I must not blame the dear girl: I am sure she loves me as well as ever; and, of course, her relatives had the first claim upon her."

Allen remained silent; and Jane leaned her head against his shoulder and looked into his face with tender, tearful eyes. "What are you thinking of, little woman?" he said at last.

"O Allen! I am ashamed to tell you, my happiness has made me so selfish! I don't like to feel so; but I can't bear that there should be any change, any break, in our life. I am so contented, so perfectly contented, with you, that I don't want a third person to disturb our peace."

"Then, you don't want her to come?" asked Allen bluntly.

"Yes: oh, yes, I do! It's not that. You don't understand me, dear; and I'm very foolish."

"It seems to me you are a trifle, Jane. I think it'll be very pleasant to have a bright, cheerful girl in the house."

"Why, Allen! you're not dull, you're not discontented, are you?" cried Jane with a sharp ring of trouble in her voice. "I hope you're not tired of your quiet life already. I hope you're not tired of me." Then, overcome by a terrible thought, she covered her face, and burst into tears.

Allen looked at her almost angrily: then

he said fretfully, "This is too much, Jane! I thought you were a woman of sense. Tired of you? how absurd! If I were tired of you, I needn't stay here at your elbow all the time, need I? How unjust and childish to speak so!"

"I know it, dearest; pray forgive me! I am very nervous and foolish to-night: a foreboding of trouble haunts me; but don't scold me, Allen," cried Jane in a pitifully imploring voice.

"I don't scold you; I won't scold you; only be reasonable," returned Allen, as he arose and paced the balcony. He did not caress her: there was no tenderness in his voice. Jane was wounded and disappointed: her heart ached; but she was silent, and forced back her tears resolutely.

"He shall not see me cry," she said. "If I am unhappy, he must not know it."

The next day she dressed herself with unusual care, struggled out of the sadness that still hung over her, crushed every regret and disappointment; and, thinking only of her husband and her joy at seeing him, even after so short a parting, she went to the station to meet him with an expression of contentment on her placid face. The train arrived a few moments after she reached the platform. She ran to her husband, kissed him fondly, and clasped Ethel in her arms, almost weeping with joy. "How well you're looking! how tall you've grown! how pretty you are! O Allen! isn't she a darling?" she cried, hurrying them to the carriage. During the drive home, she held a hand of each. Allen was in excellent spirits. Jane looked at him proudly. Was there ever another such a noble, handsome man as her husband? and Ethel, she was very lovely, a dark, queenly girl, with lustrous eyes, and full, rosy lips. What a contrast to her! For a moment a pain pierced her heart: she seemed so old, so faded, so plain, beside this glorious creature! but she would not allow a shadow to cloud this evening. No: her two dear ones should be happy, very happy. It did not matter whether she were young and pretty: they loved her, and that was enough.

The dinner passed off in almost childish merriment. Dr. Warden was there. He only came occasionally, and Ethel was the excuse for his presence this evening. In the twilight, they paced up and down the garden walks. Ethel, leaning on the arm of Allen, talked and laughed with girlish freedom; and Jane, happy but quiet, listened to Dr. Warden's more serious conversation. Ever since her marriage, Allen had been a prohibited question between them. The doctor never spoke of him; but she knew he disliked him none the less. Although he treated him with the utmost politeness, he was always formal and cold toward him. At first Jane had used all her feminine tact to bring about a better feeling between them; but she had failed, and she now allowed matters to take their own course without interference. Several times she had been on the brink of telling the doctor how mistaken he had been in regard to her position as Allen's wife; still, for some reason, she had never found the courage to approach the interdicted subject: but this evening, emboldened by the hour, the doctor's gentle mood, and her own confidence in her happiness, she said with a little confusion, after a few moments of silence, "You see, doctor, your fears were groundless; for I am perfectly contented. Allen is so good, so very good, that I have never regretted for a moment."

The doctor did not reply at once. He turned his head away, and looked resolutely into the distance. Jane waited anxiously. Was he convinced, or was he evading an answer? At last he cleared his throat, and gasped out, like one choking down a sob, "Yes: you're happy enough now; but the end is not yet. However, don't speak of that. You know my opinion. Let us go in: it's getting too damp for you here." The laughter of Ethel and Allen jarred upon his nerves, and worried him: he could not listen to it any longer; so, saying he had a patient to visit, he wished them a hurried "good-night," and went away. Ethel seated herself at the piano, and sang in a clear, sweet voice. Allen turned the music: Jane sat by the

window, watching the rising moon, as pale and quiet as a spirit; and through her brain, and through her heart, mingled with Allen's voice and the song of Ethel, sounded the prophetic words of the doctor, "But the end is not yet!"

The summer months passed away slowly and wearily to Jane, swiftly and joyously to Allen and Ethel, who were always together, for Jane had given them entire freedom. At the first they had made a pretence of sharing their time with her; but she very soon saw that she was rather a drawback than otherwise to their happiness and amusements. Jane did not ride. Ethel was a splendid horsewoman, and Allen was very fond of that exercise; so they passed all their mornings in the saddle. Jane had always been delicate, and was a poor walker. Ethel and Allen liked long tramps over the country; so she was left alone to lie on the sofa, or to wander about the deserted house and silent garden, seeking some distraction for her unquiet heart. There were picnics and croquet-parties in the neighborhood. She had never attended them, and she did not care to now; but what was more natural than that Ethel should go, accompanied by Allen. Sometimes she thought they were a little selfish to leave her alone so much; then in the goodness of her heart, and the strength of her boundless confidence, she made excuses for them. They were young and full of life, they were congenial to each other, they were happy together; then, why should she destroy their pleasure? Again and again she repeated to herself her constant lesson, "I must be reasonable: I must make him happy." And close upon it, like a refrain, would follow the prophetic words of the doctor, "But the end is not yet." Sometimes she would be restless, miserable, impatient, and inclined to lecture Allen if she had only the chance; but he was with her so little, and then he was always so affectionate and good-natured, that, on the whole, she had really nothing to complain of. He loved her, she never doubted that; then, why should she fret

because he did not show it in the way she preferred. And Ethel was so sweet, so caressing, so loving, that she could find no fault with her. Still, she was not satisfied: she was unhappy, and she could not tell why. "Patience, patience," she would say to soothe herself. "I am wicked and selfish. In a few weeks Ethel will be gone, the fine weather will be over, and Allen will be with me always; then we shall return to our old, intimate life, and all will be as it was before." Inasmuch as she was sad and depressed when alone, she tried to be cheerful and happy when she was with them; and they, too much absorbed in their own pleasure, did not notice how forced and unnatural it was. In the beginning of September she grew languid and weak, remaining in her room for entire days. Then Allen had spasmodic fits of tenderness that almost re-assured her, and drove away her gloomy forebodings. Dr. Warden came occasionally, looked at her pitifully, held her thin wrist between his fingers, and counted her languid pulse with most depressing gravity. Then he would prescribe a tonic, and go away, without her reading any thing in his impassive face. One day she felt very poorly, and Allen and Ethel remained with her all the morning. She slept during the afternoon while they rode, and when dinner was over both had come into her room and talked a half-hour affectionately and cheerfully; then Allen proposed a walk to Ethel.

"Lie still and try to sleep until we return," said he to Jane, as he leaned over her, and touched his lips lightly to her forehead.

Ethel had left the room: some sudden emotion stirred Jane's poor heart to its very depths; and, throwing her arms around her husband's neck, she drew his face close to hers, and sobbed, "I love you, dear: I love you so much; and I am so unhappy."

Allen turned dreadfully pale: something in her voice struck his heart like a blow; but he drew away from her clinging arms, and said sternly, "What childishness, Jane! you'll make yourself worse if you fret in

this way." Then, kissing her again more coldly than before, he went out and left her alone. Her hands fell helplessly; and she turned her face to the pillow, sighing heavily, "It's no use: I will be reasonable. I will not make him unhappy." Then came the refrain, "The end is not yet, the end is not yet." She tried resolutely to compose herself to sleep, but she could not; then she arose and looked from the window. The sun was setting: she watched it with slow, intense gaze. "Would she see it set again? To-morrow would she be living and suffering? or would she be lying cold and dead? There was mignonette on the table. Allen was so fond of it. "When she was dead, would he stoop over her coffin, and lay it upon her breast, and drop a tear upon her face?" She leaned forward, and looked down the avenue. Allen and Ethel were returning from their walk. They were talking earnestly, and never raised their eyes to the pale face at the window. Smiling and happy, full of life and joy, they passed out of sight and entered the house. "Will they come up?" she wondered. She waited a long time, and they did not come; so she resolved to go down. "Yes," she thought: "I will make the effort. I will dress myself and go down. I will spend another happy evening with them. I am dreadfully nervous: all these morbid feelings are a part of my disease; and I cannot drive them away." She arranged her hair with trembling hands, and put on a white dress. Allen liked her best in white, but how ghastly pale she was! "Would she look so when she was dead?" she found herself thinking again. "Would they dress her in white, and put myrtle and pansies on her breast? What folly! was she going mad? She must go down to save herself from such dreadful thoughts. The doctor had told her not to leave her room: Allen had told her the same; yet she must go, and she would go. The drawing-room was silent and dark. "They are on the balcony," she said, and walked straight toward her sad destiny. Her own name

fell clear and sharp upon her ear. It was Ethel who spoke; and she said, "But Jane, poor Jane! when she has been so good to me, what a return to rob her of her husband's love." Then Allen replied distinctly and passionately, "For God's sake! Ethel, don't say you've robbed her of my love. It never was hers. I never loved her, never!"

Jane thought she cried out sharply, but she was mistaken; for her white lips made no sound: neither could she hear; a fearful ringing in her ears drowned their voices, and black darkness settled upon her. She reached out her arms for some support, but there was nothing to lean upon. "I must not fall here," she thought; and, struggling to overcome her mortal weakness, she reached the door, and groped blindly back to her room. There she was safe from intrusion; there she could look her ruin in the face undisturbed. She clasped both hands over her heart, to still its heavy beating. Above all she must be calm. No one must know what had happened, not even they: they must never know that she had overheard them; there was something humiliating in the very thought. It seemed to her that she stood for hours in the middle of her room, outwardly quiet as a statue, doing battle with an army of interior emotions. "First of all," she said, "I must calm myself before I can see clearly into my own heart, before I can be just to them." At last some one knocked gently. It was her maid, who asked if she needed any thing. Jane opened the door, and said softly, "Nothing: don't disturb me again to-night. I think I shall sleep, for I am very tired." Afterward the woman remembered how strangely her mistress's voice had sounded. She lit her night-lamp, placed it near her bed, and shaded it so that the room was nearly dark. Then she sat down by a table, and took her Bible: she had used it from childhood, and had always found comfort in its blessed pages; now she held it in her fingers for a few moments, and then laid it down, seeing nothing to console her. She was ship-

wrecked, with not even a plank to cling to; and the one thing only that she understood clearly was her utter desolation. She was alone in the world, utterly alone. Allen did not love her, had never loved her; neither had Ethel; and she had done so much for both! "Why have they deceived me? why have they deceived me?" she repeated over and over. "How could they have the heart to deceive me? Have I not loved them both, as a mother loves her children? Why, then, have they deceived me so cruelly? Why did Allen profess to love me? Why did he wish to marry me? And why has Ethel loaded me with affection and caresses?" In her infinite love, in the generosity of her noble heart, she even tried to find excuses for both. "Poor Allen!" she thought: "he must have suffered so much, and he will suffer so, to be bound to a woman he does not love! And Ethel, what a fate for her to be separated from him by such a barrier!" Then she began to blame herself for allowing him to make such a sacrifice. "I might have known that he was mistaken when he thought he loved me. Poor boy! he imagined it; and now, in the constant society of a young and lovely woman, he has discovered his delusion. What am I to do? I longed to make them both happy; and I have made them miserable. I am an obstacle; and how shall I remove myself from their path?" She imagined a hundred impossible projects, that afforded her no comfort; for, in spite of herself, she always returned to the old thought, of her utter desolation. She had no husband, no love, nothing. She had stripped herself of every thing, to give all to Allen; and now she lay crushed and broken, like a poor weed, torn up by the roots, and left to die. Hasty steps approached her door: she knew it was her husband. It was late, and he was coming to his bed. How could she meet him? Her heart stood still, and the cold sweat lay in drops on her face. She was thankful for the friendly shade of the room, that hid her terrible pallor. There was an expression of triumph on Allen's face, and a

plank to cling to; that she understood consolation. She was utterly alone. Allen never loved her; and she had done so have they deceived received me?" she "How could they give me? Have I as a mother loves, then, have they? Why did Allen? Why did he wish to have Ethel loaded me with crosses?" In her inquisitiveness of her noble to find excuses for he thought: "he must die, and he will suffer as a woman he does not at a fate for her to be by such a barrier!" she herself for allowance sacrifice. "I might be mistaken when he said, 'Poor boy! he is in the constant society of a woman, he has done nothing. What am I to do? I am both happy; and I am miserable. I am an obstacle. I remove myself from the world that afforded her no rest of herself, she always thought, of her utter loss of a husband, no love, she stripped herself of every thing; and now she lay like a poor weed, torn and left to die. Hasty as she was, she knew it was too late, and he was coming. How could she meet him? He was ill, and the cold sweat on his face. She was thankful for the shade of the room, that she could see his face. There was an expression on Allen's face, and a

certain excitement in his voice, as he said, "What, Jane! not in bed yet?" then he cried in a different tone, for her strange manner startled him, "Are you worse? In Heaven's name! what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing is the matter: I'm no worse," replied Jane calmly, turning away her head as she spoke, "but I should like to be alone to-night. Will you sleep in the next chamber?"

"Certainly, if you wish it. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing, thank you;" and with these indifferent words, they parted forever on earth, without either having the slightest premonition of it.

Jane's eyes followed him as he walked coldly from the room: a wild light sparkled in them,—a flame of longing love, that flickered a moment, and went out, leaving her face as pale and fixed as a corpse. "If he had but kissed me. If he had but spoken kindly to me," she said with a dry sob. "O Allen, Allen! you will live to regret it." Then a convulsion of grief shook her frail form, and she wrung her hands wildly, and looked around, as though she would fly somewhere for shelter. "If Dr. Warden were here," she cried, "he would save me. Where shall I go? What shall I do? I am alone, with nothing in earth or heaven to lean upon. I cannot live: my heart is breaking, my brain is on fire. If I could but sleep, and sleep forever." A bottle on the table near her bed caught her half-frenzied glance. It was an opiate, that Dr. Warden had given her that morning, when she complained of insomnia. "Take ten drops," he had said, "and no more." Now she forgot his directions, she forgot every thing; and, scarce knowing what she did, she put the bottle to her lips, and drank the contents eagerly; then she fell on her knees before her bed, and tried to pray. Perhaps it was from habit, perhaps it was her great need of help, that led her to God in that last moment. Still it was Allen that was first in her thoughts. "Forgive him, and make him happy," she

repeated over and over, until her voice died away in a confused murmur. A strange drowsiness and numbness crept over her: she reached out her arms, and tried to raise them upward; but they fell heavily on the bed, her head drooped, her eyes closed, a smile of childish sweetness settled around her lips, and she slept peacefully.

That night Dr. Warden dreamed that Jane called him. He awoke cold and trembling, while a voice seemed to say close to his ear, "The end has come." After that he could not sleep, but tossed restlessly on his bed until daylight. Then he rose, dressed himself, and waited patiently for the proper hour to visit Jane.

When he reached the house, Mary was dusting the hall; and she opened the door for him. "How is your mistress?" he said anxiously.

"I don't know, sir: I've not been to her yet this morning."

"Is Mr. Allen down?"

"Yes, sir: he's in the garden with Miss Ethel."

"Go up to your mistress, and say I am waiting to see her, when she is ready to receive me."

A moment after a loud scream from Mary rang through the house. It was an ominous summons that left no time for delay. When he entered the room, the shaded night-lamp still burned upon the table. Slanting rays of sunshine struggled through the half-open curtains, and rested warm and bright on the floor where Jane still knelt in the attitude of prayer, her head bowed on her clasped hands, silent, cold, dead! With a cry of anguish he lifted her in his arms, and laid her upon her bed as tenderly as though she had been a sleeping infant. "Go find your master," he said to the half-frantic maid. She left the room, weeping bitterly. Then he leaned over Jane, and pressed a long kiss on her placid brow. "You called me last night, darling: you called me, and I did not come. If I had been here, I might have saved you." Looking around, his eye fell upon the empty bottle; and the truth

burst upon him in all its force. "Oh, my God! my God!" he cried: "it is as I feared; and I unconsciously furnished her the means. Poor Jane! poor, feeble, tortured woman! your misery was too much for you; but, thank God! you are at rest; and no one shall ever know the secret of your death." A half-hour later he came out of the room, bowed and feeble like one smitten suddenly with old age. At the door he met Allen, pale and horror-stricken. He had just learned of the dreadful event, and was hastening wildly to Jane's room.

"O doctor!" he cried, "is it true? Is she dead?"

"Yes," returned the doctor sternly, "yes: she is dead; and I thank God for it."

"What? How? Tell me the cause of her death," questioned Allen with trembling, broken voice.

"Ask your own heart, and it will answer you better than I can," replied the doctor

with a look of deep significance, as he turned away, and rushed from the house like one bereft of reason.

Neither Allen nor Ethel ever knew the direct cause of Jane's sudden death; for later the doctor pronounced it heart disease, which, after all, was not far from the truth. After the funeral, Ethel returned to her aunt. Allen also left the place: the house was closed, and no one except Dr. Warden ever knew of the sad tragedy that ended the life of Jane Herbert.

Before the violets bloomed the second time over Jane's grave, Allen and Ethel were married; but they never returned to their old home. Perhaps they had a vague fear of a haunting presence there. The house was sold, and Dr. Warden became its owner.

Is poor Jane forgotten? I think not; for some one keeps the flowers fresh and beautiful upon her grave.

MR. JOHN.

I AM thirty years old, and a painter: that is, a worshipper of high art; a disciple of Raphael, Michael Angelo, Tintoretto, Leonardo, Paul Veronese, and a host of other Old-World divinities. I read Ruskin from principle, Eastlake from curiosity, and Vasari from love. I look upon the old masters as standards, the modern as teachers; and try to imitate the excellencies of Kaulbach, Zannacois, Rousseau, and Daubigny. I dabble in landscape, still-life, and *genre* compositions. Sometimes I am decided that the only style worth copying is the gray melancholy of Troyon; again the sentimental delicacy of Hamon, or the exquisite tenderness of Merle. I have no settled school, no settled method. There is so much good in every age, every style, in fact almost every artist, as far as I can see, that I don't know just how to condemn any. When I think I have decided on one, before I am aware of it I am admiring another still more. I am a shuttlecock of every form and color, balancing between four generations of battledoors. I often regret this indecision, because I think it is the only thing that has prevented me from becoming a great artist. After confessing my weaknesses, I may leave the impression that I am not original in my subjects: but that is not so; for I think I am very original, — so original that I have never succeeded in selling my pictures to any advantage; because the Boston literati, ship-owners, and doctors, the New York merchants and railroad speculators, will have the modern French school, — Bouguereau, Meissonier, Frère, Diaz, and others equally popular. So what

chance have I with my homely New-England originality? for I maintain that it is originality, though not of the marketable kind.

I was born in Boston, — set that down in my favor; and my father was poor, — as poor as printers usually are; and he broke down even younger than is common with that class of martyrs. Ink, night-work, and bad air consumed what little vitality there was in him. I was four years old when he died, leaving my mother, a delicate woman of twenty-five, with just nothing but myself, as cross and troublesome a little creature as ever was. I don't think mother lasted more than three years after father. I know she sewed, and sewed; and then we were both often hungry. At last her poor eyes gave out, "From over use," the oculist who examined them kindly said, and charged her ten dollars for saying it. Poor soul! her last ten dollars which she had saved from the sale of father's watch. I think that ten dollars, paid for fifteen minutes of time, and no good from it, broke her heart; for she talked of it constantly until she died. Well, he was a rich man, and of course his time was valuable; but I laid it up against him in my childish heart, always intending to be even with him by making him pay ten thousand dollars for a picture when I became a great artist. I have never got even with him yet; but I remember it, and perhaps I shall some time. If ever I do, every cent of it goes into gravestones for father and mother.

After mother died, what became of me? Let me try to remember. First, I was a

newsboy, then an errand-boy, then a printer's devil in the "Herald" office, then a compositor on the "Journal," which occupation I followed until I commenced my profession. When I was twelve years old, I began my art studies under the favorable auspices of the Lowell Institute. How well I remember my evenings in that low, gassy studio! The over-heated boys and young men, the plaster models, the grave, kind face of Mr. H—, with his large shirt collar, and the long, dishevelled locks of good Mr. C—. They were fine teachers; and, without doubt, I owe all my anticipated success to them. I am sure it was thought that I had some talent; for, after six years of drilling, I could make as clever an off-hand sketch as any of the artists who have graduated at that famous institution. Then I went into the "life-school," and struggled through every possible position of the brawny blacksmith who served as a model. He must always remember me; for there was no other scholar as anxious as I was that he should twist himself into impossible contortions, which I gloried in producing in the boldest and most angular manner.

One evening, I think it was the beginning of my seventh year there, I entered with the *nonchalant* air of an old *habitué*, to take my usual place, when I was confronted by Mr. H—, who looked at me sternly, and said very cavalierly, "It seems to me, young man, that you've been here long enough. We can't teach you any thing more: you must leave your place to others who haven't had a chance yet." Then he added dryly, "All you need is practice to make a second Benjamin West." I went away from this temple of high art, a rejected devotee, turned out because I could do something! It was a dreadful blow; and the only consolation I had was, that they, the Alpha and Omega of art, could teach me no more, and that in time I might become a second Benjamin West. On the strength of that encouraging prediction, I took an eight-by-ten studio, with a very poor light; and, with twenty-eight dollars and twenty-nine cents in my pocket, I com-

menced my career. It's no use to give the details of two years of misery, during which I only existed by giving a few hours now and then to my old occupation, drawing a crayon portrait when I could get a sitter which I believe was two in as many years, or retouching pictures for photographers.

Was there ever such a mistake in the choice of a profession? Yes: there has been many, and even more fatal ones than mine; for I always had, and still have, the hope of success to lead me on to victory. One only needs to succeed a little to succeed a great deal; and now that Mr. John has given me the golden key I shall open the door easily.

I don't know whether it was a fiend or an angel, in the shape of a great hulking sculptor, that said to me one day when I was awfully hungry and blue, "Why don't you go abroad and study a while? It would be a sure fortune to you. All you need is a few years of foreign teaching to become one of the greatest painters of the time." Perhaps he was making fun of me; but I didn't suspect it then, although I have since. However, whether he was jesting or not, his words put a new idea into my head; and I thought upon it night and day. It was so pleasant to know that a fortune could be made in any honest way, for I must confess I had about given up the hope of making mine legitimately; but how could I take advantage of this preliminary step of going abroad, when I had not a dollar in the world, and owed fifteen for my rent? At last I hit upon a plan, if it only succeeded. I had an uncle, mother's only brother, somewhere in the wilds of Maine. He was rich, but a thorough old curmudgeon; and I hated him heartily because he had refused to help mother after father died. "It will do no harm to try him," I said: "at the worst, he can only refuse me." So I spent a whole day in composing a letter, in which I told him of my undoubted genius, that required a little foreign cultivation to make my fortune; of my inability to take advantage of this rare chance, because I lacked the one thing needful; and I entreated him

by the sacred memory of my mother, who died from poverty, to give the aid to her son that he had refused to her. In short, I wrote a letter that would have melted the heart of an English oak. After two months of alternate hope and fear I received an answer. I knew it was from him before I opened it; because my name was commenced with small letters, — he was too stingy to use large ones. I came very near dying of surprise, when I opened that yellow envelope, and saw a check — yes, actually a check, for five hundred dollars! I danced for the first time in my life: I cried, I fairly howled for joy; and then I read the charming epistle. If space permitted, I would give it verbatim; but, as it will not, I can only say that the first part was devoted to abuse, in which he called me “a lazy, gude-fur-nothin’ doag,” who wanted to live off of his relations, instead of working like an honest man. The second part was full of advice of a religious nature. The third was practical and business-like. He said that he had always intended to leave me five hundred dollars when he was “done with things airtily; and it didn’t make any grate difference whether I had it now or later.” How thankful I was that I had it now instead of later! In conclusion, he said that I “needn’t expect another cent,” from him “never;” that I could use that sum that he had “airned” by the “swet” of his brow in “rius livin” if I pleased: that was “nothin’” to him; he had “done” his duty to his sister’s child as “beseamed a Christen.” And then he added that he hoped I would make good use of the talents God had given me, and not paint “naked wimmen, and statues, and sich-like abominations, but copy natur’, fields, and trees, and cattle and sheep.”

I can assure you that I didn’t spend much time over the soiled, blue-lined letter. The clean white check was what pleased me most; and, fearing that the bank might “suspend” before I could get it cashed, I rushed down to State Street with the important air of a heavy financier about to “tighten” the market.

I think I was the happiest man living, the day I sailed from New York with my ticket and three hundred dollars in gold in my pocket. Never having had so much money, I thought it an almost inexhaustible fund: however, it was not, as I found to my sorrow, after I had lingered a few weeks in Paris. When I reached Rome, my intended destination, I had but twenty Napoleons and a few sous; and no letter of credit to back the amount that now seemed proportionately small when I compared it with the sum that I had started with. But what did I care? I was young and strong; and my fortune awaited me. So I hired a little attic in the Via Babuino, for which I paid three *sculli* a month, and commenced my career in earnest.

After all my Boston training, I found that I was lamentably ignorant and stupid; for I thought I had only to paint the handsome *contadini*, the picturesque children, the grand and mellow-tinted ruins, the broad sweeps of *campagna*, to sell them at once. In my self-conceit, I thought that I was the only artist in Rome, and that all the Italian nobles, the English lords, and American nabobs, were waiting with open purses and impatient hearts to buy my pictures as fast as I finished them. Fool that I was! I didn’t stop to think that Rome was a city of painters. I didn’t know that there was more genius hidden in one narrow street than ever existed in our great republic. It took almost a year to undeceive me, and teach me that I knew nearly nothing. Until I arrived at that point, of course I had learned very little; and as, at the same time, I found myself reduced to abject poverty, my condition was not one of the most enviable. Sometimes I laugh and cry together in thinking of the *ruses* I resorted to, the better to hide my true situation from my *padrona di casa*. She was a good old soul, and very careful of my comfort, — almost too careful. One morning she would say, “Will the signor have his coffee and roll at eight?” And I would reply carelessly, although my stomach appealed to me pitifully at the word coffee,

"No, thank you, Signora Tita: I shall breakfast out this morning." Then I would wander forth with an awful appetite; and in the course of my walk I would perhaps pick up a raw carrot at a stall, which I would wash down with a draught of water at a neighboring fountain; after which I would return to my work, apparently as much refreshed as though I had breakfasted heartily at the "Greco." Another day she would ask politely, "At what hour will the signor dine?" I would pretend not to hear her, which gave me time to invent an answer; then, when she repeated the question, I would say, with the air of one entirely absorbed in his work, "Oh! it's you, Signora Tita. What did you ask me? What hour will I dine? Let me see: I think it's to-day I dine with friends at the Hotel de Roma." Again, altogether too anxious for my welfare, "Will the signor leave his soiled linen? The wash-woman has been several times."—"Ah, I have forgotten it!" I would answer blandly, "You may tell her not to come again. I have found another who is better: she is lame, and I carry the clothes to her."

Poor old Signora Tita! she thought me the best and most truthful of beings. Thank God! she never knew how I lied to her; she never knew that I washed my clothes in my little attic, and dried them on the roof fastened to an old canvas-frame; she never knew that my shirts were without starch, thanks to the artist's blouse which I wore continually.

Well, two years passed away in this wearisome struggle; and I began to feel, after having been thoroughly unlearned, that I was at last learning a little of true art: yet no one came to buy my pictures, or even to see them, unless they stumbled, through a mistake, into my studio, as I insisted upon calling my attic. I declare to God that no poor soul was ever so neglected as I was during those two years! I should have died again and again of starvation, if a kind-hearted dealer in the Piazza di Spagna had not bought a picture now and then from sheer pity, affixed an

Italian name to it, and sold it to some unsuspecting compatriot of mine for six times the amount he gave for it.

But you will naturally wonder why I could not sell my pictures, as well as other American artists who live in Rome. I will explain to you why I could not; because an explanation is due to myself, lest you should think that my pictures were either very bad, or that I have overcolored my story, which is a simple statement of facts. In the first place, I was poor; and, being poor, I could not give dinners, and invite strangers to eat them, while I told them that Lord English, or Lady Russia, or the Countess of France, or Mrs. Colonel America, had bought my "Star of Bethlehem," or my "Evander and Æneas," or some other equally interesting subject; nor could I have a large studio decked with brie-a-brac, where I could give weekly receptions, and invite people to meet all the celebrities; nor had I a dress-coat, white tie, and lavender gloves, with which to make my appearance at bankers' balls, and resident tea-parties. I was only a hard-working young man, who shut himself up in a dingy attic, and devoted his life to his art, instead of ogling ladies on the Pincio, or promenading the Corso. So what chance was there for me? Although, as you perceive, I did not live luxuriously in the Eternal City, I lived wisely, and much as did the old philosophers, whom we admire and hold up as examples of heroic fortitude and self-denial, though we despise and neglect their prototypes of the present day.

Well, time went on. I was without money; and the dealer in the Piazza di Spagna had closed his heart against me, because I suggested that he might give me one-fourth of what he received for my pictures. Again ruin stared me in the face; and I despaired, and shut myself up, and wept until hunger drove me out to seek a carrot, my staple article of food,—it is astonishing how much nourishment there is in a carrot. At last I grew homesick (how absurd!), when I had no home, and began

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to think that after all my fortune was behind me, in that land across the sea,— dear, generous, appreciative America; but how could I get there? I had no good uncle down in Maine to apply to; for he was done with "things airily," and had left his property to build a town-house as a monument of his generosity; and I had nothing in the world to convert into money save about a hundred canvasses covered, more or less thickly, with paint.

One day, when I was more than ever disgusted with carrots and water, with washing and drying, and lying to my landlady, a happy accident occurred. A good-natured Englishman came puffing and blowing into my den. He was looking for a celebrated French artist, whose name mine resembled, and never doubted for a moment that I was he. I suppose, virtuous reader, you think it would have been more honest if I had undeceived him; but, good Lord! I was starving, and I had no notion of losing a chance to save my life. Well, he looked around, assured me in very bad French that he was charmed with my "sketches;" selected one of the best, and offered me fifty pounds for it; which I accepted with a readiness that almost frightened him into suspicion. Do you suppose he would have bought it if he had known how poor I was, and that I was not the Frenchman he had heard of; or if he had understood the language he murdered well enough to know that mine was equally bad, and therefore I could not be any thing but an ignorant, vulgar American? However, without an idea of how he was being sold, he gave me a check for fifty pounds; ordered the picture done up,— it was not large,— and trudged off with it, fearful lest it might be changed for a copy if he left it to be sent. I can imagine that picture adorning the wall of a stately English mansion, and the pompous, self-satisfied owner showing it as an "original of H—, immensely clever, but very eccentric, as most Frenchmen are." I am thankful that my signature, which I always make as illegible as possible, will never betray me.

You can naturally suppose that I was not long in rolling up my canvasses, and starting for the "Land of the free." Poor Signora Tita! Poor old attle in the Via Babuino, whose every spot of floor I have washed with my tears! Warm, sunny roof that dried my clothes! Hard couch where I rested my long, tired limbs! Juicy carrots and sparkling water! Adieu; for I shall see you no more. I have fifty pounds; I am rich; and I am starting for America, for Boston, where my fortune awaits me. Such were the thoughts that floated through my mind as I drove triumphantly away from the grim door that had opened for me so many times. What a scene to enlarge upon! But here I am half through my story, and I have not yet begun to tell you how I found my wife, Mr. John, and all the good things that have lately fallen to my lot.

Well, to go on with this *très véridique histoire*, I arrived in Boston one drizzly morning in October, by the night-train from New York, after three years' absence, sleepy, tired, and hungry, with a shabby valise somewhat collapsed, an immense roll of canvas done up in a tin box, and a one-dollar green-back in my pocket. Where was I to go? I had no friends to welcome me, no home awaited me; so I left my treasures in the charge of a *dépôt* clerk, took a check for them, and then wandered into the dirty "saloon," where a crimped girl dispensed muddy coffee and flabby biscuit. I invested twenty-five cents in "refreshments," and then started out to find a studio.

It was scarce sunrise: nevertheless I directed my steps toward that modern temple of art, the Studio Building, where I found a yawning porter dragging the dirt over the rope-carpeted stairs with a stubby broom. "Are there any studios to let?" I inquired with as foreign a drawl as I could produce. It commanded immediate attention. "Yes, sir," he said respectfully: "there is a small one just vacated: the artist has gone South, and left it to be let furnished." I looked at it: it was an

improvement on my Roman attic; and, before twelve o'clock, I was established with my slender baggage ready to receive the fortune that was sure to come to me. But I had learned from past experience that one must have food while he waits, so I selected a good picture of a pleasing subject, and carried it to a dealer near by, to whom I offered it for whatever price he pleased to pay me. He gave me thirty dollars (it was worth two hundred), which I accepted thankfully; for at last I had come to understand that the real value of my pictures was what they would bring, otherwise they were only canvas and paint. That meagre sum of thirty dollars kept the wolf from the door while I looked around, and made the preliminary arrangements that should lead me to success and fortune. For some reason that I cannot explain, I expected my arrival would create a little stir in the world of art. I thought it would gradually leak out that I had returned with numbers of studies; that all the artists would flock to see them, then all the people; that my studio would be filled with appreciative visitors, that my pictures would sell, and that in a little while I should be on the high road to prosperity. My first step, which I now know was a foolish one, was to make friends with the artists. They came, looked at my pictures, praised them to my face, and then went away, and found fault with them. I placed several of the best on exhibition in the various galleries; but they attracted little or no attention. Who had heard of me? I could not be a celebrated artist, or some one would have known of me. I don't suppose they ever stopped to think whether Raphael or Leonardo came into public favor with their first picture. But what else could I expect of Boston. It is such a high-toned city, it has such a lofty standard of art and literature, such finely cultivated tastes, such precise discrimination! of course it could not decide at once in favor of a new-comer. My success might be slow in coming; still, I never doubted but that it would come in the end. Accordingly I waited patiently six months,

then impatiently six more, and at the end of that time I began to suspect that my fortune was no nearer than it was at the first day of my arrival. My pictures did not please; no one could tell why; and I was not sure myself whether they were good or bad. However, I did manage to sell enough to keep soul and body together, and that was something. Perhaps it was as much as I could reasonably expect, seeing there were so many better painters than I.

At last some one suggested that I should paint autumn scenery, — something familiar and homelike, something bright and cheerful, instead of those sad, gray landscapes that I had put all my soul into. It was a new idea: perhaps, after all, there lay the source of my success. So, with high hopes, I packed my traps, took my camp-stool, sketching easel, and big green umbrella, and started for New Hampshire.

It was a warm, dreamy afternoon, late in September; the trees were beginning to turn from green to vivid gold and red; a violet haze hung over the hills, and the valleys were full of silver mist. Perched high upon a woody hill, my easel stuck firmly into the ground, my camp-stool propped up with stones, and my green umbrella spread over me, I was trying to give the finishing touches to a long stretch of landscape, mountains in the perspective, great, beetling precipices in the middle distance, and a languid, reedy river in the foreground, creeping between clumps of scarlet and gold elms. I had laid on the color thick and warm, with a free, bold touch; yet for some reason it did not seem so tender, and still so brilliant, as the exquisite tints of nature which I was trying to copy. There was something crude and tawdry in the effect that pleased me less than any thing I had done. Autumn scenery is beautiful, with its foliage of a thousand wondrous shades and tones, its sweet harmony, its striking contrasts, its gorgeous decay; but what human hand, with the positive medium of canvas and paint, can imitate that which the mystic

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curiously? No, no; in spite of my desire
to be pleased with my picture, I could not
but confess that it lacked sentiment, har-
mony, and truth. It was superficial, a
mere travesty on nature. Tears of disap-
pointment almost blinded me, as, for the
first time, it dawned upon me that this
style of art was not my *forte*, and that I
should fail here as I had in every thing
else. Thoroughly discouraged, I leaned
my head dejectedly upon my hand, and
looked away into the mysterious distance,
wishing,— but what did I wish? For the
wings of a dove? Oh, no! For a twenty-
dollar bill? Yes, to be truthful, I wished
for a twenty-dollar bill; for at that moment
I needed it more than any thing else. My
financial affairs were again in a most dis-
couraging condition, and that was always
a cause of depression and dissatisfaction.
I never was pleased with any thing when
I was out of money. For nearly three
months I had been wandering about the
country, living in the woods, and working
like a slave, only to be disappointed at
last with what I had done. This little
village in Northern New Hampshire, where
I had pitched my tent for a few days,
offered very little attraction to pleasure-
seekers; still, it was a charming spot for an
artist, and I was loath to leave it until I
had consigned some of its striking points
to canvas; but how could I remain when
I had not enough money to pay a week's
board at the fly-inhabited little inn? Lost
in these painful reflections, I did not hear
approaching steps, nor did I look up, until
a shadow was thrown across my canvas,
and a sweet, clear voice said, "Oh, what
a pretty picture!" I raised my eyes, and,
standing between me and the level rays
of the sun, was what I might have thought
a vision, only for her speaking; but,
although I was dazzled and surprised, I
soon discovered that it was no angel, only
a pretty girl in a cambric gown and straw
hat. However, if it had been an angel, I
should not have been any more frightened
than I was; for the only thing in the world

that ever made my heart stop beating was
to be suddenly addressed by a pretty
woman. I had never been a favorite,
never had the least luck, with the other
sex. Not that I am altogether an ill-look-
ing fellow. It's true that I am rather long
and lank, with a hatchet face, and a great
bundle of hair and beard; but my eyes are
rather good, and the line of my nose isn't
very bad. It must have been my thuddity
and awkwardness that made me so ridicu-
lous and stupid when I encountered a
woman. Now, as I looked up and saw
those beautiful eyes gazing steadily at me,
and the pretty mouth just parted in a little
surprised smile, I felt as though I should
sink into the earth, green umbrella and
all. There was a moment of silence: the
stranger was the first to break it, and the
following conversation took place:—

"How in the world can you copy all
these things so exact?"

"I don't think they are very exact, and
that troubles me."

"Goodness gracious! why it's as natural
as life,— Farmer Jones's mill, Mr. John's
meadow, Cherry Hill, and Arrow Creek,
— why, I should know it all anywhere."

"Should you? I'm very glad."

"Do tell me how you go to work to
make such a picture. Of all things, I
should like to know how to draw. Is it
very difficult?"

"Not very, when one has a talent for
it."

"Oh, a talent! but can't you learn unless
you have a talent?"

"Not easily."

"Is that so? Well, don't you get lone-
some here all alone?"

"Sometimes."

"I suppose, though, that when you're at
work, you'd rather be alone, just as I
would when I read. I like to come here,
it's so still! I can think better. I like this
so much!" looking at a book in her hand.

"Do you? What is it?"

"It's 'Don Quixote.' I found it among Mr.
John's books. He laughs at me for liking it
so well."

"Then you like to read?"

"Very much, because I've nothing else to do. Mr. John won't let me work, nor go to the village, nor get acquainted with people; so I should be awful dull if it wasn't for books."

"Who is Mr. John?"

"Mr. John? why he's the gentleman I live with: he's the same as a father to me."

"Then you have no father nor mother?"

"No."

"Nor I either: I lost both when I was a very little boy."

"And you had no one like Mr. John to take care of you?"

"No one: I've always taken care of myself." The lovely eyes were full of pity, and the sweet mouth looked very sorry for me, so I thought I would change the subject. "Do you live near here?" I said.

"Just behind the hill, on the other side of the road, in the great stone house."

"Ah! a very pretty place; and is Mr. John's wife kind to you?"

She laughed a short, musical laugh. "Mr. John's wife! Why, he never had any."

"And you live there alone with him?"

"No, not alone: there's Ben and Tom, the hired men; and Mrs. Smith, the house-keeper; and Sallie, the kitchen-girl."

It was astonishing how comfortable I was beginning to feel in the presence of this simple child of nature. I even had the courage to ask her in the boldest manner by what name she was called; to which she frankly replied, "Kate: Mr. John calls me Kate, and the servants Miss Kate."

"Well, may I call you Miss Kate?"

"I don't know — just as you like," with a little confusion. "But perhaps Mr. John wouldn't be pleased if he knew I was talking to a stranger. He's very particular about it: he never lets me talk to any one; so I think I must go."

"Oh, no! not just yet. Wouldn't you like to be painted in a picture? See, here is a little canvas; if you will stand still just as you are I will make a drawing of you."

She was delighted, and promised to stand very still. I had almost finished an exqui-

site little sketch of her, into which I had put a great deal of life and feeling, when a sudden crash in the underbrush startled me; and a great dog leaped out from among the trees, followed by an elderly man, with a kind though sad face. He was dressed in a hunting-suit, and carried a gun and game-bag.

"O Mr. John!" cried Kate, rushing toward him eagerly. "Look, do look! I am having my picture painted!"

Mr. John seemed very angry as he glanced from one to the other in surprise; but perhaps something in my homely, stupid face re-assured him, for he drew near, and looked over my shoulder.

"By Jove!" he cried, bringing his hand heavily down on my knee, "it's like her! but what in the Devil are you doing here, Kate? What are you doing here with this stranger?"

I didn't like to see him angry with the poor girl; so I explained gently how she had accidentally come upon me, and how I asked her to stand for a sketch.

"It's the first time? You're sure it's the first time?" he said, looking suspiciously from one to the other. "Tell me the truth, Kate."

"Of course," she replied, laughing and blushing a little, "I have never seen him before."

This seemed to appease Mr. John; for he patted her on the head, called her a good girl, and then told her to run away home. She looked lingeringly at the picture, and, I thought, lingeringly at me, as she turned away, followed by the great dog. After she had gone, Mr. John came, and sat down near me, pushing over my umbrella and color-box. "See here, young man," he said, "I want to have a little talk with you. I like your face: I believe you're honest. You're the first man Kate has ever talked with alone. She's romantic and silly, and it would be just like her to fall in love with some one. Now, I don't want any of that nonsense, you understand. I brought her up, and educated her to be with me, and to take care of me when I'm old; and I don't intend to lose her."

Now, I'd like to have her portrait painted right well; but I've never had it done, because I'm afraid of artists. They're a precious bad lot, the most of them. See here, are you married?"—"No," I stammered out; for the very thought frightened me. "I'm sorry for that," he returned. "However, if you will promise me that you won't encourage Kate to fall in love with you, nor won't fall in love with her yourself, I'll let you paint her portrait; and you may come to the house to-morrow, and begin it. But first you must promise me."

How could I do that? I was sure already that if I saw her again I might fall in love with her; but I needed money, so I tried to resolve that I *would not*. Though I gave the desired promise rather unwillingly, I was honest enough in my intention.

That night I put a few questions to the landlord of the inn about Mr. John, which elicited the following remarks:—

"No one knows nothin' about him: he came here ten year ago, an' bought that place of Carnel Simpson's, an' paid ready cash down; then he went off; an' in a few weeks he cum back with a little gal eight or nine years old, an' an old woman to take care of his house, an' another servant-gal, an' two men. Then lots of furniture cum by rail to the town below, an' was carted up here,—cheers, an' sophys, an' a grand piano, an' Lord only knows what else! They say it's most like a palace up there: though I've never seen it; an' I don't know who has, for that matter, for no one never sets foot in his door; an' he never was in a house in this district; an' the men an' the servant-gal don't speak to any one, more'n to say 'good-day,' the same as their master; an' they never any of 'em come to church, no more'n a pack o' heathens. The little gal never went to school to the 'cademy; an', now she's grown up, she never comes to the village. They say that he's educated her himself, an' that she's a proper pretty gal; but no one thinks she's his child, an' they do say queer things about her."—Here I interrupted the old gossip with such a sudden "Good-night,"

that I left him, his mouth wide open and his eyes staring with surprise.

The next morning I presented myself at the stone house, with canvas, easel, and paint-box, ready to begin my pleasant labor. Kate and Mr. John received me in a large, handsomely-furnished room which they called the library, and which was to be my studio while I was painting the portrait. My charming sitter was full of delight at the thought of any break in the monotony of her life. She took a dozen different, graceful positions, arranging her simple dress and blue ribbons with bewitching coquetry. I don't think any one was ever so happy as I during those first days. I didn't quite understand how happy I was, or perhaps I might have been conscience-smitten to find that it was perfect bliss only to be able to look at Kate, with Mr. John sitting by, regarding her with pathetic tenderness. I knew before the third day that I was in love with her, desperately, dishonestly in love; but I was determined that neither she nor Mr. John should suspect it. Almost before I was aware of it, Mr. John had gained my confidence, and I had told him of all my past struggles and sorrows. Sometimes he would listen to me quietly and tearfully, then again he would break into a furious tirade against the injustice of the world and the cruelty of fate. One day, when I had finished telling of my trials in Rome, he slapped me heartily on the shoulder, and said cheerfully, though there was an undertone of sadness in his voice, "Never mind, my boy: don't think any more of it. Keep your promise to me, and I will see that you sell your pictures. I lost all my chance in life when I was your age, through poverty. I might have been happy; but I tell you I lost the chance then, and, by Heaven! it was a wrong that nothing else can compensate me for." Then his voice choked, and he fairly broke down. The next morning he gave me three hundred dollars, which, he said, was a prepayment on the portrait.

I think I had been there eight or ten

days, and my work was going on finely; yet I was not satisfied with myself. For the first time in my life, I felt that I was really dishonest, that I was stealing the treasure of my benefactor under his very eyes; for in spite of my honor, in spite of my resolve, I was in love with Kate, and the dear child, much to my astonishment, was becoming too fond of me. I saw it in every tender glance, I felt it in every innocent word. I was a great, lank, awkward fellow, poor and unfortunate; but I was the only man she had ever known beside Mr. John, and she fancied that I was the best and the handsomest in the world. One morning we were alone for a few moments: Kate was more lovely, more gentle, than ever, and I was completely beside myself. I had occasion to change the position of her hands; and, before I knew what I was about, I pressed them to my lips. She drew them away, looked at me a little surprised, then suddenly threw her arms round my neck, and burst into tears. There was a position for an honorable man, who had given his word to his benefactor! Almost crushed with shame and remorse, I held her to my heart until she broke away from my clasp, and rushed from the room.

Mr. John came in peaceably. "Where is Kate?" he said. I cowered beneath his glance. What could I say? What excuse could I make? He had been noble and generous to me: I had broken my promise, and betrayed his confidence, and I felt like a criminal. He looked at me gently, waiting for my answer. I could not speak: my shame made me dumb.

"Ah!" he said at last, "I see how it is." Then I threw down my palette and brushes, and told him all. "Now," I cried, "I must go! I can't stay here to see her! I love her: I can't help it; and there's nothing more to say! The sooner I get away, the better!"

"And without finishing the portrait?" said Mr. John ruefully.

"Yes, without finishing the portrait," I returned decidedly. "I must not see her

again." I had never forgotten myself, my diffidence, my awkwardness, so completely. For the first time in my life I was sure of myself. I knew I had the strength to go then; but, if I hesitated, I felt that I was lost. "I will return you the money you paid me," I said, picking up my things rapidly; "keep what there is of the portrait: it's better than nothing."

Mr. John looked at me pityingly. "It's true you've broken your promise; but perhaps it's not too late if you go now. Don't speak of returning the money: the portrait, even as it is, is worth double the sum. Send me some pictures, and I will pay you a good price for them. Perhaps you'll think I'm hard: may be I am: but I can't lose Kate; she's all my life. You can't love her half as well as I do."

I had gathered up my things with a bursting heart, gave my hand to Mr. John, and turned toward the door. I had been in paradise for a little while; now I was leaving it forever. As I stood on the threshold listening to Mr. John's "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," the door was thrown open violently, and Kate burst in with flushed face and red eyes. Looking from one to the other, and noticing Mr. John's agitation, and my preparations for departure, she divined the truth, and cried out sharply, "Where are you going?" Then, springing at Mr. John like an angry little tiger, she seized him by the arm, and demanded what it all meant. "You are sending him away because I love him! and you think I'll never see him again; but I will! I will!" Then, coming to my side, she put her hand on my arm, and said gently, "If you go, I'll go too."

That was more than Mr. John could bear. He trembled, turned deadly pale, and at last sobbed out, "O Kate, Kate! is that the way you return my love?"

In a moment the impulsive girl was at his side, with her arms round his neck. "I love you, you know I love you; but I love him too, and you want to send him away. Let him stay here, and I can love you both."

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"Child, child," said Mr. John, gently
stroking her hair, "you don't know what
you ask: you don't know how hard it is to
give you to another. How can I live if I
lose you?"

"You won't lose me," she said earnestly;
"that is, if you will let us both stay with
you and love you; but if you send him
away, I will go too,—remember what I say,
I will go."

I stood during this touching conversation,
silent, embarrassed, guilty, yet very happy,
because the dear girl loved me, and had
declared her intention to go with me.

At last Mr. John said sadly and almost
reluctantly, "Put down your box, boy, and
let's talk this over. Perhaps we can ar-
range it. Go away, Kate: when we have
finished talking, I'll call you."

"You won't go without seeing me; prom-
ise me," and she looked me imploringly in
the face.

"I promise you," I said, pressing my lips
to her forehead; then she went away and
left me alone with Mr. John.

I was full of contrition at seeing the
good man in such trouble. "Forgive me,"
I said with a broken voice. "It's my
fault, I know; but I never meant to make
trouble. I love her: she's the only creature
besides mother that ever loved me. I'm
so poor and unfortunate, such a miserable
man for a sweet girl like her to love! I
worship her; but don't fret, Mr. John: even
if she wants to go, I won't take her away
from you. No: I can't marry her, as dearly
as I love her; I can't marry her, for she
would starve with me. No, no, I never
can drag her down to my misery."

"But you won't drag her down,—by
Heaven you won't. I've money enough
for all. I'm a selfish brute to stand be-
tween the poor girl and her happiness.
I've suffered all my life because cursed
poverty stood between me and the only
woman I ever loved. I did a great wrong
to her mother. Now's my chance to atone
for it. If you really love her, and she loves
you, take her; and I will make every thing
easy for you, even if it breaks my heart."

Before I knew it, I was on my knees cry-
ing like a child, while I thanked Mr. John
between my sobs; and he cried too, wring-
ing my hand until it ached, and calling me
over and over his boy, his dear boy.

"But wait, wait a little: don't go crazy
with joy until I tell you all; for, by Heav-
en! I won't deceive you in the least;
but remember, you're to keep it from her.
She's my own child, and I never was mar-
ried. Do you understand? Her mother
was the sweetest, the truest. O my God!
what an angel she was! but she was a poor,
humble girl; and my father, a purse-proud
old Jew, swore that he would disinherit me
if I married her; and I was a coward, a
weak coward, and afraid to make her my
lawful wife in the face of it all. She loved
me, poor girl! she gave up all for me: but
shame and remorse broke her heart; and
she died when Kate was born. I've never
known a happy day since. If she had lived
to share the fortune that my father left me
a few years after, how different all would
have been! It did me no good then: my
heart was buried in her grave. I hated
the world, and determined to leave it and
devote my life to her child. I've watched
over her and guarded her as a miser does
his treasure. I've kept her away from
every one, because I wanted all her! love all
her life, for myself. Good God! how her
mother's face comes before me to-day! No,
no: I won't make her unhappy. I believe
you're a good, honest man, and she loves
you: that's enough. You shall have her, if
it breaks my heart."

I thanked him over and over, and assured
him that it never would break his heart,
and that Kate would love him none the
less because she loved me a little.

"But you don't think any the less of
the girl after what I've told you."

I assured him that nothing could change
my love for her.

"Remember, she's never to know it: she
must think, as she always has, that she's
only an adopted child."

I promised him every thing he asked
with the happiest heart that ever beat in

any man's breast. Kate was delighted when she learned of the course events had taken; and I believe she loved Mr. John better than she ever had before. Well, we were married very quietly, and my wife and I remained with Mr. John until nearly Christmas. Now we have come to Boston for a little while. It's no use to take a house, because we shall pass the greater part of the year with Mr. John. But Kate insists that I shall have an elegant studio. So I've abandoned my little hole in the temple of art, and have taken a large, airy room on — Street, No. —, where my former works, autumn scenery and all, are handsomely framed, and hung in the best possible light; and the public are respectfully invited to call and see them, at any hour between ten and three. You

know, I told you that I only had to succeed a little to succeed a great deal; and now I've proved it, for I've already several orders from studies made abroad; and yesterday the very doctor who robbed my poor mother bought a picture from me, for which he paid five hundred dollars. Not as much as I intended to get: not as much as I will get in the future; but still it's not a bad interest on ten dollars. I shall double the amount without any delay, and buy those grave-stones, which have been the dearest wish of my life. So you see that my fortune is in a fair way to come to me at last. Not from having been abroad; not from painting autumn scenery; not even from my profession: but through the love of my dear Kate and good Mr. John.

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THE DRINKERS OF ASHES.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE "REVUE DES DEUX MONDES."]

INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH every one knows that Savonarola, excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI., was burnt at Florence the 23d of May, 1498, but few persons are acquainted with the strange events that immediately followed his martyrdom.

It was not for having overthrown the power of the Medici, and in its stead substituted his own authority, that Fra Girolamo, so dear to the Florentines, was torn from the convent of San Marco where he had taken refuge, endured torture, and at last perished by the flames: it was for having shaken the all-powerful of the Court of Rome,—for having declared that the Borgia could neither be considered a bishop, nor yet a Christian.

In spite of the terrible re-action against the poor monk, he had nevertheless, until his last hours, many secret disciples, who remained faithful to his cause, and who tried in vain to save him. Those who were present at his death divined his thoughts when he cried to his two companions, Dominico da Peschia, and Silvestro Marussi, "*In minus uas Domini, comendo spiritum meum!*" In effect, these words were less a prayer addressed to God, than a last injunction to his disciples, to continue the struggle, even to the threshold of death, against that powerful opponent, who triumphed over his enemies only by torture and fire.

The Court of Rome, fearing that they would make relics of the remains of the martyr, ordered his ashes to be thrown into the Arno; but the people broke through the line of guards, in spite of the blows of their pikes, rushed upon the still burning remains, and carried them away, crying that they had murdered a saint.

Three of the disciples of Savonarola, those to whom his last words were addressed, took possession of the charred head and heart of their master; and, baffling the pursuit of the guards by traversing the narrow lanes of Florence, they were enabled, without being detected, to take refuge in a ruined hut near the convent of Sant' Onofrio. During the fray one of them was wounded in the shoulder by the blow of a halberd. Once in security, they adored the shapeless remains of him whom they had loved so much, as if they were the relics of a saint. Then followed a strange scene: they mixed with wine some of the martyr's ashes, and added to it the blood of the wounded man; then all three, having partaken of these new sacramental elements, swore to avenge their master, and to combat then and always, until they had effaced from the earth the power of the sacred throne, and all the strength that flowed from it. They swore to be apostles to all the world, to raise up enemies against Rome, to be ready for battle in the light of day, in

the darkness of night, by sword and by speech, and as they said in their oath, "*per fas, per nefas*." In a word, all was permitted except assassination; for it was the authority itself they would overthrow, instead of its representatives.

Thus was formed a secret society, that rapidly developed. At that epoch reform was in the air: John Huss was dead, leaving numerous disciples; and Luther, already born, was not long in raising the cry of revolt. The friends of Savonarola, re-united as understood between them, gathered around those who had communed with the remains of the martyr; establishing their ramifications indiscriminately among laymen and priests, frequenting the courts of Italian princes, fomenting opposition against the monks; and, as much to bewilder the curious, as to be recognized by them as a common rallying word, they took the name *Téphrapotes*, composed of two Greek words which signify *Drinkers of Ashes*. They then elected seven chiefs, to whom they gave the names of the first seven Kings of Edom, predecessors of the Kings of Israel. As at that time many were well versed in the lore of the Cabala, their traditions were derived from the *Zohar*, which no one will ignore as its universal code.

These seven chiefs of the Drinkers of Ashes transmitted their names to their successors in such a manner that one would almost believe the founders of this singular society to have been immortal. During a conspiracy that was discovered in Rome in the beginning of the eighteenth century, one of these *Téphrapotes* was arrested: when interrogated, he replied that his name was Bela, son of Beor.

"Who has induced you to conspire against our Holy Father the Pope?"

"Bela, son of Beor."

"What is the name of your father?"

"Bela, son of Beor."

"And your grandfather?"

"Bela, son of Beor."

"How old are you?"

"Three hundred and twelve years."

"Do you try to persuade us that you

have lived always, — that you are a man who has existed for three centuries?"

He replied simply, "I have."

They believed him insane, and that saved his life. He was imprisoned in the castle of Sant' Angelo, from which he escaped by the aid of other Drinkers of Ashes, who had watched over him in secret.

The Roman government, so well instructed in every thing, thanks to the confessional, was not long in discovering the existence of a society inimical to its interests. At first it was little troubled; but, seeing the number of its adherents increasing rapidly, and believing that the death of Savonarola was the only cause of their hate, it would use mildness, withdraw the former condemnation, and at least rehabilitate the martyr. Paul III. declared any one who attacked his memory a heretic; Paul IV. determined, after examination, that his writings were irreproachable; and at last Benoit XIV. no longer hesitated to rank him among the *servants of God who merited beatification*. Such measures, however, were not sufficient to disarm the men who desired, not only vengeance, but also the entire destruction of an order of things the most complete and most solid that had ever existed.

The scene of action of the Drinkers of Ashes was not confined to Italy. They engaged in the struggle against the house of Austria. They took an important part in the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, the creation of the kingdom of Prussia, that, with its new Protestant power, seemed to demand an overthrow of the old edifice of Hapsburg. During the French Revolution, one of the chiefs of the Drinkers of Ashes was a member of the Convention: he voted the death of Louis XVI., held important offices under Napoleon, endeavoring with all his influence to overthrow the temporal power. At the time of the Restoration, the *Téphrapotes*, who contended that kings had no divine right, were in communication with the French *Carbonari*, and, above all, with the various retreats of the Dauphin. Dispersed in other times over

Europe, and even the New World, the force of the work within forty years seemed concentrated upon three principal points,—the destruction of the temporal power, the overthrow of the empire of Austria, and the annihilation of the Turkish empire of the Occident. To these tended all the efforts of the *Téphrapotes*. God alone in his unfathomable secrets knows to what destiny they are reserved.

The oath of 1498 is sworn to-day; but the mystic formula of the compact, imprinted with the confused ideas of the Middle Ages, has expired, and it can find no place here. It is enough to know that each Drinker of Ashes is pledged never to risk his life but for the work to which he is given, and under no pretext to fail to obey; for, if he refuses obedience, he is punished by death. In short, no matter what power is vested in one member, he is never to use it to arrive more surely or more quickly to the supreme end, unless the chiefs and the association approve of it. The eldest chief dwells *beyond Jordan*. By these words is understood the territory of the power with which there is no temptation to affiliate. The six others reside ordinarily in the centre of the same country, often living two and two together, or, at least, not far from each other, so that they may be able to take promptly any position that circumstances demand.

These explanations, which I have given as briefly as possible, seem necessary for the comprehension of the true story I am about to relate.

I.

SYLVERINE.

BETWEEN the end of the Oriental crisis in 1840, and the first Italian commotion of 1847, a great calm seemed to reign over the world. A profound silence enveloped the ordinary political conspirators: kings

seemed to sit tranquilly upon their thrones, and monarchs the most constitutional believed themselves absolute sovereigns. During that period, the Drinkers of Ashes seemed to have vanished entirely, so profound was their silence. The supreme chief resided sometimes in Paris, sometimes in London. His six associates were scattered over Europe,—two in Italy, two others in Austria, and the two last lived sometimes in Serbia, sometimes in Constantinople. They often held secret councils between them, when one would agitate some new question; for the initiative was allowed to each one, especially for the sphere of action in which he moved. The society re-united usually in Switzerland, a free country, undisturbed in circulation, and bordering on the scene of action. They resembled birds of passage, who, guided by their instinct, sometimes arrive in the same country from all four corners of the world. They gave the fraternal kiss to those, who, without personal ambition, worked for a common good; saluted each other as in the time of Alexander VI., "*In nomine fratris Hieronymi*;" discussed eagerly the question most important, displaying the strongest affection and confidence for each other; parting, not only with the hope of approaching triumph, but armed with an unshaken faith, and a persistent courage in spite of delay and defeat.

At that epoch one of the chiefs, who, in his order, was styled Johab, son of Zerah, king of Edom for the tribes of Romagna, lived in Ravenna, the centre of his action in the Papal States. He had dissimulated so cleverly, and had concealed his opinions so well, that he was left to live tranquilly in the midst of the serious occupations that seemed to fill his life. He was very gentle, very affable, and not proud. He talked voluntarily with the fishermen on the coast; and if by chance he had needed a boat to have taken him even to Corfu, I am convinced, so well was he liked, that he would have found one without searching long. He was called Flavio Masterna, and belonged to a very old Tuscan family.

Complaisant genealogists even tried to trace it back to the Etruscan Masterna, who reigned in Rome under the name of Servius Tullius. Flavio was the first to laugh at the illustrious origin they would thrust upon him. He was a count or a marquis, I know not which; but he had never taken any title, believing that such puerilities appertain by right to those who are forced to retrace the course of time to discover a merit, or to search a distinction among the generations that are forgotten. He remained, then, particularly simple; intelligently attached to the work that regulated his life; beloved by those who surrounded him, devoted, ready, and anxious to please him; and that sufficed him. He lived beyond the city, on the border of the celebrated forest of pines, in a small, isolated house, covered with verdure, and filled with books. He seemed to pass his life in a very simple fashion, between reading and the few friends who visited him. At least outwardly, there was nothing strange in his life. He accomplished regularly, but without excess of zeal, the religious duties imposed in the States of the Church; gave voluntary alms; never spoke of politics; was friendly with the officers who commanded and the soldiers who held the garrison in the city; but was never seen in the *cafés*, knowing well that they are the refuge of idleness and fanaticism. Sometimes he took long, solitary walks, followed by a great dog, alert and watchful, that was usually seen lying in the sun on the door-stone of the house. Sailors returning late from fishing had sometimes encountered him on the shore, sitting upon an upturned boat, as though he waited for some one; but they had not paid much attention to him, merely remarking, "Oh, he is an original!" In spite of his extreme sweetness; in spite of his caressing manners, peculiar to the men of the Tuscan race; in spite of the dreamy sadness that floated in his dark eyes,—when one regarded attentively his tall figure, already a little bent, his vigorous thinness, his olive tint, the energetic arch of his brows, his large,

full forehead, that a premature baldness made more striking, one felt in seeing the gravity that predominated in the expression of this man of thirty-five years, that in him was something implacable and abstruse,—an interior life hidden from all, of which he alone possessed the secret. "Bah!" said they, noticing how grave he was, "he thinks of some old love sorrow." But they were mistaken: he lived in the difficulties of his double existence, conforming to the device, in the bad Latin of the Middle Age, bequeathed to him by his ancestors: "*Atque ante panem, justitiam*" (Even before bread, justice.) He had no family; his father had died in exile; his brother had been shot at Modena in the course of a fruitless insurrection; his mother he hardly knew; when he thought of her, he remembered vaguely a large, thin woman, who, each evening at her devotions, mingled prayers for the *carbonari* with imprecations against those she called princes of the cursed alliance. Being arrested at Milan for having insulted an Austrian officer, when interrogated, she declined to give her name and title; then added, *Schiava!* (slave). The police under this foreign government not being merciful, the Marchesa Masterna, of the dukes of Montespertoli, was treated as a woman of abandoned life. She became insane from humiliation, and died soon after in a mad-house.

Flavio was then alone, without any of those natural ties which retain a man within the circle of his own family. His need of affection was nevertheless imperious; and he had concentrated all upon two persons, who formed what he called, smiling to himself, his sentimental horizon. One of these persons lived not far from him, in a modest house, hidden among the pines that separate Ravenna from the sea. Her name was Sylverine, and she was very beautiful. She was a woman of about thirty, and had been connected with Flavio for some years. Her origin seemed doubtful: some spoke vaguely of a husband abandoned in a strange country, of

flight, of abduction; but romance, without doubt, constituted a great part of these rumors. Some time before, she had come to Ravenna, under the pretext of taking sea-baths. The country seemed to please her: she had hired a house, and installed herself with two old domestics, who composed her whole family. She received Flavio familiarly every day, and seldom made visits in the city. That was all any one knew; but they were not slow in remarking that her absences often coincided with those of Flavio, and they were very quick to divine that there existed between these two persons more than the simple relations of friendship. Without any doubt they loved one another; but there was, in their respective affections, different essentials, of which it is well to take notice.

Wounded by the deception of life, having crossed the fire and water of events, associated from childhood with the various complications of a political career, Flavio lacked that outward tenderness of sentiment so agreeable to women, yet which so often hides the emptiness of the heart. He was a man solid in the full acceptance of the word, and he found no need to repeat what he felt each day. He loved Sylverine, it is true, with a love unutterable and devoted; and, owing to the excessive maturity of his nature, he seemed also like a father to her.

"I ask but one thing," he said once to Sylverine. "Never tell me a falsehood: never deceive me. I am always strong enough to hear the truth."

"Bah!" she replied, laughing. "You speak like an old tutor." In effect, she considered him a little as such, but she loved him none the less. She was intelligent, and understood with what a superior soul she had to deal. She wept over the dangers and trials of a life of which she alone knew the secret. She understood his most hidden thoughts, when he recounted to her his hopes and fears; and even once in Sicily she was associated with his perils during an insurrection which was quickly suppressed. She crossed with him mountains on foot

without complaining, forgot the feebleness of her sex, slept on the bare earth, or took refuge in the huts of the half-famished herdsmen, playing the rôle of heroine with a simplicity that was the admiration of all who saw her. But inasmuch as she was invincible and resolute in the face of peril, in herself she was wavering and uncertain: she had strange imaginations, reveries without end, inexplicable abandonments to tears. She was not a virago, as one might think after such adventures, but a woman suffering from all feminine weaknesses, to which she succumbed without courage. In the secret of her heart, she knew she was devoured with a need of tenderness that nothing could satisfy. The emotion, whatever it was, had for her a power that she knew not how to conquer. She was all expansion, all enthusiasm. The cold, sure, and severe Flavio was not the man to entirely satisfy the cravings of such a nature. Sometimes, in default of the love which she would have, she played at the comedy of love. Throwing herself in the arms of Flavio, and leaning her head upon his breast, she would remain for a long time, recounting to herself an imaginary romance in which she and Flavio played the first rôle. But, when she raised her eyes, she could understand by his fixed and absent regard that he was plunged in far-off speculations that engrossed his spirits entirely. Often she would burst into laughter, and say, "What a *ménage* we make, my Flavio! I sing, and you calculate: I am a romance married to a theorem." Then, seeing him saddened by these remarks, she would throw herself on his neck, and cry, "My Flavio, knowest thou not that I jest? I am a poor fool, that thou art too good to love."

In saying this she was sincere; for when she accused herself she spoke but the truth; knowing she was capable of any rash act, she distrusted her own heart. In fact, she was an Italian, and had light ideas of women's virtue, and estimated still less that of men.

A celebrated Italian monk came to Ravenna to preach during Lent. He thun-

dered against women. — called them daughters of Satan, vessels of iniquity; cursed the flesh and its sins; cited the Scriptures; and, in short, opened to them both sides of the doors of hell.

"What an insufferable pedant!" said Sylverine to Flavio.

"Perhaps he is convinced," replied Flavio.

Sylverine shrugged her shoulders, but made no reply. After that, she was so kind to the poor monk that he completely lost his senses: one day, falling on the floor at her feet, and embracing them in his coarse robe, he declared that he adored her. "*Padre, padre,*" said she, laughing, "you must not be so severe on the poor women." And he never was again.

It was then near to her in reality that Flavio passed his life. She listened to him, loved him, calmed him, looked with resignation on the terrible eventualities that surrounded his life, and was resolved to follow him wherever he went. He often spoke to her of Giovan Scoglia, who, with her, shared all his affections. This Giovan Scoglia, also Drinker of Ashes, and King of Edom for the Neapolitan tribes, under the name of Ballenane son of Achbor, had for a long time inhabited Naples, from which place he had been obliged to flee, followed by a too clairvoyant police. At that time he had been all over Europe, visiting the *faithful*, and strengthening everywhere the cords that defeat had weakened. When his journey terminated, he was to come to Ravenna and settle near Flavio, who felt for him a friendship so tender that it was almost a weakness. Flavio rejoiced at the approaching arrival of his friend; and Sylverine, who had heard so much of him, awaited him with impatience. "When Giovan comes," was a sacramental phrase of the lovers: all seemed suspended until that arrival so anxiously expected. Sylverine had never seen him; but she imagined how he would look, pretending to know him much better than Flavio. Sometimes when he would correct her mistakes on the subject, she

would say, "Leave me alone: I am never mistaken."

At last one evening, when Flavio was at the house of Sylverine, they heard steps rapidly mounting the stairs, the door opened with a great noise, and Giovan threw himself into the arms of his friend. He took the hand of Sylverine fraternally, and then began to speak with a volubility that bore little resemblance to the habitual calm of Flavio.

Sylverine regarded the new-comer: he was not at all what she expected. Instead of the man, absorbed, serious, and even a little sullen, that she had imagined, she saw a young man of about twenty-five, blonde, slight, but of an elegant figure, showing with complacency hands womanly white; while on his lips, a little too red, was an expression of scornful pride, that seemed to contradict the extreme sweetness of his blue eyes. His manner toward Flavio was that of a spoiled child, — a sort of timid respect mixed with a wheedling resistance. There was in him an exuberance of life that escaped in spite of his efforts to repress it, while he heaped question upon question.

"What do you do here? Are there any amusements? Have you any horses? Is there a theatre? Are the women pretty? Where do you go in the evening? Can one hunt about here?"

Sylverine listened a little confused to the flood of words. "At least, he is full of life," she thought.

Flavio himself seemed disconcerted by so much nonsense. "It is I, nevertheless, who have raised such a rattle-brain," said he.

"You have an astonished air," said Sylverine, "like a hen who has hatched a duck."

They did not separate until late in the night, for they had much to recount.

"How do you like him?" said Flavio to Sylverine.

"He is charming," she replied.

He put the same question to Giovan, respecting Sylverine. "I don't know," he said: "I have scarcely looked at her."

He lied, for he had regarded her with much attention; but he had the singular gift that belongs to the double nature of the Italian and conspirator, to astonish people by a flow of words, by precipitate movements, by an appearance of blustering frankness, that deceived the best advised; while he followed imperturbably the thread of his secret thoughts, and observed with a marvellous perspicuity all that passed around him. He had often put that science to the service of his own passions; for he suffered the tyranny of a fiery impetuosity.

"I have tempests in me," he often said. At times he feigned violence, and his violence served his dissimulation. He turned away suspicion by force of abandon, by vivacity and boyishness, as Flavio did by reserve and dignity. While talking freely to Flavio, he watched Sylverine. In the pure lines of her beautiful face, in the veiled glances of her large eyes, of a blue so deep as to appear black, in the sparkling laugh that showed her white teeth, he fancied he detected something of weariness and indifference, that indicated a native weakness; and he did not hesitate to say to Flavio afterwards, "I will bet my cap against a cardinal's hat, that you, with your sententious and dogmatic love, weary her enough to make her weep."

In that he was mistaken. Sylverine suffered, it is true; but it was because she believed she was not loved enough.

As to Flavio, he needed nothing: he lived in the plenitude of happiness, with the two beings he loved best in the world. He listened to their conversation with pleasure, laughed at their follies, and sometimes softened almost to tears on seeing them so happy together. They scarcely parted during the day; they read or walked under the shadows of the pines; and their evenings were spent with Flavio, who, often lost in his own thoughts, left them to a *l'été-à-été*. They did not intend to abuse his confidence, certainly not; but their conversation became more intimate, and glided gradually down the declivity of confidence

from which it is impossible to return as intact as one has descended.

Neither Sylverine nor Giovan coldly conceived the thought to deceive Flavio. The idea gave birth to itself. It was the result of their meeting, their constant companionship, their youth, in fact, a thousand circumstances against which only those could struggle who were cold, self-contained, and invincibly armed with virtue. They did not go toward the fault, if I may so speak: the fault came to them. They were young and congenial to each other; and, having no solid foundation on which to stay their resistance, they gradually drifted toward the sad result.

Very often Sylverine, looking at Giovan and Flavio, and comparing their diverse characters, would think with an inexpressible pang, "My God! these poor, dear heads will, perhaps, fall on an obscure scaffold. I will keep them with me, and hide them from all danger; or I will accompany them in their enterprise, share their perils, and die in their arms."

Had Giovan, then, taken such a place in her heart? It seems so. In any case, she was the most clear-sighted, and the first to feel that the situation was becoming dangerous. She was very severe with herself in the calm of her reflections, making no cowardly excuses. "Wilt thou, then, leave thyself to be bewitched with Giovan?" she would say. "Wilt thou deceive Flavio?" It was not because she believed it to be a sin, — I have said that abstract virtue had no great hold upon her mind; but she feared to distress the man whom she loved so much, who had for her an extreme affection, and who had treated her so long with the greatest kindness. In any other circumstances, she would not have hesitated to have given her hand to Giovan, and said, "I love you;" but, arrested by the thought of the good Flavio, she dared not advance a step on the way that attracted her to the new-comer. "We can, perhaps, save ourselves," she said, but without much conviction; for she could not count upon herself to accomplish such a miracle.

On his side, Giovan was no longer tranquil. The fruit that hangs on a forbidden tree offers a singular attraction to certain natures. Resolute, proud, and persistent, he had quickly counted the obstacles that separated him from Sylverine; but these obstacles irritated, rather than cooled, his passion. Remorse filled his heart, when he thought of his friend; and he tried to reassure himself with weak arguments; often saying, when he saw how calm was the affection that Flavio displayed for Sylverine, "Bah! it is not love, it is only habit." Reasoning foolish and wicked, that he despised himself for ever tolerating. What would he have? He was not contented with himself. His conscience was not at rest; something within him complained incessantly, that he could not quiet; that interior voice was heard above all the noise of the world; it fatigued him with its persistency, yet gave him no strength to make a good and definite resolution. "After all," he said, "I love her; and it is not my fault." He became sad; and to the excess of gaiety that during the first days disturbed the serious life of Flavio, succeeded a sort of irritation, the cause of which he would not avow.

"After such a life of excitement," thought Flavio, "he finds it difficult to accustom himself to our too peaceable existence."

He could not deceive Sylverine, who felt that a crisis approached; yet she had resolved nothing within herself; she regarded Flavio with sadness, and Giovan with anxiety.

It was on the shore of the sea that the important words escaped their lips. They had gone out together, and crossed the forest of pines, where forever moans the monotonous breeze that resembles the confused and perpetual 'plaining' of sorrow. Walking side by side, they had reached the sandy shore of the Adriatic. Both were silent. Giovan, uneasy, and irritated by his interior struggle, never raised his eyes to Sylverine, whose affected calm betrayed her inquietude. They sat down under the shadow of a fisherman's hut, and looked out

on the tranquil sea, whose green plane seemed to reach the horizon. Giovan drew together with his cane some shells and dried sea-weed; Sylverine mechanically traced undecided lines in the moving sand. In a moment, as if he had taken a sudden resolution, Giovan said to her, "Can you write on the sand where the waves will efface it, the name of him you love?"

"Of what good to write, if the waves must efface it?" replied Sylverine. "And you," added she, looking at him fixedly, "will you write the name of her you love?"

He arose from his seat with impetuosity, and cried, "Yes: by God! I will write it, though the heavens crush me!" and, with the aid of his stick, he traced in large letters the name of Sylverine.

Silently, with the end of her parasol, she effaced the letters slowly one by one: then, without raising her eyes, she said, "You are insane."

Giovan's passion broke all bounds; and, forgetting all prudence, he told her how he had loved her from the first day that he had seen her; that he was invincibly drawn toward her; that he was not guilty for yielding to a passion he could not resist. That his will, usually so strong, was as nothing when he would place it as an obstacle against his overwhelming love. He spoke with ardor, and said more than he intended. "I love you: I love none but you," cried he, taking her hands. "If you refuse me, if you laugh at me, if you treat me as a child or a fool, I will go away, and rush into danger where I will find death."

"And Flavio!" cried Sylverine.

It was the drop of water that cooled the ebullition. Giovan sank into his seat; and, covering his face with his hand, he groaned, "I am miserable, I am miserable!"

At that moment, Sylverine perhaps might have saved all, if there had been in Giovan a strength that she had the right to invoke. A man of sacrifice in his public life, she could have shown him the grandeur of a sacrifice made to gratitude

and friendship; she could have entreated him to leave her, and, profiting by his real sorrow, have secured from him a promise to depart at once: but she was enchained by the power of this new affection; and, although she knew she was plunging herself into dreadful complications, far from being dismayed, she was attracted by the need of strong emotions, which she desired without ceasing. So, after a moment's silence, she exclaimed, "Alas! and what shall I say of myself?"

It was an avowal. Giovan seized her hands, and covered them with kisses.

The night had come: they arose to return to Ravenna. Slowly, step by step, they crossed the obscure forest, and involuntarily they subsided into the re-acton that follows such a crisis. It seemed as though they were arrested on the very threshold of what they called happiness, but what was in reality treason. They spoke little, and in a low voice. Then, thinking of the honest man they had deceived, they said, "Poor Flavio!"

"I have not the courage," said Sylverine, "to tell him the truth."

"Neither have I," replied Giovan.

"Then he must remain in ignorance always," returned Sylverine.

Giovan did not answer, but inclined his head in sign of acquiescence.

One might say that Sylverine, who loved these two men, and who did not understand her own diseased and troubled heart, had obeyed a double instinct, — alas! too common, — fragility and perfidy. But for Giovan, accustomed to the loyalty of a life where sacrifice demanded the greater part, one may readily believe that he did not resign himself to the sad rôle which was reserved for him without many interior combats. There would have been a certain nobility in seeking Flavio, and saying to him, "I love Sylverine! How shall it be settled between us?" But Giovan was afraid of his friend. He feared to blush before him who alone knew how great was his ingratitude. So he preferred to enter into the labyrinths of an intrigue where he

would be reduced to unworthy ruses to deceive the man under whose roof he lived, and who had opened to him the door of Sylverine with such boundless confidence. In spite of the revolts of conscience, he resigned himself to the unworthy position that became day by day more difficult to sustain. In fact, the love of Giovan for Sylverine was not a caprice quickly satisfied. Possession only exaggerated it, until it became an ardent passion, exclusive and tyrannical, which increased in spite of all obstacles, and would only support with infinite trouble the restraints imposed.

It was no longer Flavio that Sylverine feared. It was Giovan; for he had reached such a state of jealousy that he would break through all reserve, and infringe every right. "You will make me hate Flavio," said he to Sylverine.

"Alas!" replied she, nearly weeping, "it is Flavio I have deceived for you, and not you for him. What more would you have?"

"If he was but your husband I would support it, for I should be obliged to; but he is not, and I am right to exact that you break absolutely every tie with him. Ah! I will seek him, and tell him all, and then — to the mercy of God!"

"Do what thou wilt, my poor Giovan. I am prepared for the worst. The heart of Flavio is greater than thine."

Giovan fell into indecision. He loved his friend; he adored Sylverine; yet sometimes he felt like cursing both. The violence of his nature was revealed in the struggle, in which he was always vanquished, never having the strength to conquer himself. He suffered deeply; and Flavio anxiously interrogated him as to the cause of his apparent illness. Giovan was on the point of throwing himself on his friend's neck, and of telling him all the lamentable history, but a mistaken shame retained the confidence on his lips: he pretended a nervous disease, and said nothing.

Outwardly, at least, nothing was changed in their existence. They lived as unitedly as before. They passed their evenings to-

gether with Sylverine. Toward midnight they both said adieu, and returned to the house of Flavio, who, tranquilly dreaming and reflecting, played his part in the drama without suspicion. How could he divine? was not his confidence absolute?

Sylverine, who loved emotion, had more than she wished for. The struggle increased nevertheless, until often she was ready to abandon all. The violent and incessant reproaches of Giovan wearied her beyond measure. Flavio, in his paternal affection, always had a mild, indulgent kindness for her. Now there was nothing but tempests: she had desired them, it is true; but she had more than enough. Sometimes, playing upon the name of Scoglio, which signifies cliff or rock, she would say, "Ah! thou art well-named. I shall be wrecked against thee." Nevertheless, she closed her eyes, and drifted with the current, not having strength to return. Often she asked herself, "How will this end?" then she fell into depths of sadness when the tenderness of Flavio only seemed a reproach. She loved Giovan: she loved Flavio; which did she love the best? She could not say. "In short," she thought, "if both were in the perils of death, if both were drowning under my eyes, which would I save?" She reflected a long time upon the question she addressed to herself; then, bursting into tears, she cried, "Alas! I would save him who was nearest me, and pass the remainder of my life in regretting the other." Beyond these obscurities, she could find no light to guide her: she was lost in the confusion of her own sentiments. But, by a contradiction that existed without the power of explanation, she often thought of Giovan when with Flavio, and of Flavio when near Giovan. If one had asked her which she preferred, she would have replied in all sincerity, "He who is not here."

Nevertheless, life went on; day followed day, and the three persons in the drama moved in the same circle. Flavio always calm; Giovan forever meditating some new violence that he dared not exe-

cute; Sylverine resigned to the catastrophe that she foresaw without power to avert.

It was a chance, or an imprudence, of Giovan, that revealed at a single blow, to his friend, the truth of which he had no suspicion. As nearly always in such circumstances, fate uses the means the most simple to enlighten the darkness.

Flavio had known for a long time that the Drinkers of Ashes meditated a movement in Southern Italy. He had calculated the chances, — they were doubtful, if not contrary; but he had judged that even an unsuccessful insurrection was necessary, if but to awaken the interest of public opinion. During forty years, Europe had been surprised at the failure of all the efforts in Italy, which seemed often only to tend to the shooting, hanging, or imprisoning of some poor creature, generous even to folly. The insurrection with which Flavio was occupied at that time had been prepared in silence. At the last moment, when all should be ready, a chief of the Drinkers of Ashes must, according to the custom in such a case, be on the spot where the first blow was to be struck, hiding his identity under the disguise of a *figurant*, re-uniting under his hand all the secret threads of the adventure, arranging and directing all without exciting the least suspicion. The movement had been devised and conducted almost to the point of disclosure during the absence of Giovan, who scarcely suspected it. His friend had spoken of it vaguely, waiting until all was concluded to show him the complete plan.

Flavio was then much engaged with the important arrangements; for, if the insurrection succeeded in the Neapolitan States, he would immediately stir up Romagna, and recommence the fruitless campaign of 1831. He passed his time meditating upon this project, and often remained entire hours studying the map of Calabria, searching the points of landing, and the roads most sure to arrive at Cosenza, from which place they had intelligence, and which they hoped to make the centre of supplies

for the insurrection, as well as the centre from which the revolt would spread to the neighboring provinces. One night he sat until late, searching for a landing-place. Should it be on the eastern side, toward Cotrone, where the Bandieri brothers had stranded? Or should it be on the western side, near Sapri, where, later, Piscane came to die? He felt fatigued with meditation, and a prey to the cruel insomnia familiar to those who overtask the brain. Needing some one to speak to, to distract his thoughts from himself, he went into the chamber of Giovan to talk with him. The room was empty; the bed had not been used. Flavio made a gesture of surprise, and then began to laugh. "Ah!" said he, "he seeks adventure in Ravenna, and says not a word to me. What childishness!"

He descended, and left the house. The moon, at its full, illuminated with pearly tints the heavens sown with stars. Reaching the house of Sylverine, he thought, "Perhaps she has not retired," and rapped lightly at her window. He repeated it several times, but no one replied. "She sleeps," he said, and turned away to take one of those long, nocturnal walks, that calmed and soothed him after his mental fatigue. Scarcely had he taken a dozen steps when a sudden suspicion wrung his heart. "Giovan absent! the door of Sylverine closed!" He strove to shake off the cruel thought. "I am insane," he said. Nevertheless, he sat down at the foot of a tree, and surveyed the route attentively. For more than an hour, he remained plunged in reflections that tortured him. Then suddenly he heard a window open softly, and Sylverine, putting out her head, regarded carefully the road. Flavio, lost in the shade, was invisible. Some moments after a door opened, and a man descended the steps. It was Giovan, who walked away peacefully in the direction of his dwelling.

Flavio started up with a bound, and laughed with dreadful bitterness. "Ah!" said he, "that is it." Then, turning his

back upon the house that, revealed the odious secret, he rushed away with rapid steps. To his first burst of rage, succeeded a deep dejection at finding himself suddenly face to face with his interior ruin; then a profound commiseration filled his heart when he thought of the treason hidden with such care. "Ah!" said he, "how they must suffer to deceive me so!" His great soul, his unselfish soul, was uppermost in the conflict; and little by little it calmed the tempest that raged with such fury. Still he returned often to the thought, "Why have they deceived me? Why have they been so false? Am I, then so cruel and severe that they must dupe me by the deepest hypocrisy?" He suffered much in his friendship for Giovan, in his love for Sylverine, and his confidence for both. "Who, then, can one trust?" demanded he; and the grave voice of his own experience answered, "No one." He reflected on his life, the great aim he pursued, the important matters that occupied him; and, in comparison with these, a disappointed love was but a little thing. Still his philosophical reasoning did not comfort him. "My life is sad, tormented, miserable: Sylverine was my only light and joy. Why, then, has she deceived me? And Giovan, the child who has grown up under my eyes, and who is as my own son." Then he repeated his eternal question, "Was she not free? Why, then, have they both deceived me? Their only excuse, if they have one, is that they were invincibly attracted towards each other by a passion too strong for them to resist; and they have hidden it from me because they feared to distress me!" He held fast to that thought: it gave him something real to seize upon; and in it he found almost an excuse for them. Although he accepted the idea, he knew it was but false coin. He paid it, nevertheless, for her. Giovan and Sylverine, were they not as his own children? and if he had for them that inexhaustible indulgence that survives every thing in the heart of a parent, how could he reproach and despise them? Certainly,

in an explanation, he could have played the superior *rôle*, that of judge; but to him the thought of such an explanation was humiliating beyond expression. "Fight on, old gladiator!" he said at last with a smile that contained many tears, "and learn how to die with courage."

When the day dawned pale and cold over awakening nature, it revealed Flavio leaning against a tree, watching the waves that broke tremblingly on the shore. I know not why; but the movement always repeated, and the murmur always the same, seemed to irritate him. "O brutal and perfidious!" he cried, throwing a sharp stone against the advancing wave: "why do you complain without ceasing?"

That night of anguish and contradiction — a night more terrible than that of Jacob; for Flavio had to struggle, not only with his good, but also with his bad angels — purified his heart already so noble, and strengthened it in its sorrow. It was not without great and painful convulsions of feeling that he took his resolution; but at last he took it, and he kept it. "And so," said he, "I have but two friends."

When the three met again, the face of Flavio had resumed its habitual impassibility; and Sylverine, in spite of her inquietude, read nothing there. "I knocked last night," he said to her; "but you did not hear." She was not re-assured. Was Flavio as ignorant as he appeared? She believed not. What was then passing within his heart? a decrease of love, or an excess of generosity? She knew not. In any case, she would have preferred his reproaches; for she felt ill at ease before the Sphinx, who would not pronounce the word of his enigma.

From that day there was a certain change in the habits of Flavio: he came less often to the house of Sylverine; and sometimes in the evening he did not appear with Giovan as had been the custom.

"What is the matter, my Flavio?" she said to him: "I scarcely see thee now."

"I have much to do at present," he replied. She was astonished and distressed at his excessive reserve. He was no longer

the same to her, and she was as irritated as though it were treason. She was tossed between two contrary currents, and knew not where to rest. At times she said, "What have I done that he should no longer love me?" At other times she understood her guilt; and, looking into the very depths of her heart, she knew how odious was her crime. Then she asked herself, "Why do I complain? has he not the right to despise me?" Still, she could not accustom herself to the thought that she had lost the esteem and tenderness of Flavio. At times she blamed Giovan, forgetting that she was as much in fault as he; and that it was her own will that had plunged her into such dreadful complications. And so she revolved in this bewildering circle, at times resolved to tell all to Flavio, and entreat him to take her away from Giovan: again she thought of his despair, and imagined that he also was necessary to her happiness. In this way she was something as a needle between two magnetic poles, sorely baffled and perplexed. She had believed that love consists in loving much; and, in spite of her sorrows and her struggles, she did not yet understand that love consists in loving but one. Giovan understood it, for he desired to tear every thought from her heart that was not for him: his love — the love that at first had appeared so resigned — had now become a permanent fury. "As long as we two are together near thee," said he to Sylverine, "there can be no happiness for us." She had spoken to him of the reserve of Flavio: he did not believe it, or at least his jealousy would not allow him to. "Love is a repose," she said, "and not a combat." Still he was none the less aggressive and violent: obeying his nature, which was exclusive even to injustice, he made Sylverine suffer because he suffered himself.

Flavio, who lived impassibly in the secret of his own sorrows, read upon the pallid features of Giovan the too visible traces of his ceaseless struggle. All was explained to him now: the irritability of his friend, the unquiet sadness of Sylverine. Looking at himself, and comparing his own sorrow with

the greatness of his sacrifice, he said, "And they are not even happy!" He knew the character of Giovan; and he expected every day to see him enter, furious, not knowing that he had learned all, and to hear him demand in his impetuous manner, "By what right do you love Sylverine?" As much to escape from himself as to force his obtrusive thoughts to silence, he worked with ardor, and prepared, without relaxation, the movement that the Drinkers of Ashes intended to make in the Neapolitan provinces.

The day that he feared arrived. One morning, being alone in his room, occupied with writing an important letter in cipher, he saw Giovan enter. At the first glance, he knew that the decisive moment had arrived. Giovan, his eyes on fire, his lips pale and trembling, advanced rapidly toward him, saying excitedly, "I love Sylverine, and she loves me. I wish thee to know it."

"I know it," replied Flavio calmly.

The blow was sudden for Giovan, who felt his anger soften in the presence of his friend; but he quickly recovered himself, and cried angrily, "If you know it, why do you allow it?"

"Because I love thee," replied Flavio with a smile that brought the tears to his eyes; "because I am the only judge of my renuncements; and perhaps, also, because it is more sweet for me to suffer, than to know that thou art unhappy."

Giovan could contain his feelings no longer; throwing himself upon the breast of Flavio, he burst into tears. "Ah!" he cried, "thou art truly our dear *Masterna*; thou art truly he whom we call *heart of diamond*, the greatest of us all! Curse me, beat me, drive me from thee; but do not in pity kill me with thy kindness! Thou makest me hate myself. What wilt thou say nothing? Thou knowest all, and hath not murdered me like a dog? I adore thee. I am dying with jealousy; I am mad at the thought of her loving thee; I despise myself beyond expression, but I cannot help it. I am bewitched; I am possessed; I cannot recover myself, and I am miserable. I

have neither strength nor virtue: nevertheless I must do something; and it is thou who must aid me. It is thou who hast ever assisted me. Thou hast taught me what I know; and, if I have not fallen into the gulf of debauchery, it is because thou hast always upheld me and restrained me. In spite of all, thou art calm and indulgent. Why dost thou not reproach me?"

"Thou reproachest thyself," replied Flavio. "I have nothing to say."

Giovan had a spasm: he held his heart in both hands. "What wilt thou do? What wilt thou do?" he cried.

"What wilt thou that I do, my child?" demanded Flavio. "Canst thou not enjoy thy happiness in peace, without disturbing that of others?"

"Thou lovest her no longer, then?" cried Giovan.

"Ah! why should I show it?" returned Flavio. "I love her still, and more than ever."

"Thou tearest my heart in shreds," cried Giovan, falling into a chair, and covering his face with his hands.

Flavio, hearing him sob, took him in his arms, and caressed him as mother would a sick child. But Giovan disengaged himself by a sudden movement from his gentle embrace; and, raising toward him his face disfigured with anger, he cried, "Ah, thou art my evil genius! Thou hast entangled me in political impossibilities, and the only woman I can ever love thou lovest also."

Flavio made a gesture of ineffable pity. "Poor child!" said he: "how thou must suffer to be so unjust! I am sorry for thee, from the bottom of my heart."

"I will not have thy pity," cried Giovan. His tears were dried: passion had taken possession of him, and he overwhelmed Flavio with reproaches; he heaped injustice upon injustice with rudeness and insult.

Flavio looked at him with sorrow. He was grieved that such a soul should so forget and dishonor itself. At last he took his hands; and, turning his calm face full upon him, he said, "Compose thyself, young volcano, and mistake not anger for

strength. We are men I remember that, and leave all violences to sick children. Why dost thou come to reproach me in this manner? And what wilt thou have of me?"

"I will finish this at once and forever," cried Giovan, "for I cannot live in such anguish. One of us is one too many under heaven. Let us go to the shore, and fight until death comes to relieve one; and Sylvérine shall be the reward of the other."

"Enough!" replied Flavio with a smile. "What knight-errantry! Thou forgettest that the time of Ariostes has passed." Then all his features softened with an expression of infinite sadness, and he added, "And thou forgettest above all, that the survivor would die of grief at having murdered his friend. And thou forgettest many other things, my poor Giovan: thou forgettest that we do not belong to ourselves, and that we have no right to dispose of our lives arbitrarily; thou forgettest our old friendship; and I understand it, for passion hath made thee insane; but remember the oath that thou hast sworn, and sealed with the ashes and the blood."

Giovan cried out in despair: his heart was like a field of battle whereon contended three armies of equal force. "Have pity on me!" said he to Flavio: "I can do no more."

There was a long silence. Flavio walked the length and breadth of the chamber. And Giovan, extended upon a sofa with his face buried in the cushions, struggled with all his strength against the passions that overwhelmed him, passing from one extreme to the other, without the power of taking any decided step. At last he arose. "Come with me to her," he cried.

"Of what use?" said Flavio, "of what use to make her the witness of our violence, and to afflict her with our discords?"

"Come to her house," continued Giovan. "Come, I pray and entreat you. And whatever she pronounces will be as the judgment of God. I will accept it, and submit to it."

They left the house together, "Ah!"

said Giovan, walking by the side of his friend, "If thou couldst know what I suffer, and what I have suffered."

"Thou hast not suffered alone," returned Flavio; "but the cries of thine own sorrow hath so deafened thee that thou hast not heard the moaning of others."

They entered the presence of Sylvérine. She appeared calm; but her heart beat violently, for it was not difficult to read their emotion in their faces. However, she restrained herself, and said, "What good fortune!"

Giovan walked rapidly toward her. "Listen!" cried he. "Flavio knows all; we have both come: we love thee; which dost thou love? speak quickly."

Sylvérine arose pale and trembling; and, regarding the two men who disputed for her heart, she placed a hand on the shoulder of each, and dared to say, "I love you both." Then, as if crushed by the avowal, she burst into tears.

"O misery!" cried Giovan: "is it not better to die, than to live thus?"

Flavio approached Sylvérine, took her in his arms, and kissed her forehead; and, holding her to his heart, he said, "My darling child, you must not demand of men what gods could not endure. I am an old soldier. I have had so many wounds that I know not even the number of my scars. I believe I love thee; but I will cure myself of this weakness. Thou lovest life, and I regard it not; for I know what it is worth. I am an obstacle to thy happiness, — thee whom I consider with the tenderness of a mother; to Giovan, who is as my child. I will retire from thy path, and trouble thee no more. Be happy, then," added he with some bitterness, "and speak of me when thy tendernesses leave thee the time."

"In the name of Heaven, do not leave us!" cried Sylvérine.

"I will not have thy sacrifice," said Giovan with anger.

"Whether thou wilt or not, I will accomplish it. Thou wouldst have accepted it if it had been imposed by Sylvérine. Then, by what right dost thou refuse it because it

is voluntary? Learn to look into thine own heart, and take care that thy intolerable pride does not cause to others more sorrow than they can bear." He extended his hands to Giovan and Sylverine. "God bless you both!" said he. Then he went away without turning his head. He did not go to his own house, but walked on until he reached the shore of the Adriatic: there he remained a long time, lost in thoughts more sombre and more profound than the sea that beat at his feet. When, toward evening, he returned to his house, he no longer found Giovan there. He had hired an apartment in a little villa near that inhabited by Sylverine.

Flavio rarely went out, only during the evening; then he wandered through the great forest of pines which hid him in its shadows. He evaded Giovan, and Giovan evaded him. After all, neither of these three persons was happy, nor could they be: they thought constantly of each other with sorrowful anxiety. "She loves him yet," said Giovan. "Is it true that he no longer loves me?" demanded Sylverine. "I love her always," thought Flavio.

It was, however, not Flavio who had the most to regret. He had a solid basis on which to support his sorrow. Though the revelation that came so unexpectedly had been terrible, the sacrifice that followed had been free and spontaneous, given by himself, and of his own free will. The only one of these three unhappy beings who had acted according to the dictates of a better nature, he preferred his suffering to a pitiful compromise which nothing could induce him to make. He regretted Sylverine as one regrets an absent love; he thought of Giovan as of a sick friend: but at least he reposed upon the conviction that he had done his duty without hesitating.

Giovan was not satisfied. Irritated against himself, irritated against others, ready to burst into a rage at the slightest contradiction, he could not find a place in his heart that was not full of sorrowful regrets: it is the fate of those, who, not

having repudiated all probity, sacrifice the happiness of others to their own selfishness. All that should have rendered him happy made him suffer: the absolute submission of Sylverine was to him a constant and insupportable reproach. "Of whom does she think?" he said, when often, immobile and dreamy, she kept long silences which he respected in spite of himself. Sometimes, when a gleam of reason came to clear the shadows that enveloped him, showing him Flavio, so devoted, so generous, who for so many years had had for him the tenderness of a father, he felt the deepest remorse mingled with desire to go to him, to entreat his pardon, and to restore to him all he had taken. But of what good were these impressions? He felt that he was enslaved, bewitched, as he had said to Flavio; and, if in the evening he had made the sacrifice, the next morning he would have cursed himself for having done it. At other times, more docile to his imperious nature, he meditated quitting Ravenna, and taking refuge in some other part of Tuscany, carrying Sylverine with him, and so separating her from Flavio, whose presence — so discreet, so absent, dare I say, though it was — only enraged him.

As to Sylverine, never ship without compass, driven by the tempests, was more cruelly tossed than that poor soul, who for a long time had found no star to guide her. She regretted Flavio with a fervor that would have caused her to think she loved him alone, if she had not known how much she loved Giovan. Uncertain between those two sentiments, she lived a life without happiness, dignity, or satisfaction. She passed long hours in dreaming of the execution of impossible projects. She regarded with affright the gordian knot that she had not the courage to cut, asking often, "Will it unravel itself?" Weakness is sometimes as much a sin as is perversity. Flavio had never appeared at her house since the scene I have recorded, and she desired to see him beyond expression. She could not understand his sacrifice, neither could she ac-

count for what she styled an "excess of virtue." There was a great lack of principle in her, but Flavio was in fault there. Always occupied with his ideal speculations, he had not taken care to fashion her soul to generous sentiments. The soil was rich, but he had sown nothing; therefore he had no right to complain that there was nothing to reap. Sylvérine, we can truly say, thought not of that. She searched for Flavio, she followed him, she waited for him. One evening, unexpectedly, she met him; and, running to him, she put her arm within his, and said joyfully, "At last I see thee!"

He recognized quickly his peril, but had the strength to jest in spite of his trouble; and, disengaging his arm, he said, —

"Dost thou remember the words of the French song the children sing

'We will go no more into the wood,
The laurels all are cut.'

"Why dost thou fly from me, dear Flavio? Why hast thou left me? Is not the best place in my heart for thee?"

"Hush!" said he, placing his fingers upon her lips. "An old precept says, 'Thou shalt not tempt the saints;' and I am but a man." Then feeling, perhaps, that his courage failed, and his emotion gained, he kissed her hands, and rushed away with hurried steps.

She looked after him without making a gesture to retain him; but a smile of joy trembled on her lips, and lighted up her eyes. "Ah!" she said, "he loves me still."

Yes, certainly, he loved her still; for he was not one of those who know how to take back what they have once given.

II.

Two months had passed, without bringing any change to their sorrowful situation, when Giovan received suddenly, by one of

those secret means which the Drinkers of Ashes employ for their communications, orders to leave Ravenna within eight days, and to present himself at a point designated on the borders of Calabria, to take the immediate direction of a movement which had been preparing for some time. These instructions admitted of neither doubt nor delay. It was a thunderbolt to Giovan; who, instead of accepting his rôle with resignation, if not with eagerness, as was his duty, declared that the order was absurd, and impossible of execution. Blinded by the passion that overwhelmed him, he saw nothing clearly beyond; and so he imagined that this sudden order was a scheme invented by Flavio to free Sylvérine from his presence, that he might repossess her love. "It is he who has done this. Why does he not go himself?" He did not reflect that it was for him especially that this task had been reserved: as he had lived so long in the Neapolitan provinces, all the means of action were known to him. "Let what may come," said he, "I shall not be taken in so clumsy a net; and I will not go." Then he wrote to the chief of the Drinkers of Ashes, notifying him of his refusal to engage in an enterprise which he considered inopportune. In that case, as in many others, Giovan was unjust; for the truth was, that Flavio, desirous of rushing into action to escape his trouble, had asked to direct the expedition himself; and they had replied that his presence was indispensable in the Papal States, as he would have to rise, in case of success, to give aid to a Neapolitan movement. Flavio knew how to obey, because he was accustomed to command, and was resigned without a murmur.

Giovan had consulted no one in taking his resolution. He said nothing to Sylvérine; and, as he never saw Flavio, naturally he had not spoken to him. Nevertheless, what he feared was not long in arriving. About eight days after he had sent the letter announcing his refusal, one evening, toward the hour of midnight, he walked hurriedly along the seashore, until he

reached a spot where there were neither trees nor houses: he stopped and listened; a man coming from the opposite direction approached him; and, by the doubtful light of the stars, he recognized Flavio.

"Art thou, then, called?" said Giovan.

"I am called," replied Flavio.

They remained without speaking again, until a boat approached the shore, and left rapidly, after a man had leaped upon the sand.

The new-comer walked straight toward the two, who, enveloped in the darkness, awaited him at some distance. Stopping within a few steps of them, he said, —

"*In fratris Hieronymi nomine, salve!* To which they both replied at the same time, "*In nomine fratris Hieronymi, vale!*"

Giovan and Flavio gave the fraternal kiss to the other, who, throwing his mantle upon the ground, desired them to sit down.

This mysterious person was no other than the chief of the Drinkers of Ashes. His name is of little importance. We will only say that he was known among the *T'phrapotes*, under the Edomite appellation, as Samla. He entered at once into the subject, as one who knows the value of time.

"There can be no secrets between us," said he to Giovan: "here is Flavio; here am I, — I, who am come expressly to know the reason why, in scorn of your oath, you refuse the post confided to you?"

Giovan, in spite of his stubbornness, knew himself guilty. Fearing to have it known that he repudiated a perilous mission, in order to remain with Sylverine, he commenced to excuse himself with political reasons, hoping in that way to escape the avowal he dreaded. "Is it not folly at this moment, when all Europe sleeps in profound peace, to arouse a country where the Drinkers of Ashes have met only defeat, since Campanella, who submitted seven times to torture, to the Bandiera brothers who were shot;" and he went on more warmly, "I am resolved as well as another not to throw away my life in a

desperate enterprise. No one can know better than myself the condition of the Southern provinces; and I affirm that they are not ready; that the country, crushed under the double despotism of clergy and king, will not echo a response to the cries for deliverance; that the projected expedition is absurd, impossible; and that the best thing to do is to abandon it at once. Then," added he, "why do we go to Calabria, or even to Naples? Is the enemy we have sworn to combat there? Of what use to decimate our forces, and reveal our projects in badly arranged operations. The enemy is not there: the enemy is at Rome. Once overthrow the power there, and all will fall as if by enchantment. If you intend seriously to establish liberty in the world, destroy the principle that is contrary to it. Begin at the source from which flows all authority; for where it springs forth, the world will go to drink."

"If you know how to play at chess," responded Samla, "you would not speak so. To take the king, you must first remove all the pawns that surround him. You have taken the wrong way instead of the right; and you refuse to go, not only because you judge the expedition badly conceived, but because you are in love with a woman you have stolen from Flavio, and you fear to leave her."

"Has Flavio told you that?" cried Giovan in fury.

"Rest in peace: it was not Flavio. Why do you pretend to suspect one whom you know to be incapable of a doubtful action? I am acquainted with the history of both: it is of little importance how. Giovan, all the wrong pertains to you; and you have singularly aggravated it in refusing the work that has the right to claim you. Into what miserable clay have you then been turned, to let a woman arrest you on the road to duty! Every other object is absolutely secondary in the presence of the great aim we follow. Each one of us must remember that he has sworn to say to those who would retain him, 'Woman, what is there in common

between thee and me?" We must remain solitary: never forget that. See where that creature for whom you are insane has conducted you! Look at yourself, Giovan. You, our man of action *par excellence*, our standard-bearer, have become more debilitated than an old priest who fears hell! See Flavio, our most brilliant light, our projector of the most profound ideas: what has so bewildered and darkened his mind that he has no power to discern clearly in the midst of his troubled thoughts? If you must be children, take the Bible, and learn from it to recite each night before going to your beds the history of Samson and Delilah. Be men! you are not made to be either lovers or husbands: amuse yourselves if you please; but, in the name of Heaven! give nothing of your hearts, nothing of your brains, to these feeble creatures. Do you know what you resemble with your sad *amourettes*? those tamers of lions who at last are eaten by the ferocious beasts. Our work is a work of justice, and remember the words of wisdom, 'Woman is the desolation of the just.'

"You are wrong, Samla!" said Flavio, in a grave voice: "the woman of whom you speak has not a weak heart. She was with me at one time in Sicily, and she is capable of following Giovan to Calabria."

"Ah! she is a Clorinda, then," returned Samla, making a disdainful gesture that was lost in the darkness. "It may be that she has all the virtues and all the charms, — I agree to it if you will; but she is none the less dangerous to you both, and you know that we are accustomed to remove obstacles from our path. She has set you at variance; and that is already a crime: we know how to prevent her from committing another. It is necessary that the insurrection in Calabria have a chief: Giovan is designated; he would go if it were not for that woman who opposes it."

"How can she oppose it?" said Giovan: "she is in entire ignorance of our project."

"Then," replied the inflexible Samla, "you refuse to go because of her, which amounts to the same: in any case, she is

the obstacle. Be ye reconciled: it is necessary. Giovan, give Flavio the kiss of peace. Flavio, remain in communication with Giovan, in order to be ready to assist him at need. That woman comes between you: have the courage of great hearts, and renounce her. If you will not, why, then, remain near her, but live united: that is indispensable. There are two beings in you, never forget that, — the man and the Drinker of Ashes. If the man suffers, it is best that the Drinker of Ashes know nothing of it. Give the hand!" continued he with authority, "and swear to me, who am the invested chief, to live in friendship, one with the other, — far from that woman or near her; to cease your dissensions, and to act but for the furtherance of our work."

"I swear it!" said Flavio, grasping the hand of Giovan. "I swear it!" said Giovan, "even if I die of madness."

"Well! I accept your promise, and I know that you will keep it. Giovan, it is you who have the weak head in this matter. Listen to Flavio: he is your elder; and his intelligence is greater than yours. You have eight days to arrive at the place designated, to put yourself at the head of the men who await you. Will you go?"

"Yes," replied Giovan.

"Flavio," continued Samla, "if, in eight days, Giovan is not at his post, you will take his place, and march straight upon Cosenza."

"It is well," replied Flavio.

They remained together until dawn, talking over their projects, discussing and modifying them according to the possible eventualities. When the rays of morning whitened the heavens, Samla arose, and embraced his two friends. "It is well!" he said to them. "You can be men in your spare moments; but, before all, you are Drinkers of Ashes."

"Yes; and God guide us!" responded Giovan and Flavio.

Samla gave a vigorous whistle, the boat re-appeared, he sprang in, and soon it was lost to sight on the coast of Comacchio.

Giovan was much softened toward Flavio:

the memory of his old friendship filled his heart, and excluded all anger; still, he was distracted by sorrowful contradictions. At that moment, moved by the stern authority of Samla, he was decided to go. But he knew himself, and he feared his resolution might abandon him at the last. Besides, the idea of leaving Sylverine, and of leaving her with Flavio, was insupportable. "If I go," thought he, "she must leave Rayenna." Nevertheless, he wished to perform an act of courage and self-abnegation; yet it was not without an effort over himself, that he said to Flavio, before leaving him, "Let us pass the evening together with Sylverine."

"We will," replied Flavio. "Samla is right; a woman must not come between us."

That evening they met at the house of Sylverine. She, happy to see Flavio, and hoping that all dissensions were ended forever, abandoned herself to the joy that reconciliation caused. But there occurred what neither of them expected: inasmuch as they regained their former intimacy, the old contradictions filled each heart. Sylverine, more in doubt than ever of herself, fell into an interior contemplation, while she tried to decide which of these two men she loved the best.

Very soon Giovan felt his anger and jealousy ready to burst all bounds: he made of Flavio a redoubtable rival, whom he feared would displace him in the heart of Sylverine.

As to Flavio, a nameless sadness overwhelmed him when he found himself sitting in the place where he had passed so many happy evenings near the woman whom he adored and regretted always, and whom, in spite of his disappointment, he could never entirely and hopelessly resign. Then there arose in his heart sentiments, not unknown, but severely restrained until that hour. He regarded Giovan with envy; he accused him; he forgot the tacit pardon he had pronounced; he retracted, one might say, his indulgence, and repeated often to himself, "It is too much! It is more than I can bear!"

They talked, nevertheless, all three, — Sylverine with a forced abandon that deceived no one, Giovan with a scarcely dissimulated violence, Flavio with a gravity that resembled despair. The hours passed away; midnight had long since sounded; but neither seemed to think of retiring. Sylverine, who understood plainly what was passing within them, was more flattered than disturbed; for she well knew they remained in her presence less to be together, than to watch and guard her.

At last Sylverine arose, and, extending a hand to each, she said "Good-night."

The two men clasped her hands with apparent calmness, and then went away together. For a long time they walked side by side without speaking. Flavio was the first to break the silence. "I cannot endure this," he said: "I was wrong to accompany thee to the house of Sylverine. I felt all my old tenderness spring to life within me. I have been jealous of thee, and I suffered to see thee near her."

"Thou art right," replied Giovan: "the situation is intolerable; there will be no repose until one of us is far from her."

"It must be ended: one of us must make the sacrifice."

"Which?" demanded Giovan with terror.

Flavio did not reply: they walked on in silence, crushing beneath their feet the pine cones that had fallen from the trees. The sun appeared above the horizon: the city was awake. They passed women and children gathering dead wood in the forest. Flavio stopped to look at them: seeing the misery that had no other care than the hard occupation to gain their daily bread, a feeling of envy passed through his heart, and he cried, "Ah how happy they are!"

Then he shook off his reverie; and, turning to Giovan, he said, "It is necessary that one of us should go to Calabria. Thou lovest Sylverine, and thou dost not wish to leave her: I love her, and I have the right to remain. But that is of little importance: we alone are the judges of our rights and duties. If we go to her and interrogate her again, she

will reply as before, 'I love you both,' and we will sink anew into the same misery. Let fate decide between us. My dear Giovan, wilt thou consent to it?"

"I will," replied Giovan. "Ah, this is terrible!"

"What God does is well done," continued Flavio. "This evening we will go together to Sylverine; and the one to whom she addresses the first word will leave to-morrow for Calabria. Wilt thou have it so?"

"Yes," replied Giovan.

They passed the day together at the house of Flavio, who instructed his friend in all the prepared projects, indicating the point in the Gulf of Tarenta where they were to embark, explaining to him what resources he could count upon, and where the money and arms were. When the night had come, there was nothing more to learn. They went out together: the moment was grave. The sentence that fate should pronounce upon them left them little to hope. The one who went would doubtless find death in his adventure. In any case, did he not renounce her he loved?

When they reached the door, they stopped and wrung each other's hands with force. "Courage!" they said in the same breath, as if they were in the face of an inevitable danger.

"Good-evening to both," said Sylverine, as they entered.

They replied to her by a sign of the head, and sat down.

She was embroidering a piece of dainty muslin, and, without raising her eyes, continued, "Why have you not been to see me through the day?"

Neither replied. Astonished at their silence, she regarded alternately Giovan and Flavio; and, noticing their pallor, she said, "What is the matter with you?" Then, not obtaining any reply, she cried, "In the name of Heaven! are you dumb?"

Both turned their heads, as if to evade a direct question. Then she arose, went to Flavio, and, taking his hand, said, "See

my Flavio, I have courage. Answer me. Why do you not speak?"

Flavio felt upon his face that imperceptible moisture which is the dew of violent emotion, as he replied in a choked voice, "A movement is prepared at Cosenza: one of us must go and take the direction."

"Which will go?" cried she; "for I shall go with him."

"What folly!" said Flavio. "There will be innumerable fatigues to support. I will not have thee go."

"I wish to go, and I will go," replied Sylverine. "You have seen me in the work, and you know what I can do. It is decided: I shall go. Is it thee, Giovan? Is it thee, Flavio?"

Giovan bowed his head, without daring to reply. Flavio made a supreme effort, and said, "It is Giovan: he will leave in a month."

Giovan remained immovable, as if crushed upon his chair. Sylverine put her hand upon his head. "I will go with thee, my poor Giovan," she said; "and thou shalt see that I am not a bad companion."

"Yes," added Flavio, continuing his thoughts: "Giovan will leave in a month: the expedition will be short, and there are chances of success. If all goes well, I will join you; but at present I have no time to lose, for I must prepare all. I leave to-morrow for the coast of Tuscany to organize a navy, and to make the last arrangements. When all is finished I will return here, and Giovan will leave."

A suspicion crossed the mind of Sylverine: she looked Flavio fixedly in the face, and said, "Thou dost not deceive me? Thou wilt go away for a month, and after return here?"

"Have I ever deceived thee?" replied Flavio, lowering his eyes.

Giovan arose as if to speak; but, wanting courage, sat down without a word. His heart was full of pity for Flavio. "Wretch that I am!" he sighed.

They passed a part of the night in talking of the projected expedition. Sylverine, delighted to leave her monotonous life,

clapped her hands, laughed, and said to Giovan, "Thou wilt see how well I march, and that I am not afraid of the carbines."

The two friends went away together. "Ah! what hast thou done?" said Giovan.

"That which was agreed upon. He to whom she spoke the first, was he not to go? and what wouldst thou think of me, if I should take her with me?"

In the morning Flavio went to say adieu to Sylverine: he had the courage not to appear moved, though his heart was torn within him.

"In three weeks at the latest, I will return," he said.

Giovan and Flavio had a last conference. At the moment of separation, perhaps never to meet again, Giovan's compunctions overcame him. "Stay!" cried he: "it is I who ought to go; and I will not accept thy sacrifice!"

"It is my destiny," replied Flavio. "I never return when the route is once taken. I leave Sylverine to thee. Adieu, brother, and be happy."

"If thou need me, send, and I will come," said Giovan. "What shall be the word if thou send an emissary?"

Flavio extended his hand toward the table, and took therefrom a volume of Dante. He opened it, and read a verse of the twenty-ninth song of the *Paridiso*. "*O difesa di Deo! perche pur giaci?*" (O justice of God! why dost thou sleep?) He who comes from me shall repeat the first part of the verse, and thou shalt repeat the second."

They embraced each other. "If thou die," said Giovan, "it is I who have killed thee."

"Rest in peace," replied Flavio. "Is not destiny the mistress of all? Return to Sylverine, and leave me alone; for I need strength. God bless thee!"

"And thee also!"

After they parted, Flavio hastened toward the shore. A boat awaited him: he went on board, they raised the sails, and swiftly left the coast behind. He

watched it disappear, dreamily rocked by the monotonous motion. An abyss of sorrow seemed to open before him. His heart softened, and he wept freely. Two hours after his departure, the forest of Ravenna—that forest that threw its shadow over all he loved—appeared to him a scarce perceptible line, obscure, and nearly confounded with the heavens.

Sylverine was very sad after the departure of Flavio. She suffered a vague inquietude that Giovan had no power to relieve; for he was himself the prey to continual anguish. His reason, firm and clear when passion did not blind him, showed him to what an extent his selfishness had made him criminal. To console himself, and to drive away his own remorse, he often repeated, that, if the expedition succeeded, all the glory would appertain to Flavio; yet he could not re-assure himself with such a reason; for he knew, better than any one, with how much danger such a venture was menaced. He fell into a deep melancholy; and he, usually so expansive, kept long and profound silences, from which it was impossible to arouse him. At any price, he would not leave Sylverine; and yet he wished to be with Flavio. The thought of his absent friend possessed him: he could not drive him from his mind. This pertinacity wearied and irritated him beyond measure. He thought of him, a fugitive upon the mountains; living at hazard, from the water sources and wild fruits; repulsed by the shepherds from whom he demanded shelter; tracked as a ferocious beast by the peasants armed with scythes; sold by his host of an hour; arrested, imprisoned, condemned, hung. All this tortured him until he yielded to his anguish, and, making that selfish return upon himself that we all make when we suffer a merited misfortune, he would cry, "Am I not unhappy enough?" He could not remain quiet in any place; repose was odious to him; he went out, he returned, he was restless in his inaction; he wished to go, and yet he remained. He heaped strange reproaches upon Sylverine, of

which she understood nothing. Often he went to the shore, and remained there long hours, looking toward the south, as if some breeze coming from Calabria could tell him of the fate of his friend.

More than three weeks had passed, and Sylverine grew anxious. "It is strange," said she to Giovan, "that we receive no news of Flavio."

He flew into a passion to evade a reply. At last, to calm him, Sylverine spoke of their projected expedition, in which she counted to accompany him. "When will we leave?" she inquired.

Giovan could contain himself no longer; he rushed from the house, and she saw him no more that day.

"What have I done, that he avoids me in this manner?" She imagined that Flavio had something to do with the trouble of Giovan; but she concluded it was a new fit of jealousy, and so did not suspect the truth.

Travellers who passed through Italy at the epoch of our story will easily believe that an insurrection could have taken place in Calabria, and the neighboring provinces know nothing of it for some time. In effect, the journals were mute, the police exercised a pitiless inspection. The post had no respect for the secrets of letters, and they arrested without mercy the bearers of evil tidings. One can understand very easily the radical absence of communication, when it is remembered, that in a more recent epoch, during the war of the Crimea, the *official Gazette of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies*, the only journal then in all the Neapolitan provinces, published not one line that could lead any one to suppose that a long war in which five powers took part, one of which was Italian, was then occurring in the East.

Calabria had been agitated some days before Ravenna knew any thing of it: at last, a coasting vessel coming from Brindisi brought the news, which soon circulated, and increased in spreading.

One morning a servant of Sylverine, who had just returned from the town, en-

tered the room of her mistress, and said, "Signora, do you know that they are fighting in Calabria and the border of Cosenza?"

It was a flash of light to Sylverine: she understood all. While she dressed in haste, the servant told her what she had learned. That the insurgents had been beaten by the royal troops; that the chief had been taken; that he was a very brave and handsome man; and that he had been sent to Naples, to be sentenced and executed.

Sylverine made no reply; but, from time to time, she moaned, "My God! my God!" Then she ran wildly to the house of Giovan. As soon as she saw him, she cried, "Wretch! where is Flavio?"

He trembled out an evasive reply.

"Hush!" responded she with passion. "I know all. Thou art a coward! Thy place is at his side. He is in Calabria: what art thou doing here?"

Giovan threw himself at her feet. "Crush me," he said: "I deserve thy contempt; but I love thee; I adore thee; and I could not resolve to leave thee. We left it to chance, my Sylverine: Flavio lost, and therefore he went." He then recounted all their struggle: the visit of Sauala, their last resolution, and the departure of Flavio. He wept bitterly. "Ah! I know too well that I merit neither compassion nor pardon: but thou hast made me insane; and, for love of thee, I know not what crime I would not commit."

"They say that they are defeated, that he is taken," cried Sylverine. "Our place is where he suffers. He is our Flavio: we must save him. All this news may be exaggerated,—who knows the truth in this country of falsehood? Let us go at once: perhaps there is yet time."

"Yes, we will go. If I perish, I will go straight to him. In an hour I am ready. We will go direct to Leghorn: there I will take a boat that will carry us to Pola. It is the shortest route, and the most sure."

"If we do not save him," said Sylverine,— "listen well to my words, Giovan,—I will never see thy face again in all my life."

They were separating to hasten their departure, when some one knocked at the door. Giovan opened it, and found himself face to face with a man dressed as a sailor.

"Giovan Scoglia?" inquired the man.

"I am he," replied Giovan.

"*O difesa di Dio!*" said the stranger, in a low voice.

"*Perche par giaci?*" responded Giovan; then, turning to Sylverine, he cried, "News of Flavio."

The man took off one of his heavy shoes; and, separating the sole with the aid of his knife, he drew from it a sealed letter, which he gave to Giovan. He broke the seal: the envelope contained a letter for Sylverine, and a note for himself. The note comprised but three words, "All is lost!"

There was a moment of stupor: Giovan and Sylverine looked at each other in silence. The man had seated himself, and was trying to repair his shoe.

"Read thou quickly!" cried Giovan, who was the first to recover himself. Instinctively, Sylverine regarded the unknown, who understood her look of distrust.

"Ah! am I a restraint?" said he. "It is not eight days since I was assistant jailer at the prison of Cosenza. I know all the history: you can speak before me without fear."

Sylverine opened Flavio's letter, and read,—

"I have deceived thee; but pardon me, my darling child! Giovan will tell to thee all our sad history; and thou wilt see that I could not do otherwise than hide from thee the end of my journey. I knew too well the courage of thy heart! I knew that thou wouldst accompany me, if thou knewest to what destiny I marched; and that could not be. One of us must lose thee. I accepted the will of fate, and I left thee. But why complain? There is in all this a profound wisdom, before which I am constrained to bow. Each man, in this life, has his share of happiness. Thou wert mine: could I, then, possess thee always?"

Alas! no: the laws of God admit of no exception; and I would be ungrateful to accuse destiny. I lost thee when the hour to lose thee sounded; but still I have for thee a tenderness without equal, and in my heart there is nothing for thee but thoughts of infinite sweetness. Above all, do not reproach thyself. We are of those who are born for defeat. I obeyed my destiny: thou wert the instrument, that is all. Thou art innocent, and never accuse thyself.

"It is the prison of Cosenza from which I write. I have been here for three days, under a rigorous guard, it is true; but they leave me, nevertheless, the possibility of writing, and sending to thee my last adieu. All is finished! I am not the man to be allured by vain hopes. I know my days are counted, and the last will be welcome.

"Perhaps, by giving much trouble, and compromising many people, I might gain my liberty; but of what good to recommence my life of other times? to renew that enervating struggle in which I have always been defeated? to roll again the rock of Sisyphus, that always and always returns? No: I am weary, and I need rest. Dost thou remember the words of Luther, when he looked upon the tombs in the cemetery of Worms, 'I envy them, because they repose.' Thanks be to God! I shall soon have nothing to envy them. Be calm, Sylverine; and, Giovan, despair not. I am the eldest: I must have gone first; so it is but aiding nature a little, and that is not a great evil. And nevertheless, as thy poor Flavio loved thee; as he would joyously have given his life for thee; as he rested in confidence,—and what a hard awakening thou didst prepare for him!—in short, in short,—I will speak no more of that: of what good to reflect? Are we not already unhappy enough? I know thou wilt never forget me, and that thought consoles me.

"Take every precaution at Ravenna. It is possible some one may discover a thread that will lead to you: that would astonish me nevertheless, for who knows

our secret? Myself only here; and I need not say, that never mute of a seraglio was more impenetrable than I. My judges are exasperated to see me so indifferent. Yesterday, after my examination, the president of the court-martial came into my chamber, and there mysteriously offered me a large sum of money if I would expose to him the true culprits. 'För,' said he, 'I see in you but a passive instrument sacrificed to the ambition of others.' I immediately named to him King Ferdinand and all his ministers. That folly has cost me a new annoyance. Last night I was given for my supper dry bread and water, like a scholar who has not learned his lesson. All this is very pitiful. When I see by what means these men are governed, in what subjection they are kept, and with what arguments they are satisfied, I ask myself by what irony God has endowed such animals with speech? Sometimes we imagine naturally that humanity aspires to the light; but the greater part of men, wallowing insensibly in their vice and ignorance, return to it eagerly, if, by chance, they have been rescued from it for a while. God has made man of clay, and he forgets not his origin. I may be unjust; but these dregs of humanity stir my soul with indignation.

"In our first engagement, we were very few. We had defeated the royal troops, who flew at our attack like a flock of pigeons, and marched straight upon Cosenza; but they were not long in discovering the number of our forces, and consequently our weakness. We were surrounded and overwhelmed, but died bravely, shouting, 'Viva Italia!' I had forced a passage, at the head of fifty men, by which we gained the mountains, directing our march towards Polichoro, where we hoped to embark; but enraged wolves were never hunted as we were. Day and night we were on the alert; but we were captured, and, consequently, we were criminals. It was then natural that each one should turn against us. A band of peasants and *gendarmes* arrested us. I believed that I had already

drunk all the bitterness of life; but I was mistaken. Those whom we had come to deliver rushed upon us with the greatest fury. But perhaps they were just without knowledge, and crushed us because we were defeated in our enterprise, and still delayed their hopes. I have asked myself if it were not folly to endeavor to save such men in spite of themselves; and if, under the pretext of duty, we did not instinctively obey the subtle needs of a personal ambition? But now, when all is finished for me, and I have no further interest in the things of life, I reply, No, no! It is not a folly to save a man in spite of himself. It is a duty, an absolute duty; and, Giovan, never forget to guide the flock toward the light. Before, in speaking of them, I was bitter, I was unjust, I was resentful, because of my defeat. I was wrong: they are enveloped in obscurity, they are conducted and retained in the brutalizing road of servitude. It appertains to us to carry the light,—the torch of need. It is our duty, our only duty, and he who fails is guilty. Rememberest thou the words of the dying Goethe, which thou hast often heard me repeat? Light, light, still more light! There are shadows that hinder mankind from discovering the true path. At any price they must be dissipated. I speak myself of what I believe, but whom do I doubt? Have I not searched history? and do I not know that in some place there is always a vestal who watches over the sacred fire? That suffices; for it will never be extinguished, and one day it will illumine the world. I die, then, in peace, secure in my unshaken faith. Giovan, my well-beloved child, continue thy work imperturbably; and thou shalt have in thy soul the peace promised to men of good-will.

"Will all be finished soon? I know not, and I am not anxious. Life is a mortal malady: each day that passes conducts us toward the healing; and the essential is to heal, no matter how or when. I believe, nevertheless, that it will not be long: they are expeditious here, and haste to finish.

When the Angel of Death, comes she will be welcome; and she will give the kiss of peace to him who loves her.

"Do not imagine that I suffer here. No, I am comparatively well-treated. My chamber is large; and from my window I see the city, and the amphitheatre under the hill, and I can even perceive the place where the soldiers of Alaric turned the river to inter their general. Yesterday I was at the casement: a woman passed carrying a child. She saw me, and knew, without doubt, who I was. Falling on her knees, she raised her infant toward me, as if to demand my blessing upon it. That hurt me: I threw myself on my bed, and wept freely in thinking of thee.

"The man who comes to thee is sure. He has belonged to us for some time. Giovan will send him to Samla, who will do for him what is necessary.

"My darling child, I would embrace thee, and hold thee once more to the heart that adores thee; but that cannot be. The will of God be done! If, during the happy years I have lived near thee, I have caused thee some pain, forgive me, and guard my memory as of one who has loved thee much. Thou knowest that I shall die with thy name upon my lips. Adieu, Giovan! Adieu, Sylverine! Be happy, and forget not

"YOUR FLAVIO."

Her face bathed with tears, Sylverine turned toward the man. "Tell me all: I will know all," she said.

"I will tell you all I know," he replied. "When I left, he was not yet condemned. The sentence was to be pronounced the next day, or the day after. Ah! he has a great heart: at the last the judge could scarcely speak to him."

"But all is not yet finished," cried Sylverine: "there is yet some hope. O my God! to be so far from him! Tell me, cannot we save him yet?"

The man shook his head doubtfully.

"When once the sentence is pronounced, they will forward, without doubt, the pro-

ceedings to Naples. In that case there will pass some days before the sentence will be executed. But how to save him? Do you believe they will ever release such prey?"

"No matter," replied Sylverine. "I will go to Naples. I am a woman, and they will allow me to enter everywhere. I will go to the king. I will throw myself at his feet. Giovan, we must leave immediately, this instant."

"We will go," said Giovan in a voice so choked that one could scarcely hear him; "and, if the king refuses his mercy, I will send him to entreat his own pardon of God!"

An hour after, they were rolling rapidly along the road from Ravenna to Leghorn, by the way of Florence. They scarcely spoke: sometimes Sylverine wept, moaned, and wrung her hands; Giovan, silent and sullen, resembled a chained lion. Once or twice he flew into a fearful rage with the postilion, who drove as fast as he could, urging his horses at their utmost speed.

They arrived at Leghorn, a maritime city, in constant relation with other parts of Italy, always ready for emancipation, and listening eagerly to the revolutionary news that came from the other provinces. There, no doubt could remain. Flavio was dead. The sentence of the court-martial had been executed in twenty-four hours. Covered with the black cloth of the parricide, his head veiled in crape, his hands bound behind his back, he had been conducted beyond the city, near to the chapel of Santa Maria, where he offered calmly his breast to the soldiers, and fell on his face dead, without pronouncing a word.

Sylverine, with both hands pressed to her heart, listened to the sad recital, her eyes fixed, and her face paler than death. When it was ended, she was seized with a sort of spasm of rage; and, turning toward Giovan, she cried, "Cain! Cain! Cain!" Then a flood of tears calmed the storm, and she fell into a chair exhausted.

Giovan knelt before her, and sobbed with the sharp anguish of those who know

not how to weep. "I have murdered him! I have murdered him!"

"Yes, thou hast murdered him!" said Sylverine, regarding him with a contempt so deep that it terrified him. "Yes, thou hast murdered thy friend. It was thy selfishness, and thy cowardice, that sent him to a place of danger to which thou didst not dare go. I will see thee no more."

He tried to stammer a reply, but she would not hear him.

"Go," she cried: "I am afraid of thee. I have been insane to love thee, or, more, to believe I loved thee. It is he that I have loved. It is the dear dead, that I shall see no more. Ah! the misery of life. What a wretched heart I had within me, to deceive him, and to deceive him for thee!"

Giovan extended his hands toward her, and cried, "Sylverine! Sylverine!"

She arose impetuously, opened the door, and, pointing to it with a gesture that expressed her hatred, she said, "Go, thou! and may I never, never see thee again. There is now between us an abyss thou canst not cross. It is the bloody grave where Flavio lies with ten balls in his breast. Speak not! Go, thou!"

She pushed him outside the door with an astonishing violence, and closed it upon him. "O Flavio, Flavio!" she cried, "I deceived thee in life, but now I swear to be faithful to thee until death."

Giovan wandered all night, driven by a tempest of passion and grief. He rushed over fields and through forests as one insane: sometimes he fell on his face beneath the trees and wept; then he arose and hurried on with rapid steps, crying with fury, and clenching his hands at the heavens as though he would insult and defy God. The strongest contradictions passed through his mind. He would go to Naples, raise the people, burn the palace of the king, slaughter the soldiers, hang the ministers, and make for Flavio frightful obsequies. Or he would reject the oath of the Drinkers of Ashes, reconquer Sylverine, take her with him to some other country, to a house in a

forest, where no one would come to disturb them. In the morning, as he passed a farmhouse, a dog ran toward him and barked. He threw himself upon the animal, and, seizing it by the hind legs, served it as a club, crushing its head against the wall at a single blow. The brutal stupidity of the action recalled him to himself. "Have I, then, become insane?" he thought. Toward the middle of the day, worn out, soiled, and ghastly, he returned to the inn where he had left Sylverine. She had gone, leaving a letter for him.

"I fly from thee," she wrote, "for I know thy violence. I go to hide my shame at having thought I loved thee, and my despair at losing him whom I loved. Why didst thou come into our life? Before thy arrival we were happy. Do not search for me: thou wilt never find me. I care for nothing, I love nothing, I desire nothing. I go to await death, that it may rid me of a life that thou hast rendered insupportable. Adieu. That thou wilt forget me, is the only favor I demand of thee!"

Giovan rushed through the city. He interrogated the captains of ships, the conductors of diligences, he searched the hotels, he questioned the officers in the service of the port, the *gendarmes* who guarded the gates. It was in vain: he could not discover Sylverine.

"At daybreak," said the landlord, "the lady paid her bill, and left that letter for you: then she went out alone, and on foot, and has not returned since."

Nevertheless, after much searching, he found that she had taken a carriage to Florence. He hastened after her; but there he lost all trace, and was never able to gain the slightest intelligence afterward. He searched none the less for an entire month. He was wretched without her, and longed ardently to see her, if but for once. He even tried to put in movement the secret means which the Drinkers of Ashes had at their disposal. Whereupon Samia wrote him.

"We are not made to calm the despair of love. That woman is your evil genius,

It is because of her that Flavio is dead. Keep that in remembrance! and take care that we do not demand of you, in the future, a severe account of your conduct."

Such a letter was not of a nature to calm Giovan in his state of revolt and anxiety; and he replied to Samla, —

"If I must not be human, tear from my heart the passions that torture it, and I will devote myself to our work; but first there is a motive that urges me onward, though the heavens crush me. I must find Sylverine, and I will find her."

He then continued his search with the energy that characterized him. He explored the neighboring cities of Florence, went to Ravenna in the hope that she had returned there, and even dared to go into the city of Cosenza, thinking that perhaps she had hidden herself where Flavio had perished. It was in vain: he could not discover her. Then he imagined, that, to conceal herself the letter, she had gone to Rome, the very camp of the enemy, the place to him especially perilous, where he could not venture without risking his head. One believes easily what one wishes. He took a false passport, and arrived in Rome at the time when the ceremonies of Holy Week attract so many strangers. He visited all the hotels, demanded impudently of the police to examine the register of names; and, instead of evading the suspicion that his presence might excite, he seemed to take pleasure in braving it. He attended all the ceremonies of St. Peter's, for there he hoped to find Sylverine. He laughed under the noses of the Swiss Guards, dressed like knaves of diamonds. And he did not hesitate to make in public observations the least favorable to the government of the Pope. One day, in the gallery of the Vatican, while looking at the picture, too much praised, of the *Communion of St. Jerome*, he heard a voice behind him which said, "The communion of St. Jerome should make those who have partaken of it more prudent." He turned, and saw an unknown man, who regarded him stead-

ily, and added, "We must never forget St. Jerome."

The unknown man went away; and Giovan, always accustomed to mystery, found no difficulty in understanding that the phrase, stripped of its apparent meaning, played upon the name of *Jerome*, that is to say, upon the name of Savonarola, and was a communication from the Drinkers of Ashes. He nevertheless persisted in his researches. He went to Tivoli, to Rocca di Papa, to Castel Gondolfo, to Frascati. — in short, everywhere where he supposed Sylverine could have concealed herself. One morning, while walking through the shady road that borders the lake of Albano, he found himself face to face with the man who had spoken to him in the gallery of the Vatican. The unknown stepped before Giovan, and said to him, "She whom thou seekest is not here. It is useless to search: thou wilt not find her."

"Where is she, then?" demanded Giovan.

"I cannot tell you that," replied the man; "but I have come to warn you. They begin to suspect you in Rome. It is time for you to leave if you would not stay here always."

"Ah! Who has sent you?"

"Those with whom you have partaken the communion."

"Well, go to them, and say that I defy all Rome, and that I shall remain here as long as it pleases me to do so."

The man smiled pityingly, saluted Giovan, and went away.

Three days after the unhappy young man returned to Rome. One evening, as he walked solitary along the deserted space that borders the Tiber, beyond Mount Aventine, three men rushed upon him, enveloped him in a mantle, and forced him into a carriage that rolled away swiftly toward the *Campagna*. Before the break of day they had arrived at the little port of Fiumicino. There, on the deck of a vessel that awaited them, one of his captors gave him a letter from Samla.

"Knowing that thou wilt never over

come thyself," wrote he, "necessity compels us to use such means to recall thee to thy senses, and to save thee. The hour will soon arrive when we shall need all the energy which thou expendest so badly. Come to me immediately; and later thou shalt perhaps know where she is whom thou hast so vainly sought."

Always watched, but treated as a master by his attendants, Giovan arrived at Genoa; and from there he hastened to Samla, whom I have said lived *beyond Jordan*. On seeing him his first words were, "Where is Sylverine?"

"Thou shalt know later," replied Samla; and then he added, with an expression not habitual on his impassive face, "the time when thou canst see her will come all too soon for thee."

In spite of his rebellion, Giovan was curbed before that will of iron which none could resist. He commenced to work with a fiery energy, thinking it would distract his thoughts from the one maddening remembrance, but it had no effect; and, although the name of Sylverine never passed his lips, he thought of her continually. She reigned tyrannically over his heart, thereby reminding him of Flavio, and keeping alive a fire of remorse that nothing could extinguish.

Two years had passed, — two long and wearisome years. No action had taken place to occupy the mind of Giovan, neither had any news arrived to him of Sylverine; yet he was no more accustomed nor resigned to his sorrow. One day Samla, more serious than usual, entered his room and gave him a letter. "Thou canst go to her now," he said: "at last thou art about to be free."

Giovan took the letter, and opened it with a beating heart; for he at once recognized the writing of Sylverine. It contained but a line, that seemed traced by a feeble hand.

"I am at Pisa. I am dying, and I would see thee."

Giovan was not long in reaching Pisa, and hastening to the house of Sylverine. When he saw her, he started with terror; for she was only the ghost of herself. Her sunken eyes, surrounded by purple shadows

seemed to float in sockets too large for them; the transparent temples showed the violet veins; an opaque pallor gave to her complexion the whiteness of wax; her lips, thin and parched, showed her discolored teeth; and her long, emaciated hands had the vague gestures of an incomparable languor. She had said truly: she was dying, — wasting away slowly and without suffering, consumed by one of those mysterious maladies where the mind and the body react one upon the other. A doctor would have said, "She is dying of dyspepsia;" a philosopher would have said, "She is dying of sorrow;" and neither would have been wrong.

A feeble smile lighted her face, and a fugitive flush passed over her thin cheek, when she saw Giovan enter.

"I am glad to see thee," she said; "for I could not go to Flavio until I had clasped thy hand once more."

Her hours were numbered: each one that passed increased her weakness. Giovan never left her. He remained near her, tender, anxious, almost womanly in his gentle care, watching with terror the rapid progress the disease made from day to day. She suffered no pain. The spirit seemed to leave little by little the exhausted body. They spoke seldom, but always of Flavio. She loved to recall the first happy days of her acquaintance with the regretted dead. The time seemed so long to her since she lost him, and she was so near death, that she believed herself to be old. Sometimes she said to Giovan, "Dost thou remember when we were young?" Often she remained for hours, immobile, silent, her eyes closed, her head turned away, and her hands folded serenely, giving no sign of life save a sort of mechanical moan that wrung the heart of Giovan. One day a low sob fell upon her ear: she raised her eyes with effort, and saw Giovan leaning over her bed, weeping to see her die. She had no convulsions, no agony, none of the terrible combats, where life and death seem to struggle with each other. She spoke of Flavio, extended her damp hand to Gio-

van, breathed a light sigh, and died. He watched over her while a priest murmured, in a low voice, the consecrated orisons, regarding, without power to move his eyes, the form immovable forever. It seemed impossible that she was dead. Once he called aloud, "Sylverine! Sylverine!" in a voice broken with fatigue, grief, and sobs. Then a heavy stupor fell upon him, and he slept, overcome by watching and weariness.

When he awoke, day had already dawned. He looked from his window: the swallows floated in the blue heavens; the Arno flowed peacefully, with a sad, monotonous 'plaint. When he returned to the funeral chamber, and saw Sylverine, upon whom death had already strewn its pale flowers, he cried, "Ah! how can day dawn after such a night?"

During the religious ceremony, which was held in the cathedral, Giovan had only a confused consciousness of the sad event. He suffered in an intolerable manner, thinking of Sylverine and Flavio; of the work of the Drinkers of Ashes, their efforts always frustrated, always defeated; of the great motive that had directed all their actions, and for which Flavio had been sacrificed; and regarding the great bronze lamp that is suspended to the ceiling by a long cord, and whose oscillations revealed to Galileo the theory of the pendulum, he said, as did the great Pisan, "Nevertheless, it moves!"

Sylverine reposes in the Campo Santo, not far from the fresco Orgagna painted of Christ, showing his wounds, to teach men that life is but one long scene of suffering. Beside the spot where she sleeps forever, Giovan bought two burial places. One can understand for whom they were intended.

At last free, as Samla had cruelly said, he returned to his post, that is to say, Ravenna. Gloomy, sullen, and silent, he lived among men like one in a desert. In 1848 he threw himself into action with a blind fury, as though he had something personal to avenge. He was everywhere. At Naples, at Cortone, at Milan, upright uncovered, always in the front rank, he as-

tonished the most hardy by his recklessness. They called him "the invulnerable," for death seemed to avoid him in spite of the advances he made. When he knew that many of their hopes were vanishing before the counter revolution,—that in Italy, Hungary, and everywhere, the cause he loved would return again to silence and shadows,—he conceived with Samla the project of bringing into Italy, *les armées Magyares* attacked on the Danube by the Austrians. In spite of perils without number, and adventures useless to recount, he reached Transylvania, and entreated Bem to blockade Venice, and to commence a struggle between the Adriatic and Mincio; but he was too late. The destiny of Hungary, fixed by the capitulation of Villagos, forced Bem to seek a refuge in Turkey.

When Giovan returned to Venice, there also all was over. Rushing insanely to Ferrara, then occupied by the Austrians, he endeavored to renew the combat. He was taken, judged, and condemned, not to be shot as a soldier, but to be hung as a bandit. The sentence pronounced in the morning was to be executed the same evening. At sunset Giovan was in his cell, sitting upon the bundle of straw that served for his bed, calm, immobile, absorbed in the retrospective contemplation of his life, which seemed to pass before him with wonderful distinctness in the last hour. The door opened, and an Hieronymite monk entered,—one of those whose rules are so austere that the people of the Umbrias take them for sorcerers.

"I do not wish a confessor," said Giovan sternly.

The monk made a sign for the jailer to leave. Then, raising the hood from his eyes, he walked toward the prisoner and said,—

"*In nomine fratris Hieronymi, salve!*"

"Samla," cried Giovan, recognizing his voice. Then, throwing himself in his friend's arms, he said, "I will not be saved."

"I have not come to save thee," replied Samla, who, having fled from Rome, had found an asylum in a convent near Ferrara.

"I have not come to save thee; for I know well that thou hast thirst of death. I have come to know thy last wishes, and to execute them if possible."

In the presence of the grim monster, Giovan thought but of Sylverine. "There is one thing," said he, "which thou must promise me; and that is, that thou wilt remove my body to the Campo Santo, at Pisa, and place it beside Sylverine."

A smile of pity passed over the face of Samla, as he replied, "I promise it; but is there nothing else?"

"Nothing," said Giovan: "all my life was engrossed in that passion; and I have cared for nothing else since I lost her."

They sat side by side on the bundle of straw, and talked together as though death did not wait at the door. Samla spoke of his projects; for, with him, hope was indestructible, as well as conviction. "This is but another delay," said he: "we must know how to await our time." Then, after a short silence, he said to Giovan, "Art thou very sure there is nothing more thou desirest?"

"Whatever I may desire, amounts to nothing," replied Giovan. "In an hour I shall be hung. It is very foolish, I know, to dispute upon the outward form of death; but to make grimaces on a scaffold before people who will clap their hands, I avow that tortures and humiliates me. I would have died as Flavio died, by and before the carbines."

"I cannot give thee carbines," said Samla, "but I can tell thee how to evade the rope. Take this," said he, giving a little

bottle. "See my provision of deliverance. I have kept it for a solemn occasion. Use it dear child; and die with the consolation that thou wilt not be a spectacle for the curious and indifferent."

An hour after, when they entered the cell of Giovan to conduct him to the place of execution, they found him extended upon the floor, cold and dead, and around him a strange perfume of bitter almond.

A doctor, called in haste, declared that he was poisoned by a powerful dose of cyanhydrique acid. The body was, nevertheless, hung as an example.

The last wish of Giovan has been executed. He reposes near to Sylverine; and Flavio also has been united to them. In the first days of the month of September, 1860, after Garibaldi had taken the city of Cosenza, the body of Flavio was removed from the little chapel of Santa Maria, where it had been placed, and brought to the Metropolitan Church. There it was received with military honors, to the sound of bells and the report of cannon; then it was placed upon a caisson of artillery, and, accompanied by an escort, it was carried to Pola, embarked to Leghorn, and from thence to Pisa.

Those who were separated in life are today forever united in death. Upon their tombs one reads simply their names, —

GIOVAN. SYLVERINE. FLAVIO.

which crosses an epitaph of a single line, — Eccl. vii. 26, "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares, and whose hands are chains."

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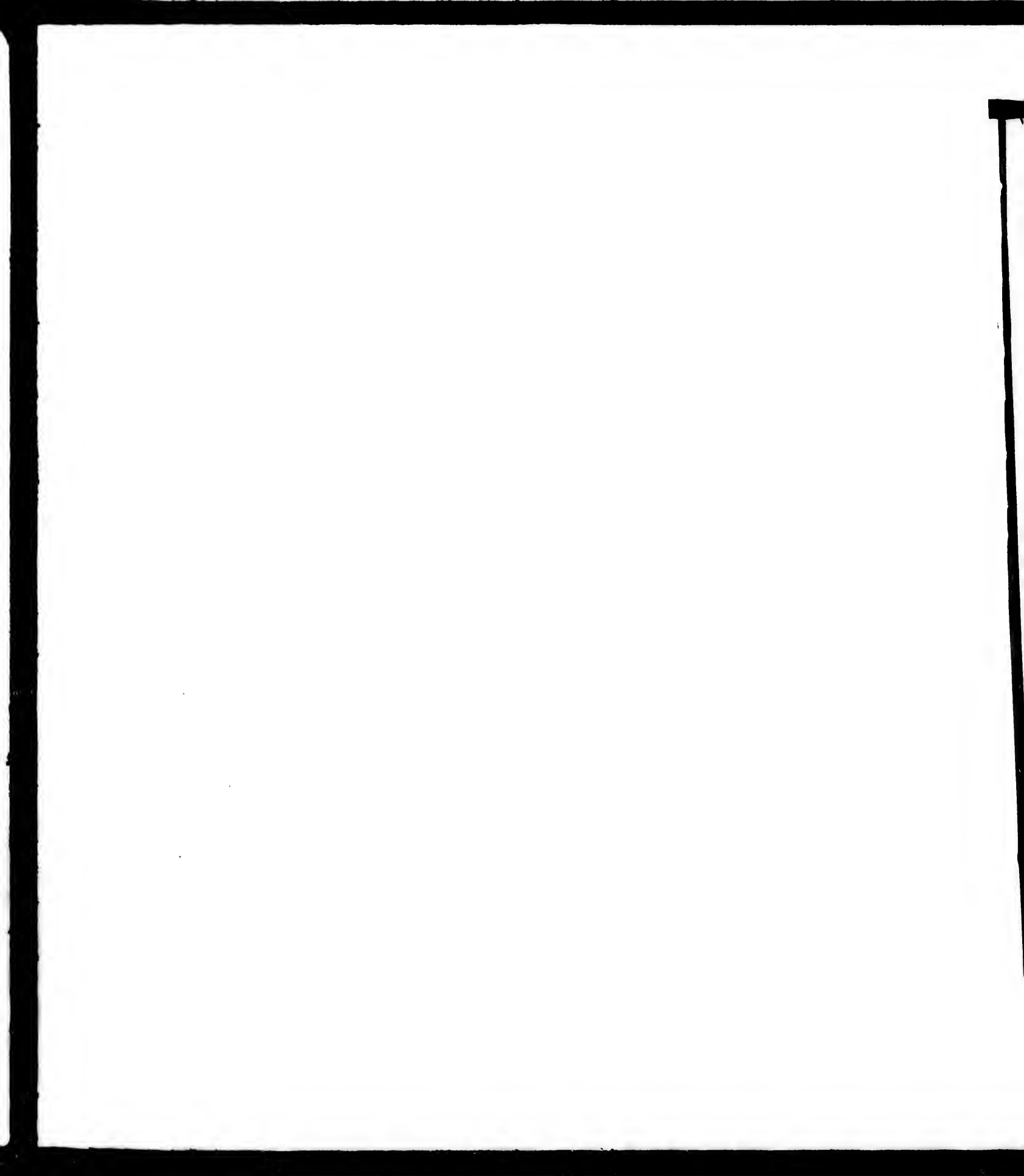
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