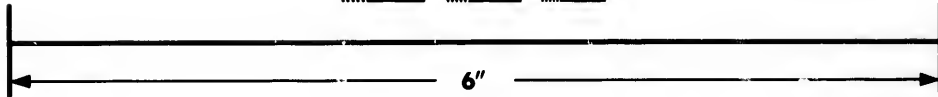
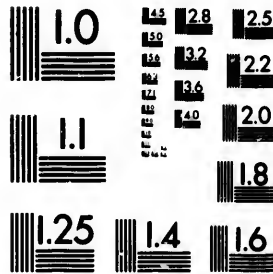


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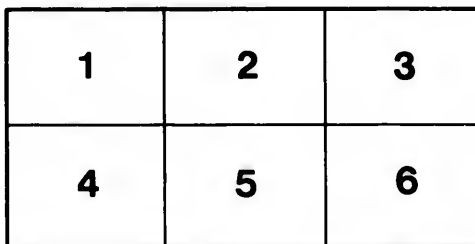
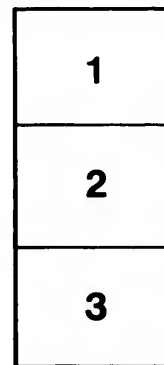
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A WIFE'S TRAGEDY.

CHAPTER I.

ARTHUR SUTHERLAND.



R. ARTHUR SUTHERLAND sat by the open window of his room, in the Metropolitan, smoking a cigar, and watching the ceaseless tide of humanity ebbing and flowing on Broadway. Three o'clock, and a sunshiny May afternoon—silks and satins and beautiful faces sweeping down to meet dress-coats, and switch canes, and mustached faces, sauntering up. An organ-grinder, right below, was playing a lively air, and it seemed to Arthur Sutherland that the men and women were keeping time to his music, walking through the great quadrille of life. For what is it all, this ceaseless gliding in and out, bowing and dipping, and forward and back, but a mighty quadrille that we dance every day,

with the music in our own hearts, whether that music be a jubilate or a dead march.

Arthur Sutherland sat and watched the ever-shifting panorama, with a face as serene as the bright May day. Why not? He was young, and handsome, and rich, just returned from making the grand Continental tour, and disposed to think there was no place like home after all. Young, and handsome, and rich; surely all that the world can give of happiness is contained in these three words; and Arthur Sutherland was happy—very happy indeed this pleasant May afternoon. This bright little world of ours looked very much to him as Eden must have done to Adam on the first day of his life, and Eve—yes, Eve, was up-town, in a brown-stone front, and only waiting the word to make him blessed for life.

There was a tap at his door.

“Come in,” said Mr. Sutherland, without looking round; and some one obeyed and crossed the room, and struck him lightly on the shoulder with a kid-gloved hand. Mr. Sutherland turned round to see—not the waiter he had expected, but a gentlemanly young man, elaborately attired, faultless, from the toes of his shiny boots to the crown of his silk hat.

“Why, Phil, old fellow, is it you?” said Arthur Sutherland, grasping both his visitor’s hands. “Here’s

a surprise! Where in the world did you come from?"

"Where did I come from?" exclaimed Mr. Sutherland's visitor, taking a seat, after a prolonged shake-hands. "I think it is I who should ask that question! Where do you come from, and what do you mean by being in New York a whole week and not informing your friends?"

"How should I know my friends were here? What are you doing in New York? Practicing your profession?"

"When I get any practicing to do; but the people who know me are so confoundedly healthy, and the people who don't know me won't employ me; so, between both, I am in a state of genteel beggary. I wish," said Mr. Sutherland's visitor, vindictively, "the spotted-plague, or the yellow-fever, or the small-pox, would break out! A man might have some chance of living then."

"He would stand more chance of dying, I should think," said Arthur Sutherland, smiling. "Why don't you go down to St. Mary's, and hang out your shingle there? This big city is surfeited with ambitious young doctors and well-established old ones. Physicians are few and far between and old-fogyish in St. Mary's, and the people know you there."

"For which very reason," said the young doctor,

dejectedly, "they wouldn't employ me. Do you suppose the men and women who knew little Phil Sutherland when he wore petticoats, and got spankings, would employ Doctor Philip Sutherland to drag out their double teeth, or cure their colics or rheumatisms. No; I might blue-mold in the grass-grown streets of St. Mary's before I sold sixpence-worth of physic."

Arthur Sutherland laughed. There is no joke so good as the misfortunes of our friends, when we are beyond misfortune's reach ourselves. They were distant cousins, these young men, bearing the same good old English name; but there, all resemblance between them ended. Arthur Sutherland was rich; Philip Sutherland was poor. Arthur had a mother and sister, and a home; Philip had no nearer kindred than this distant cousin, and no home but in swarming boarding-houses. He had been M. D. for about half a year, and found it terribly up-hill work.

"All a chap can make," said Doctor Sutherland, moodily, "won't pay his board, and keep him in paper collars and cigars. As for the theater, or paying tailors, or bootmakers, that's out of the question. If they would take payment in blue-pills, and castor-oil, or blistering, or anything professional, I might manage somehow; but they won't. Tailors and bootmakers never seem to be sick, or have their teeth drawn; or, if they do, they won't come to me! I wish I had

taken to tailoring myself—it's money-making, and it's handy to be able to make your own coat and pantaloons. I have a strong mind sometimes, as it is, to throw physic to the dogs, and take to the needle and goose."

"It's a harrowing case, certainly," said Arthur, laughing; "but don't disgrace the name of Sutherland yet. You know my poor mother's proudest boast is, there never yet was a Sutherland in trade. Stick to the scalpel and lancet, dear boy, and marry an heiress!"

"That's easier said than done," Doctor Sutherland replied, more moodily still. "I'd marry an heiress fast enough if I could find one to have me, let her be ugly as a Hottentot. But I never knew one heiress to speak to; and if I did, she would treat me like the rest. She would sail past me with upturned nose, and plump into the arms of some fellow like yourself, with more money already than you know what to do with. Marry an heiress! I wish to Heaven I had the chance!"

"I suppose it is only in novels that millionaires' daughters elope with grooms and fortunes," said Arthur; "and yet there ought to be heiresses in New York in these days of commercial fortune-making; and you are not such a bad-looking fellow in the main,

Phil! Hope on, hope ever, my boy! there is no telling what is in store for you yet."

"Yes, there is the poorhouse," Dr. Sutherland replied, gloomily; "unless I take to street-sweeping or some other useful avocation to prevent it. I think I'll emigrate to Mexico or Havana; they're nice unhealthy places in hot weather, and doctors ought to thrive there. And, by the bye, speaking of Havana," said Phil Sutherland, rousing himself from his state of despondency, "are you aware your mother and sister spent January and February there this year?"

"Yes, certainly. My mother wrote me from there, and went into rhapsodies over the beauties of Eden Lawn and its mistress. I was in Switzerland at the time, among the ice and snow, and it was rather odd to read that the weather was oppressively warm."

"Your mother liked it," said Phil, "but your sister Gusty didn't. You ought to hear her abusing the place and the people, the heat and the mosquitoes, the church-going bareheaded, and the two meals per day."

"Poor little girl!" Arthur said, smiling; "two meals per day I knew would not suit her. Who were the people, and how did my good mother make their acquaintance?"

"It was at Montreal. You know your mother sent Augusta to the Convent of the Sacred Heart there, to be finished."

Arthur nodded.

"Well, among the pupils there it seems was a lovely young Creole, Mademoiselle Eulalie Rohan, English on the paternal side, French on the maternal, fabulously beautiful, and fabulously wealthy. Your mother saw her, and was enraptured. The liking, it appears, was mutual; for a pressing invitation followed from the young lady and her grandfather to spend the winter in Cuba; which invitation was accepted, Gusty told me in a letter, only on condition that Mr. and Miss Rohan should spend the ensuing summer at Maplewood."

Arthur Sutherland looked surprised.

"Indeed! I was not aware of that. Has Mademoiselle no relative but grandfather?"

"Not one, it appears. She has been an orphan from earliest childhood, and this old grandfather idolizes her. Her fortune is beyond computation, Gusty says. There is a princely estate in South America, another princely estate in Louisiana, and still another in Cuba. Except the Rothschilds, Mr. Rohan and his pretty granddaughter are about the richest people in this lower world."

Arthur Sutherland's small white hand fell lightly

on his cousin's shoulder, and his blue eyes lit up mischievously.

"My dear fellow, the very thing. Nothing could fall out better. This heiress of fabulous wealth and beauty is to spend the summer at Maplewood. Dr. Phil Sutherland, young and good-looking and fascinating, shall spend the summer at Maplewood also. The beautiful heiress and the fascinating physician will be perpetually thrown together—riding, driving, walking, sailing. The result is apparent to the dullest comprehension. Dr. Sutherland will leave Maplewood a married man and a millionaire."

"Nothing of the sort," said Dr. Sutherland, in a hopeless tone, as he lit a cigar; "no such luck for me! It is for my dear cousin Arthur this golden trap is baited. You know the old proverb, 'He that has a goose will get a goose'."

"For me! Nonsense, Phil."

"Is it nonsense? It is a wonderful woman, that stately mamma of yours, old boy; and this gold-bullion heiress is for her Arthur—her only one, and nobody else."

"Then my stately mamma will have her trouble for her pains," said Arthur Sutherland, coolly; "I have no fancy for gold-bullion heiresses, or for having the future Mrs. S. selected for me in this right royal

fashion. No more have I for swarthy skins or tornado-tempered Creoles."

"No," said Phil, puffing away energetically. "No; you like pink cheeks, alabaster brows, and pale auburn ringlets. Miss Isabel Vansell is a very pretty girl."

Arthur Sutherland tried to look unconscious, but it would not do. The slight flush that reddened his handsome face ended in a laugh.

"There you go again, talking more nonsense! It is a lovely afternoon," said Mr. Sutherland, awakening suddenly to the fact; "suppose we take a stroll down Broadway."

"With all my heart. But, first, when is it to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"The wedding of Arthur Sutherland, Esquire, of Maplewood, Maine, to Miss Isabel Vansell, of New York City."

"As if I would put you *au fait* of my love-matters!" said Arthur, drawing on his gloves. "Who has been talking to you of Miss Vansell?"

"Oh, I happen to know the lady. She blushed beautifully yesterday when she asked me if I had seen my cousin, Mr. Sutherland, since his return to New York. Didn't I stare! It was the first intimation I had of your return."

"Which proves you don't read the papers; my return was duly chronicled."

"And so you really won't marry the heiress?"

"I really won't."

"But you have not seen her."

"That makes not the slightest difference."

"And they say she is beautiful."

"All the better! I should like my cousin Phil to have a handsome wife. The Sutherlands always marry pretty women."

"Humph!" muttered Dr. Phil, flinging his cigar out of the window, and rising to go; "and when is the fair-haired Isabel to reign queen of old Maplewood?"

"I haven't asked her that," replied Arthur; "when I do, I will let you know. Now, drop the subject. Here we are on the pave."

The two young men sauntered away, arm-in-arm, and made a very protracted stroll of it. They had been boys together, and had passed through college together, and they had not seen each other for three years; so they found enough to talk about. They dined together some hours later, and afterward strolled into a fashionable theater to see the melancholy Prince of Denmark and his love-sick Ophelia. And, when that was over, Arthur Sutherland went back to the Metropolitan, and Philip Sutherland returned to his east-side boarding-house.

The gas was burning low in Arthur Sutherland's room when he entered it, and in the obscurity he saw

a white patch on the crimson tablecloth—a letter. He turned up the light and looked at it. The address was written in a delicate Italian running-hand, and the envelope smelt like a jessamine-blossom.

“From my mother,” thought the young man. “She reads the papers, if Phil does not. Arthur Sutherland, Esquire, Metropolitan Hotel, New York. Exactly! Let us see what it says inside.”

He opened the envelope with care, and drew out four sheets of fine pink paper, closely written and crossed. There was a fifth sheet, much smaller, and in a different hand—careless and sprawling, and a trifle blotted. The young man smiled, as he laid it down to read his mother’s first.

“Poor little Gusty!” he thought. “That big slapdash-fist and these blots are so like you! If you ever write love-letters, I hope you will have an open grammar and dictionary before you; for your spelling and composition would send Lindley Murray and John Walker into fits. The nuns of the Sacred Heart may be very accomplished ladies, but they haven’t succeeded in drilling spelling and grammar into the head of my only sister.”

Mrs. Sutherland’s letter, dated Maplewood, was very long, very affectionate, and very entertaining. Her delight was boundless to know her darling was at home again; her impatience indescribable to behold

him. She and Augusta were well and happy. Maplewood was looking lovely this charming May-weather, and Mr. and Miss Rohan were enraptured with it. And from this point all Mrs. Sutherland's letter was taken up in singing the praises of Miss Eulalie Rohan—her fascination, her grace, her wealth; above all, her inconceivable beauty. Mrs. Sutherland could find no words strong enough to tell her son her admiration of this young lady.

Her son took it very coolly, lying back in his arm-chair, and smoking as he read. When he read the finishing sentence—a strong appeal, that sounded like a command, to come home immediately, and immediately was underlined twice—he laid it down, and took up the other.

“Very well, mother!” he said, half aloud, “I will go home; but I won't fall in love with your Creole heiress, and so I give you warning.”

The second epistle was in a very different style. It was short and energetic, and to the point, and not very easy to decipher. Miss Augusta Sutherland told her brother she was glad he had come back from that horrid Europe, and she hoped he would come home at once, and stay at home, as he ought to do. They had Eulalie Rohan and her grandfather with them, and mamma was just bewitched about that Eulalie.

"I dare say," wrote the young lady, "you will be bad as the rest, and go stark, staring mad about her black eyes, and pale face, and long curls, the moment you see them. Every one does. Even at school it was just the same; and I declare it turns me sick sometimes. She has only been here a week, and not a soul of them in St. Mary's can talk of a single blessed thing but the black-eyed beauty up at Maplewood. Of course, I am nowhere. Even mamma scarcely takes any notice of me now. And when you return it will be the same, only more so. Of course, you will fall in love with Miss Rohan and her overgrown fortune, and there will be a wedding at Maplewood. At least, if there doesn't, I know mamma will have to be put in the nearest lunatic asylum. Come home as fast as you can. It is rather pleasant seeing one's fellow-beings making fools of themselves when one gets used to it; and I know you will take the Cuban fever as badly as the rest. Your affectionate sister,

" AUGUSTA SUTHERLAND.

"P. S.—Phil Sutherland is knocking about New York somewhere in his usual good-for-nothing way, if the authorities have not send him to Blackwell's Island as a vagrant. If you see him, you may fetch him to Maplewood. If he is not blessed with the usual quantity of brains, he is at least harmless, and it will

be a sort of charity to keep him for the summer. Tell him I said so. A. S."

Mr. Sutherland's gold repeater pointed to half-past one as he finished the perusal of these letters. He rose, folded them up, thrust them into his coat-pocket, turned down the gas, and prepared to retire.

"Poor little Gusty!" he said to himself, with a yawn. "I don't think her convent-life has changed her much. She does not seem to be so enraptured with this Creole belle as my mother; but, then, it never was the little girl's nature to go into raptures over anybody."

Doctor Philip Sutherland presented himself next morning at his cousin's hotel in time for breakfast. Arthur showed him his sister's letter, while they lounged over their coffee and toast, which was served that morning in his room.

"You had better run down with me, Phil," he said. "There used to be capital trout-streams about St. Mary's; and when you're not angling for the silver-backs, you can angle for that golden prize—the Cuban heiress."

"All right!" said Phil. "I have no objection to running wild for a couple of months at Maplewood; and I do want to look at this bird of Paradise they have caged in your Maine home. When do you go?"

"At noon, in the 12.50 train; so you had better be off to your lodgings, and get your belongings together betimes. Fetch your cab here at twelve. I have an engagement in the interval."

"Yes, up-town, in Forty-third street, of course! Are you going to ask Miss Isabel Vansell the momentous question before you start? The gods grant she may say, Yes! Some faint ray of hope where the heiress is concerned may glimmer for me then."

Mr. Sutherland's reply to this was to take his cousin by the collar, and walk him out of the room, with an imperative order to be off and mind his own business, which Doctor Phil did, laughing as he ran down the hotel-steps, while Mr. Arthur Sutherland stood before the mirror making his toilet.

A most elaborate toilet indeed. Arthur Sutherland was not a fop or a dandy, but no fop or dandy that ever lounged in the sunshine down Broadway could take more pains brushing hair or arranging his collar or cravat than he, this morning. He had every reason to be satisfied with the result; the glass gave back a strikingly-handsome face—a complexion of almost womanly fairness, large blue Saxon eyes, and profuse auburn hair. Yes, he looked handsome, and he knew it, still without being a fop or a dandy; and, the toilet completed, he ran down the hotel-steps, sprang into a passing stage, and was rattled up-town. His destina-

tion was, as his cousin surmised, Forty-third street; and ascending the marble steps of one of its long row of brown-stone palaces, he rang the bell and was admitted by a maid-servant. It was not his first call evidently; for the girl knew him, and returned his nod and smile of recognition.

"Is Miss Vansell at home?" Mr. Sutherland asked.

Yes, Miss Vansell was at home and in the morning-room; and Susan, as she spoke, threw open the door of the morning-room, announced Mr. Sutherland, and vanished. Arthur Sutherland had his own ideal of women, or at least of the woman he wanted to marry. A tall and slender angel robed in white book-muslin, with an aureole of pale gold hair, a broad white brow, and dove-like eyes of blue; a beautiful and perfect creature, excelling in all womanly virtue and sweetness; her very presence breathing purity and holiness, and whose heart never was to enshrine any image but his.

"A lovely being scarcely formed or molded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded,"

soft of voice, deft of touch, and free from every stain of earthly evil and passion: a woman and an angel blended in one, who would choose him out from all the world, and love him and cling to him in perfect

faith and trust until death: a perfect being, perfect in all feminine accomplishments, whose music would lull him to sleep in the twilight, and whose fair Madonna-face would always brighten with a smile when he came, and sadden with tender melancholy when he went away. This was the sort of woman he wanted to marry; and perhaps he thought he saw his ideal, this bright May morning, when he entered the morning-room of the Vansell mansion.

Isabel Vansell stood by the open window, the breeze lifting her pale tinselled hair, as fluttering the azure ribbons at her waist, and the flowing skirt of her white muslin dress. She stood by the open window, among pots of tall rose-geraniums, whose perfume scented the air, placing bits of sugar between the gilded bars of a canary-bird's cage, with deft white taper fingers. Robed in white, crowned with that aureole of golden ringlets, with as fair and sweet a face as ever the sun shone on—surely, in this graceful girl, whose blue eyes drooped, and whose pink cheeks deepened as she gave him her hand, Arthur Sutherland had found his ideal. Long after, when the dark and stormy and tragical days that intervened were past, that picture came back to him with a remorseful pang—this fair and graceful girl, with the sunlight making a halo round her drooping head.

Mr. Sutherland sat down by the open window

among the rose-geraniums and canary-birds, and talked to Miss Vansell in very common-place fashion, indeed. He admired her very much; she was his ideal, his perfect woman, and he loved her, or thought he did; but for all that he talked common-places, and never let drop one tender or admiring word. Isabel Vansell sat opposite him, with the breeze still stirring the lovely pale-gold hair, and the sunlight illuminating her delicate face.

They talked of the old themes, they went over the old beaten ground—Miss Vansell had no striking or original ideas on any subject, but she talked on all with charming feminine grace. She was not voluble, and she was just a thought shy; but Mr. Sutherland admired her none the less for that. Yet still he never betrayed that admiration by one word, or look, or tone; and it was only when he arose to go that he alluded to his departure at all.

“It must be ‘good-bye’ this time, and not ‘good morning,’” he said, smiling; “I leave town at noon.”

“Leave town!” the young lady echoed, faintly, the rose-tint fading out of her sweet face; “I did not know—I thought—”

Arthur Sutherland saw and interpreted the signs, with a little thrill of delight.

“I shall not be absent long,” he said. “New York

has irresistible charms for me just now. I shall only run down to Maplewood to see my mother and sister, and return."

The color came back to Miss Vansell's cheeks, and she held out her lily-leaf hand with a smile.

"*Bon voyage,*" she said; "after three years' absence, I wonder you could linger even a week in New York."

"Home has its charms, and so has New York; very powerful ones just at present. Shall I find you in the city when I return?" he asked, holding the hand she had given him a moment.

"Yes," said Miss Vansell, blushing beautifully; "good-bye!"

The momentous question, to which Phil had alluded, rose to the young man's lips, but he checked himself.

"Time enough when I return," he thought; "it will be sweet to know it is for that I shall return."

So the words were not spoken that would have sealed his fate—that would have changed the whole current of his life. Perhaps there is a Providence in these things; and all the fever of love, and doubt, and anguish, and misery was to be undergone, to make him a better man, to try him as gold is tried in the crucible.


Once he looked back, as he descended the stone

steps, at the window of the morning-room. His ideal was there still, among the rose-geraniums and the birds, with the fair Madonna-face, and tender blue eyes.

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CHAPTER II.

EULALIE.

 IN the purple twilight of the next evening the two young men drove, in a buggy hired at the railway-station, through the one long, straggling street of the village of St. Mary's.

I wonder if any one who reads this over was in St. Mary's; if not, I advise them to visit it as speedily as possible. That beautiful little city, Portland, is very near it; and of all delightful villages on the rock-bound coast of Maine, I do not think there is one more delightful than St. Mary's. You walk down its chiet street, between two rows of dear little white cottages, with green window-shutters and red doors, their snowy fronts all overrun with sweetbrier, and their windows looking into the prettiest of flower-gardens. You walk down the long straggling street until it ceases to be a street, and you find yourself on a long white sandy beach, with the broad blue Atlantic spreading out before you, and melting in the far-off purple horizon into the low blue sky. You see winding paths leading

here and there to beautiful villas and stately mansions, embosomed in towering trees ; and still further away, your view is bounded by black piny woods and the misty outline of hills. The salt breath of old ocean is in your lungs, its saline freshness in your face, its ceaseless roar in your ears, but there is little of the strife and tumult and bustle and uproar of the big restless world in St. Mary's.

In the purplish gloom of the May-twilight, Arthur Sutherland and his cousin drove slowly along the pleasant country-roads, with swelling meadows and dark woods, and peaceful-looking farmhouses and stately homesteads on either hand. It was all very familiar and very dear to them both ; they had spent their boyhood together here before they had gone forth to fight the battle of life ; and every green lane and upland meadow and forest arcade was as well known to them as their own faces in the glass. They drove along in the misty twilight, with the scented country air blowing in their faces, very silently—thinking of these bygone days, perhaps, and wondering if they had changed as little as the landscape in these intervening years. The twilight was deepening into starlit night as the home of Arthur Sutherland came in view. A pair of tall iron gates stood wide ; and you saw a spacious carriage-drive, winding away between two rows of giant maples and hemlocks, while miniature forests of

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these same noble trees spread themselves away on either hand. Embosomed among these glorious old trees stood a long, low, old-fashioned gray stone house, older than the Revolution, and built far more with a view to strength and durability than beauty or chasteness of architecture. There were modern additions and repairs; but the old gray stone house, with its high narrow windows and stacks of chimneys and peaked gables stood much as it had stood when the first Sutherland who emigrated from England to the colonies built it, over one hundred years before. The Sutherlands were proud of their old mansion—very old as age goes in America—and only altered it to make unavoidable repairs. The long drawing-room and dining-room windows opened upon a sweep of grassy lawn, sloping down to the groves of maple and elm and hemlock like a green velvet carpet; a piazza run around the second story, in which the tall windows opened in the same fashion. Stables and out-houses, also of gray stone, were in the rear of the building, and beyond them stretched a delightful orchard, where apple and plum, and pear and cherry-trees scented the air with their blossoms in a spring, and strewed the sward with their delicious ripe fruit in autumn. To the right, rolled away swelling meadows, ending where the pine woods began; to the left, another long garden, all aglow in summer with rose-trees, and where little

wildernesses of lilacs and laburnums, and cedar and tamarack, sloped down to the sea ; a glorious old garden, in whose green arcades and leafy aisles delicious silence and coolness ever reigned, where the singing of numberless birds, the wash of the ceaseless waves, or the swaying of the boughs in the breeze, made music all day long ; a dreamy, delightful old garden, where everything grew or did not grow, as best pleased itself, ending in a grassy terrace, with a flight of stone steps leading down to the beach below. A magnificent place altogether, this ancestral home of the Sutherland's. There was not a tree or a stone inside the iron gates that was not dear to them, and of which they were not proud.

The round May moon was sailing over the dim, dark hill-tops as the two young men drove round to the stables and left their vehicle there. Two long lines of light glanced across the front of the old stone house ; and, in the blue, misty moonlight, it cast quaint and weird shadows athwart the turfy lawn.

Arthur Sutherland lifted the ponderous iron knocker and roused the silent echoes by a loud alarm. The man-servant who opened the door was a stranger to the returned heir, and stared at him, and informed him Mrs. Sutherland was engaged, and that there was a dinner party at the house.

"Never mind," said Arthur, "I dare say she

will see me. Just tell her two gentlemen await her presence in the library, my good fellow! This way, Phil!"

He pushed past the man as he spoke, and opened a door to the left, with an air of one all at home. A shaded lamp burned on a round table in the center of the floor—they had no gas at Maplewood—and, by its subdued light, you saw a noble room, lined all round the four walls with books from floor to ceiling. A portrait of George Washington hung above the low black marble mantel; albeit traditions averred the Sutherlands had rather snubbed that hero in his lifetime. Arm-chairs, cushioned in green billiard-cloth, to match the green carpet and curtains, stood around; and just as the young gentlemen subsided into one apiece, a mighty rustling of silks resounded without, the door opened, and a lady entered; a lady, fair and proud, and stately and handsome, and still youthful-looking, with fair, unsilvered hair, delicate, regular features, thin lips, and large light blue eyes; a lady who would have told you she was five-and-forty, but who looked ten years younger, elegantly dressed, and redolent of patchouly. Arthur Sutherland rose up, the lady looked at him, gave a cry of delight, ran forward, and clasped him in her arms.

"My darling boy! My dearest Arthur! and have you returned at last!"

“At last, my dear mother, and glad to be home again.”

They were very much alike, the mother and son; the same tall stature, the same blond type of Saxon beauty; but the proud and somewhat severe look in the mother's blue eyes was a warm and more genial light in the son's. She held him off at arm's length, and looked at him with loving and delighted eye.

“You have grown taller and stouter, I think,” she said, while her son stood, laughingly, to be inspected. “Your three years' travel has decidedly improved you! My dearest boy, I cannot tell you how rejoiced I am to have you home once more!”

“A thousand thanks, mother mine! But have you no welcome for this other stranger?”

The lady turned round quickly. She had quite overlooked him in the happiness of seeing her boy.

Doctor Sutherland came forward with a profound bow.

“Philip Sutherland!” she said, smilingly, holding out her ringed, white hand. “I am very glad to see you back again at Maplewood!”

Mr. Philip Sutherland expressed his thanks, and his pleasure at seeing her looking as young and handsome as ever.

“Pshaw!” said the lady, smiling graciously, however. “Have you not ceased that old habit of yours,

of talking nonsense, Philip? Have you dined, Arthur?"

"Yes, mother. We dined in Portland. You are having a dinner-party, they tell me?"

"Only Colonel and Mrs. Madison and the Honorable Mr. Long and his daughter. Will you go up to your room and dress, and join us in the drawing-room? The gentlemen have not left their wine yet. You will find your room in as good order as if you had been absent three days instead of three years; and, Philip, you know your own old chamber."

"Up in the cock-loft!" muttered Philip, sotto voce.

"Yes, ma'am, I know."

"But I should like to see Augusta first, mother. Will you send her word?"

"I'm here!" screamed a shrill voice; and the door was flung open, and a young lady bounced into the room and bounced up to the speaker, flinging her arms round his neck, kissing him with sounding smacks: a young lady, inclined to *embonpoint*, fair-haired and blue-eyed—as it was the nature of the Sutherlands to be; but, unlike the Sutherlands, with a snub nose. Yes, this young lady was a Sutherland; but she had a snub-nose and a low forehead, and cheeks like a milkmaid in color and plumpness; but, for all that, a very nice-looking and a very nice girl, indeed.

"Now, there, Augusta, don't strangle me," said

Miss Augusta's brother, when he thought he had been sufficiently kissed. "Stand off and let me look at you. How fat you have grown!"

"Oh, have I?" exclaimed Miss Sutherland, with sudden asperity. "I wonder you let me in the room before you told me that. Phil Sutherland, how do do you do? I knew you were dying to be asked down here, and so I asked you!"

Doctor Sutherland murmured his thanks in a subdued tone—he was always subdued in the presence of this outspoken cousin; but the young lady paid no attention to him.

"Hadn't you better go back to the drawing-room, mamma? That horrid old Colonel Madison will drink so much port wine, and come in and bore us all to death if you're not there to listen to him. I hate those stupid stories about Mexico, and all the valiant deeds he did there, and so does Eulalie; and I gape in his face, and he goes off and tells his wife I'm the most ill-bred girl he ever met. I know he tells her that, and I hate him!"

Miss Sutherland bounced out of the room as she had bounced into it, and Mrs. Sutherland turned to follow her.

"Make your toilets, young gentlemen, and show yourselves in the drawing-room as quickly as possible. Your luggage is upstairs by this time, no doubt."

She sailed out of the room; and the two young men ran up-stairs to their respective apartments—Mr. Philip Sutherland's being rather in the attic than otherwise.

"My old roost looks much the same as ever," said the young doctor, glancing around. "I wonder if any one has courted the balmy up here since I left, or if it has been sacred to the memory of Philip Sutherland!"

The young physician made a rather careful toilet with the memory of the Creole heiress in his mind, and descended presently in all the purple and fine linen proper for young men to wear, and tapped at his cousin's door.

"Are you ready, old boy?" he said, opening it and looking in. "Ah! I see you are, and most elaborately got up! Now, then, for our dark-eyed heiress!"

The long drawing-room was all ablaze with light from pendant chandeliers when they entered; and Augusta Sutherland, sitting at a grand piano, was singing a Swiss song, that seemed more tra-la-las than anything else. The gentlemen had come in from the dining-room, it seemed; for Mrs. Sutherland, lying back in a fauteuil, à la princesse, was listening with languid politeness to a stout military gentleman with a big bald head, while she watched the door. A smiling motion brought the young men to her velvet throne;

and they were introduced in due form to Colonel and Mrs. Madison—the latter a pale-faced, insipid-looking little woman, with nothing at all to say.

“Excuse me one moment, colonel,” said Mrs. Sutherland, with her sweetest smile, “while I present my son to Mr. and Miss Rohan, neither of whom he has seen yet. I must hear the end of that Mexican adventure.”

She took her son’s arm, and they walked the length of the apartment together, while Philip was taken by the button-hole, captive to the Mexican officer, sorely against his will.

In the shadowy recess of a deep, old-fashioned bay-window Arthur saw two people sitting. A tall, and stately, and handsome old man, with hair as white as silver, and a face deeply furrowed by time or trouble. The other, a tall and decidedly plain-looking girl, very stylishly dressed. There was a little low sofa between them that seemed only a mass of scarlet drapery and cushions, in the deep shadow cast by the heavy amber-colored curtains of the bay-window.

“Is it possible,” thought Arthur, “that this young lady, with the small eyes and wide mouth, is the beauty I have heard so much of? They must look through a golden mist, indeed, who can discover loveliness in that face.”

The young lady’s name was pronounced even while

he was thinking this ; but the name was Miss Long, and he remembered what his mother had told him of an Honorable Mr. Long and his daughter being there. The stately old gentleman was Mr. Rohan, of Eden Lawn, Cuba, who bowed rather stiffly as the son of his hostess was introduced.

“Miss Rohan, allow me to present my son ; Arthur, Miss Eulalie Rohan.”

The mass of scarlet drapery was pushed aside by a little hand all blazing with rich rings, and from the shade of the yellow curtains a recumbent figure rose, and a sweet voice, the sweetest he ever had heard, spoke to him. There had been a greenish gleam as she lifted her head, and Arthur saw that she wore a circlet of emeralds in her dense black hair ; but somehow he had thought of the fatal greenish glitter of a serpent's head, and he could not get rid of the idea. She rose up from the shadowy background, among the glowing red of the cushions, a scarlet shawl thrown lightly over her shoulders ; and she looked like a picture starting vividly out from black gloom. Arthur Sutherland saw a face unlike any face he had ever seen before ; great black eyes of dusky splendor, lighting up gloriously a face of creamy pallor, and flashing white teeth, showing through vivid crimson lips. He could not tell whether she was beautiful or not ; he was dazzled by the flashing splendor of those eyes and teeth, set in the

shadow of that raven-black hair. In far-off eastern lands he had seen such darkly-splendid faces, and it seemed to him for a moment that he was back in the land of the date and the palm-tree, under a blazing, tropical sun; but how strangely out of place this glowing Assyrian's beauty seemed in his staid New England home!

She had been resting lazily down among the crimson-velvet cushions, talking in her sweet, foreign voice to her grandfather and Miss Long; but she sat up now, letting the scarlet shawl trail off her exquisite shoulders. As she moved her little black head, all running over with curls that hung below her taper waist, the greenish glitter of the emeralds flashed and gleamed with a pale, sinister luster. Arthur Sutherland hated the gems. He could not get rid of the thought of the serpent while this pale, sickly flashing met his eye. He thought of Isabel Vansell, who wore Orient pearls as pale and pure as herself; and thought how fortunate it was for him that he had seen and loved her before he met this black-eyed houri, whose darkly-gorgeous beauty might have bewitched him else. He was safe now, with that counter-charm, his fair-haired ideal; and, being safe, it was only polite to sit down and talk to his mother's guests; so he took a vacant chair near the low sofa, and began to converse.

Mr. Arthur Sutherland, among his other accomplish-

ments, was an adept in the art of "making conversation." He and Miss Long, who was rather a blue-stocking and very strong-minded, had a discussion on the difference of society in the Old World and the New. This led him to speak of his travels, and he grew eloquent over descriptions of Florence the beautiful, and the solemn grandeur of the Eternal City. He had heard the wonderful "Miserere" in St. Peter's; he had made the ascent of Mt. Blanc; he had seen the carnival in Venice, and he had performed the Via Crucis in the Holy Land. The great, solemn, black eyes of Eulalie Rohan fixed themselves on his face, as she listened in breathless, childlike delight; and perhaps the consciousness of this made him yet more eloquent, though he said very little to her. He had essayed some remarks to her grandfather, and received such brief replies as to nip the attempted conversation in the bud. But Eulalie could talk as well as listen; and presently, when he asked her something about Cuba, the glorious black eyes lit up, the dark Creole face kindled with yet more vivid beauty, and she talked of her home under the orange and citron groves, until he could feel the scented breath of the Cuban breeze blowing in his face, and see the magnolia swaying over his head. She talked with the most charming infantile grace in the world, in that sweet, foreign-accented voice of hers—the small ringed hands fluttering in and out

the crimson drapery, and the serpent gleam of the emeralds ever displeasing the young man's eyes. She was not eloquent or original; she was only very sweet and charming, and innocently childlike—not a bit strong-minded, like Miss Long—not at all given to bounce, like Miss Augusta Sutherland—and her sweetness was something entirely different from that of his pale, golden-haired saint and ideal, Isabel Vansell—this dark divinity, who was all jets and sparkles, all scarlet drapery and amber back-ground, and big black eyes, and emeralds and diamond rings. He could see, while he sat gravely listening to her sweet, childish voice, Philip Sutherland, staring over at her with open-eyed admiration, and smiled to himself.

“Poor Phil!” he thought; “he is just the sort of fellow to be caught by this tropical butterfly, this gorgeous little flower of the sun. Those big, velvet-black eyes of hers, and this silvery prattle, so babyish and so sweet, and that feathery cloud of purple-black hair is just the sort of thing to fascinate him. Now I should like a woman, and this is only a lisping baby—a very charming baby, no doubt, to people who admire olive skins, and pretty little tattle, but not at all to my taste.”

Miss Rohan had one attentive auditor to everything she said, besides Mr. Sutherland, and that was her grandfather. Arthur had been struck from the very first by the old man's manner toward his child; it was such a

mixture of yearning, mournful tenderness, watchful care. He watched her every movement; he listened to every word that was said to her, and every word she uttered in reply. He seemed to have eyes and ears only for her, and his gaze had something of unspeakable sadness in it. The prevailing expression of his whole face, indeed, was one of settled melancholy; that furrowed countenance was a history of deepest trouble—past, perhaps, but whose memory darkened his whole life.

Arthur Sutherland said all this, and wondered what that trouble could be, and what connection it could have with this bright young creature, who seemed as innocently and childishly happy as if she were only a dozen instead of eighteen years old. Whatever it was, its blight had not fallen on her—her laugh was music itself, her silvery prattle gay as a skylark's song.

"Perhaps he loves her so well, and fears to lose her so much," he thought, "that the love and fear bring that look of unspeakable trouble with which he seems perpetually to regard her. Grandfathers have idolized before now granddaughters far less beautiful and charming than this dark-eyed siren."

The little party gathered in the recess of the bay-window so comfortably was broken up at this moment. The Honorable Mr. Long, who had been turning Miss Sutherland's music while she sang, came forward now

with that young lady on his arm, and begged Miss Rohan to favor them with some music. Eulalie acceded promptly, and Arthur saw for the first time what a tiny creature she was, with a waist he could have spanned like a doll's, and her flossy black ringlets hanging far below it. There was a general move. Mr. and Miss Long and Mr. Rohan all adjourned to the other end of the drawing-room, but Arthur Sutherland remained, and his sister dropped down on the sofa Miss Rohan had just vacated.

“There they go!” was her resentful cry; “the Longs and the grandfather, and now mamma and that stupid Mexican colonel and his automaton wife, and Phil Sutherland, all over to the piano to hear the millionaire's heiress sing. Nobody paid any attention to my singing, of course; even Mr. Long was gaping behind the music when he thought I was not looking. I wonder, if I were a millionaire's granddaughter, if people would flock round to listen to every word I let fall, as if they were pearls and diamonds, or would my snub nose and one hundred and forty-two pounds avoirdupois set them gaping when I open my mouth, as it does now.”

Arthur Sutherland smiled at his sister's tirade, but did not reply. He was listening to the grand, grateful notes of the instrument, swept by a master hand, and a rich contralto voice singing some mournful Spanish

ballad. The voice was full of pathos, the song sad as a funeral dirge, with a wild, melancholy refrain.

"There!" burst out Augusta, "that's the sort of dismalness she sings all the time. It makes my flesh creep sometimes to hear her, and people go mad over her singing and playing. Nobody ever sees anything in mine, and I'm sure I play the hardest galops and polkas going; but I dare say, if I had big black eyes like two full moons, and a grandfather with several millions of money, it would be different!"

"How very fond of her he seems to be!" said Arthur, looking over at the piano, where Mr. Rohan stood with his eyes on his granddaughter's face while she sang.

"Who? Her grandfather? Good gracious me!" cried Miss Sutherland shrilly, "there never was anything like it! They talk about people adoring the ground other people walk on, but if they only could know how that Mr. Rohan admires Eulalie, they might talk. Of course it would be sinful idolatry in anybody but a millionaire; and I know if I was Eulalie I should not put up with it. He watches her as a cat watches a mouse; he won't let her go to parties; he won't let her go outside the door, unless he is tagging at her apron-strings. He wouldn't let her speak to a young man, or let one look at her, if he could help it; and he would like to shut her up in a box and carry her round

with him, like that princess in the Arabian Nights. He wanted her to take the veil when she was in the convent."

"Wanted her to take the veil," echoed her brother, amazed.

"Yes," said Augusta, "and my opinion is there is something wrong in the business, and Eulalie doesn't know what. She says he has been like that ever since she can remember, loving her to absurdity, but always as if he pitied her or was afraid of her, or something. He is a very nice old man, but I think he is a monomaniac where his granddaughter is concerned—or would be, if he was not a millionaire."

A monomaniac! The words spoken so lightly struck strangely and harshly on the ear of Arthur Sutherland. He had heard of such things! And was this the secret of those loving, anxious, watchful looks? Did he know he was mad, and did he fear the same fate for his beautiful child? Was it hereditary in the family, yet a secret from her?

"Well!" exclaimed his sister, with her round, blue eyes fixed on his face. "I should like to know what that solemn countenance means! If you were making your will you couldn't look more dismal; and as you seem to have lost your tongue since Eulalie went away, I'll go and fetch her back to you."

Off went Miss Augusta. Arthur shook away the

creeping feeling that had come over him, with a slight shudder.

"What an idiot I am!" he thought, "weaving such a web of horrible, improbable fancies out of a casual word let drop by my chattering sister. The old man dotes on his grandchild, and that ceaseless care and mournful tenderness of look and voice is only the effect of excessive love, and fear of losing her."

Half an hour after the dinner-party broke up, and the guests went home. Miss Rohan bade them good-night, with one of her brilliant smiles, and went up stairs with Augusta. As Arthur followed, and was entering his own room, Philip came along the hall, with a night-lamp in his hand. He had managed to get introduced to the heiress, and had been devouring her with his eyes ever since they had fallen on her first.

"I say, Arthur," he cried, as he went back, "what a glorious little beauty she is!"

Arthur Sutherland looked at his cousin with a pitying smile.

"With what different eyes people see things!" he said. "You saw a glorious little beauty, and I saw—a dark fairy with a soft voice! Good-night!"

Arthur Sutherland's dreams were a little confused that night, and Eulalie Rohan and Isabel Vansell got hopelessly mixed up in them. Once, in those uneasy dreams, he was walking through the leafy arcades and

green aisles of Maplewood with blue-eyed Isabel, robed in white and illumined by the sunlight as he had seen her last, when, out of the black shadow of the trees a tall serpent reared itself upright with a hiss, and the sunshine was suddenly darkened. The serpent had an emerald flashing in its head, and looked at him with the great black eyes of the Creole heiress; and then he awoke with a violent start, and the vision was gone.

CHAPTER III.

BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLE.



ARTHUR SUTHERLAND rose early the morning after his return home, despite the previous day's fatiguing journey, and made a hasty toilet. The house was as still as a tomb; no one was stirring but the birds who chanted their matin-hymns in the glorious May sunshine, among the branches of the quaint hemlocks trailing against his chamber-window. It had been his custom from boyhood to indulge himself in a long walk, a longer ride, or a sea-bath before breakfast. He chose to ride this morning; and, mounting his horse, rode away, with all the old boyish light-heartedness back again. It was so pleasant to be at home after all these years of sight-seeing, and roaming up and down this big world; and Maplewood, in the refulgent morning sunshine, was inexpressibly beautiful.

Yes, Maplewood was beautiful, and Arthur's heart was in a glow of happy pride as he rode down the long graveled drive, through the tall iron gates, and out into the dusty highroad. He met the farm-laborers

going to their work ; he could see that St. Mary's was all astir, but he did not ride through St. Mary's. He galloped along the quiet roads, so tempted by the beauty of the morning that two hours had elapsed before he returned. Leaving his horse to the care of the stable-boys, he came round by the back of the house, humming a tune. As he turned a sharp angle of the building, the long grassy terrace overlooking the sea came in sight ; and he saw, to his surprise, a fairy form, in a white cashmere morning-dress, loitering to and fro, and dropping pebbles into the placid waters below. She wore a little straw hat on her black curls, its white feather drooping among them, and the scarlet shawl of last night drawn around her shoulders. Miss Rohan was not loitering alone either ; near her, leaning over the low iron railing, stood Philip Sutherland, talking animatedly, and Arthur could hear her low, musical laugh where he stood. There was no earthly reason why this should annoy him—he would not for a moment have confessed, even to himself, that it did annoy him—but his brow contracted, and he felt, for the first time, that his cousin was an officious meddler, whom it would have been better to have left in New York. He had started forward impulsively to join them—was he not master here, and did not the laws of hospitality compel him to be attentive to his mother's guest?—when he as impulsively stopped. Walking

rapidly through the chestnut-grove, leading from the lawn to this terrace, he saw Mr. Rohan, his aged face looking tenfold more troubled and anxious and care-worn in the garish sunshine than it had done in the lamplight. The trouble in his face was so very like terror, as he looked at his granddaughter loitering there with Philip Sutherland, that Arthur stared at him, amazed. He joined them, drawing his child's arm within his own, and bowing coldly and distantly to her companion. Ten minutes after, he saw the old man lead her away, and Philip following in their wake, faithful as a needle to the North Star. Arthur did not join him; he lingered on the terrace, smoking a cigar, and trying to puzzle out the riddle, and only mystifying himself by the effort. He flung his smoked-out cigar into the blue waves; and seeing by his watch it was the breakfast-hour, he strolled back to the house, and into the breakfast-room.

The breakfast-room at Maplewood was a very pretty apartment, with canary-birds and flower-pots in the window, and the fresh sea-breeze rustling the muslin curtains.

Standing among these birds and flowers when he entered was Eulalie. That sunlit figure in the white dress, among the geraniums and canaries, reminded him of another picture he had looked at, just before leaving New York. But Eulalie turned round, and all

similitude vanished. The dusky splendor of her Southern beauty extinguished poor Isabel's pale prettiness, as the sun might a penny candle. The flashing of those glorious eyes and those pearly teeth, the rosy, smiling mouth disclosed, blotted out even the memory of his flaxen-haired ideal. He hated tarry tresses, and sloe-black eyes, and dusky skins, and passionate dark daughters of the South; but for all that he was none the less dazzled by those wonderful Creole eyes now. The gleaming emeralds he had disliked so much glittered no longer amid the ebon waves of her hair—some scarlet geranium-blossoms shone like red stars in their place, and were the only speck of color she wore.

Mrs. Sutherland and Augusta and Philip were there, and Mr. Rohan was near his granddaughter, as usual. He sat beside her at table, too, and listened to her, and watched her, with the same jealous watchfulness as last night. Just as they sat down, a young lady entered the room, at sight of whom both young men started up with exclamations of surprise, shaking hands, and calling her familiarly by her Christian name. She was a tall, slim, pale girl, rather pretty, with the light hair, and blue eyes, and a look generally, of the Sutherlands. She was dressed in slight mourning, and looked four or five years the senior either of Augusta or Eulalie.

“Why, Lucy,” Arthur cried, “this is an astonisher!

I did not know you were here! Mother said nothing about it."

Lucy Sutherland—she was cousin to both young men, and poorer even than Philip—lifted her light eyebrows slightly as she took her place.

"No," she said quietly; "why should she mention so unimportant a matter. It was not worth mentioning."

Arthur smiled; perhaps the answer was characteristic.

"Why were you not down last night?"

"Because she is an oddity," said his mother, taking it upon herself to reply; "and as unsocial as that Black Dwarf in Sir Walter Scott's novel. I tell her she should have been with Robinson Crusoe on his island, or go and be a nun at once."

Miss Lucy Sutherland made no reply; silence was another of her oddities, it seemed; but Augusta and Eulalie chattered away like magpies. The whole party loitered a very unnecessary length of time over the breakfast-table; and, when they arose, the young ladies adjourned to the drawing-room—Miss Rohan and Miss Augusta to practice some wonderful duet, and Miss Lucy to seat herself at another window, and stitch away industriously at some elaborate piece of embroidery. Philip Sutherland hung devotedly over the piano, with rapt face; the dragon—as he mentally

style the Cuban millionaire—had gone to the library to write letters. Arthur seated himself beside his cousin Lucy, to talk to her, and furtively watch the fairy figure in white at the piano; how well she played; how those tiny, ringed hands flew over the polished keys, and what wonderful power to fascinate the little dark witch had! He talked to Lucy Sutherland, snipping remorselessly at her silks, and listening to the music, and thinking what danger he might have been in of falling in love with a black-eyed girl if he had not been fortunate enough to first meet with Isabel Vansell.

“How long have you been at Maplewood, Lucy?” he asked his cousin.

“Since my father’s death—five months ago,” she replied, in a grave but steady voice. “Your mother finds me useful, and desires me to stay; and, being of use, I am quite willing.”

Arthur smiled as he looked at her.

“Proud Lucy! You are the same as of old, I see. I am very glad you are here. You must never leave us, Lucy, until you leave us for a home of your own.”

Lucy Sutherland was habitually pale, but two red spots came into her cheeks and slowly died out again. She did not reply; she did not lift her eyes from her work, as her needle flashed in and out.

"You were here when Mr. and Miss Rohan came, of course?" he said, after a pause.

"Yes."

"How do you like Miss Rohan?"

"Very well."

"Which means, I suppose, you do not like her at all?"

Lucy Sutherland looked up, calmly, as she threaded her needle.

"Not at all! Why should I dislike her?"

"Heaven knows! For some inscrutable female reason; but I am sure you do not like her."

"I have seen very little of Miss Rohan," said Lucy, rather coldly. "I'm always busy; and she could hardly be expected to trouble herself much about me. Even if I were her equal in social position, we are so much unlike, and have so few tastes and sympathies in common, that we should never care for each other's companionship. Miss Rohan never thought twice about me, and is supremely indifferent whether I like or dislike her."

"There spoke the pride of all the Sutherlands!" exclaimed Arthur, smiling. "Why, you foolish Lucy, what do you mean by talking of being beneath her? Are you not a lady by birth and descent, and education, as much as she is? As for her grandfather's millions, she can afford to look down upon the whole of us,

where they are concerned ; for, if report speaks truly, she will be rich enough to buy and sell all the Sutherlands that ever existed."

Here there was an interruption. Mrs. Sutherland came in to tell her son there were callers for him in the reception-room. The guests of last night had spread the report of his return, and his old friends were losing no time.

"Mr. Synott asked for you, Philip," Mrs. Sutherland said. "I dare say you would prefer turning over the music, but you must go."

"Oh, hang Mr. Synott!" muttered Philip; "I wish he was in Jericho!"

There was no help for it, however; he had to go; and what was worse, he and Arthur were kept there until the luncheon-bell rang, by a constant stream of troublesome old friends. There was a conservatory off this reception-room where the back-window commanded a view of the long terrace, and they could see Mr. Rohan and his dark-eyed granddaughter lounging there, when the practicing and letter-writing were over. They disappeared before luncheon-hour, and were not present at that meal; neither was Lucy. The Cuban grandee and his grandchild had gone off riding; and it was another of Lucy's oddities never to eat luncheon. It was a far less pleasant meal than breakfast had been, although half a dozen of the old friends partook of it,

and talked a great deal; but the dark, piquant face and wonderful black eyes were missing, and it was all vexation of spirit.

Arthur Sutherland found that afternoon very long. The troublesome friends went away at last, but not until he was heartily sick of them; and then he went up into his room to write letters. But, somehow, the great black eyes and entrancing Creole face came between him and the white paper, and sent him into long fits of musing that made him sadly neglect his writing. He tried to read; but his book seemed stupid, and he flung it aside and went out, in desperation, to smoke away the tedious hours. He found Philip Sutherland pacing up and down the sunny lawn, with his cigar, and joined him. Augusta sat under a tree, reading a novel, with a big black Newfoundland dozing beside her; and Lucy, in her own chamber-window, still bending over her embroidery, watched them, and guessed instinctively the cause of their restlessness.

"When they were here before," she thought, with a contemptuous smile, "they were riding over the country, or off with their fishing-rods all day long. Now, they dare not stir outside the gates, lest they should lose one glimpse of that sallow baby-face and those great, meaningless black eyes."

The young men smoked a vast number of cigars

under the waving arms of the old trees ; but they did not talk much, and Miss Rohan's name was not once mentioned. Yet both understood intuitively what the other waited for, and hated him for it. Philip made some allusion once to Miss Vansell, and asked Arthur, carelessly, when he was going back to New York, and had met with a decided rebuff.

It was nearly six o'clock, and the trees were flinging long, fantastic shadows on the cool, dark sward, when Mr. and Miss Rohan returned.

Beautiful she always was ; but in a side-saddle she was bewitching. She rode a spirited, flashing-eyed Arab, as dark and as daintily small as herself, and her long, green riding-skirt floated back in the breeze as she cantered up the avenue. Exercise could not flush the creamy pallor of her dark, Creole face ; but it made it radiant, and the black eyes were as bright as two sable stars. Both young men started forward to assist her, but, gathering up her long train in one gloved hand, and laughing gayly she sprang lightly out of the saddle unaided.

"Thanks, Messieurs !" she said ; "but Arab and I understand each other. Grandpapa, I shall not wait for you. I must run away and dress."

She tripped away as lightly as any other fairy, and the young men resumed their sauntering up and down the darkening avenue until the dinner-bell rang. Then

they returned to the house; and presently the ladies appeared, and Miss Rohan, as usual, elegantly dressed. She had a fancy very often for arraying her light, delicate little figure in rich silks and costly moire antiques, stiff enough to stand alone; but this evening Arthur Sutherland could hardly tell what she wore. He only knew she came floating in in a cloud of gauzy amber drapery, like a mist of sunshine, with all her feathery, black ringlets hanging around her, and wearing no ornaments save a glittering opal cross attached to a slender gold chain. The yellow, sinister light of the opals was almost as distasteful to him as the greenish gleam of the emeralds.

“I wish she would not wear jewels,” he thought. “At least, none but diamonds. They are the only gems to bear comparison with such a pair of eyes.”

Miss Rohan was in high spirits, and chattered away in her sweet, soft voice about the delightful long ride she and grandpapa had had, and which she had enjoyed so much. The little heiress and the Sutherlands—mother, son, and daughter—had the conversation all to themselves. The other three took little share in it. Lucy was silent, because it was Lucy’s nature to be silent. Mr. Rohan was moodily distraught, but not too much so to keep that endless watch on his granddaughter. And poor Philip sat staring at the beautiful brunette face across the table in speechless admiration,

to the sad neglect of his dinner and the rules of politeness.

But Miss Rohan took no notice. She was so accustomed to be stared at wherever she went that she had grown used to it, and took the unconscious homage paid her beauty as a matter of course.

Philip held open the dining-room door for the ladies when dinner was over, and looked as if he would like to follow them. The three gentlemen were not very sociable over their wine and walnuts. Arthur essayed conversation with the grandfather of Eulalie, but failed; for Mr. Rohan only answered absently and in monosyllables. So there was no temptation to linger; and they speedily made their appearance in the drawing-room, where they found Mrs. Sutherland in an after-dinner doze, and Lucy reading in a corner. The other two were nowhere visible, and Mrs. Sutherland opened her eyes to explain.

“The girls have gone out, I believe, to look at the moonlight. Excuse me, Mr. Rohan, but may I ask you to remain a moment? I wish to consult you on a little matter of business.”

Clever mamma! Her son smiled to himself as he stepped through the open window out on the lawn. The moon was sailing up in a cloudless sky; the stars were numberless; and Maplewood—its gray, old mansion, its woods and shrubberies and groves, its vel-

vety lawns and far-spreading meadows—looked beautiful enough for fairy-land.

Instinctively the young men turned their steps terraceward ; and there, leaning over the low iron railing, were the two girlish figures, the petite fairy in amber with a cloud of black lace hanging around her ; the other in pink muslin. The wide sea lay as smooth as a polished mirror ; the moonlight shone upon it in one long, silvery track, in and out of which the boats flitted, with their white wings spread. One gay boatful were singing, and the music came borne delightfully to them on the low night-breeze. A woman's sweet voice was singing, " Kathleen Mavourneen," and neither of the cousins spoke as they joined the listening figures. The spell of the moonlit sea and the sad, sweet song was not to be broken ; but Eulalie's dark eyes and bright smile welcomed them. It was the first time Arthur had been near her without the Argus-eyes of the grandfather being upon them ; and just as the melody died out on the water, and he was thinking how best to take advantage of the situation, lo ! there was that ubiquitous grandfather emerging from the chestnut-walk. Had he cut short Mrs. Sutherland's little business matter, or had he managed to escape ?

" The deuce take him !" was, I am afraid, Arthur Sutherland's mental ejaculation. " If she were the

Koh-i-noor itself she could not be more closely guarded!"

"The dew is falling heavily, Eulalie," he said, drawing her hand within his arm; "it is imprudent of you to be out at this hour. Miss Sutherland, let me advise you to return to the house."

He walked away with his granddaughter, but none of the others followed. There was no mistaking his coldly repellent manner, and Augusta apostrophized him as a "horrid old bear."

"That's the way he tyrannizes over her all the time!" exclaimed Miss Sutherland; "no old Turk could be worse. I've told Eulalie about a million times I wouldn't stand it, but then she has no spirit! I'd stay out, just for spite!"

Was it tyranny? Eulalie, looking up, saw her grandfather's face so full of distress and trouble that her tender anxiety was aroused.

"What is it, grandpapa?" she asked. "What is troubling you? Something has happened."

"No, my darling," he said, with a weary sigh, "nothing has happened, but the old trouble that never will end until I am in my grave! Oh, my darling! my darling! I wish we were both there together!"

"Grandpapa!" Eulalie cried, shocked and affrighted.

Again he sighed a long and heavy sigh. "Eulalie,

are you not tired of this place? Would you not like to go home?"

"Home! Oh, dear no, grandpapa! I am very happy here, and it is not two weeks since we came. What would Mrs. Sutherland say?"

"Why should you care, Eulalie? Are we not happy enough together? Let us go back to Eden Lawn, and live quietly, as we did before I sent you to school. What do we want or care for these people?"

"Very well, grandpapa." But the sweet face darkened and saddened so, while she said it, that his heart smote him.

"You don't want to go, my darling?"

"Dear grandpapa, I will go if you desire it, but it is very pleasant to be here."

The troubled look grew deeper on his face than she had ever seen it, and his answer was something very like a groan. She clasped her little hands round his arm, and lifted her wistful dark eyes to his.

"Oh, grandpapa, what is it? What is this dreadful trouble that is blighting your whole life? When will you cease to treat me like a child—when will you tell me? I know I am only a foolish little girl," she said, with a rueful look at her diminutive proportions; "but indeed I am not such a baby as you think! I can bear to hear it, whatever it is, and you will feel happier for telling."

"Happier!" he cried out, passionately, "Eulalie, the day I tell you my heart will break! Oh, my pet! my darling! God alone knows how I have loved you, and yet my only prayer for you, all your innocent life, has been, that he might bless you with an early death!"

She clasped her hands in speechless affright, her great black eyes dilating as she listened to the appalling words.

"When I placed you in the Sacred Heart," he went on, "it was not so much that you might be educated—that could have been done at home; it was in the hope that you might take the veil, that you might become a nun. Hundreds as young and beautiful and rich as yourself renounce all this world can give, yearly, to become the bride of Heaven; and I hoped you would do the same, and so escape the horrible fatality that may come. You would have been safe, then; they never could tear a nun from her convent."

"Tear a nun from her convent! Oh, grandpapa! grandpapa! what do you mean?"

"Not now, Eulalie—not now, but very soon you shall know! Very soon, because it is impossible for me longer to conceal the horrible truth. While you were a child, all was well, and I have tried to keep you a child as long as I could. But you are a woman now, my little innocent lamb! I never felt it so plainly as to-night."

"To-night?" She could only echo his own words—she was too utterly bewildered and shocked to think.

"Yes, these young men have made me see it very plainly," he said, bitterly. "I might have known it was madness to try to keep lovers off, and you a beauty and an heiress. The convent was the only hope. Say, my child, is it too late yet? do you not long to go back to the peace and holy calm of the convent, out of this weary battle of life?"

"Grandpapa, I was very happy in the Sacred Heart with the dear, kind ladies, but I am also very happy here in this beautiful world, or would be, if your trouble did not make me so wretched! Oh, grandpapa! what is this dreadful secret?"

"Something too dreadful for my lips ever to tell you. I must say the horrible truth in writing, if my heart breaks whilst doing it."

Every trace of color had faded out of the dark face, and her black eyes were dilated in vague horror.

"Is it any disgrace, grandpapa?—my father—" she faltered and stopped.

"Your father was the soul of honor. He never wronged a human creature in his life!"

"And my mother?—I never knew either of them, grandpapa!"

"Your mother was beautiful and pure as an angel!

As innocent as a baby of all the wickedness and misery of this big world!"

She gave a little sigh of fervent thanksgiving. A great fear had been removed.

"It cannot be anything so very terrible, then," she said. "You magnify the danger, grandpapa. Only tell me, and see how bravely I will bear it!"

They were ascending the portico-steps. He looked down on her, and she saw what a haggard and wretched face he wore.

"My poor little girl!" he said mournfully, "you do not know what you are saying! There are horrors in this great world that you never have dreamed of. Go to your room, my darling, and pray to Heaven to give you strength to bear the blow when it comes."

"Only one word, grandpapa!" she cried, a wild idea flashing through her brain; "is it some hereditary disease you fear—is it"—her very lips whitening as she pronounced the word—"is it insanity?"

The old man looked at her in unmistakable surprise.

"My darling, what put such a revolting idea in your poor little head! No, physically and mentally the race from which you have sprung is sound. There are worse things even than madness!"

He left her with the last dreadful words on his lips,

and went up stairs. Eulalie lingered a moment in the portico, shivering with a horrible vague fear. The two strolling back from the terrace caught one glimpse of her, before she saw them and flitted in, but that glimpse was enough to reveal how sad and disheartened the bright face had become.

“The old brute has been scolding her!” burst out Philip Sutherland; “and choking would be too good for him—the old monster!”

CHAPTER IV.

BATTLING WITH FATE.



HERE was a perceptible change in the manner of Eulalie Rohan, after that night's interview. The vaguely-terrible things the old man had said could scarcely fail to affect his granddaughter, and disturb her greatly. She had been so happy all her life—to her existence was one long holiday—this lower world was no place of exile, but a terrestrial Eden, and she had been as innocently and joyously happy as the wild birds warbling in the trees. But now some shadowy horror impended over her, all the more fearful for being shadowy, and the sunshine of her life was suddenly darkened.

“I wonder what it all means,” she thought, sadly. “If grandpapa would only speak out—I think I could bear it far better than this suspense. What can this dark mystery be? It is not disgrace, it is not disease, it is not poverty. What, then, is it that is worse than these? Poor dear grandpapa! he is very wretched, I know, but I am sure I shall not be half so unhappy when I know the truth, as I am now.”

The family at Maplewood noticed the change, and wondered too. They saw the shadow that had fallen on the little Creole heiress, and how lovingly sorrowful the eyes with which she watched her grandfather. She devoted herself more to him than ever before, walked with him, rode with him, read to him, sang to him, and did all in her power to divert him from his morbid melancholy, with an earnest devotion that was touching to see.

“There is something wrong and abnormal about all this,” thought Arthur Sutherland; “there is some mystery here, or else Augusta was right, and the old man is a monomaniac, and she knows it. Poor little girl! David never tried harder to win Saul from his gloomy melancholy than she does her grandfather. I must ask my mother what she knows of their history.”

It was one evening, in the long drawing-room, about a week after that moonlight night, that Arthur thought this. The windows were all wide open and the pale twilight stole in, fragrant with the perfume of the rose-trees. Eulalie Rohan sat on a low stool at one of these open casements, dressed in white; and with no jewels, green or yellow, to offend his fastidious eye. The breeze lifted her feathery ebon curls, and fluttered back her flowing muslin sleeves, as her fingers lightly touched the strings of her guitar. Her grandfather sat

in an arm-chair beside her; listening with closed eyes to the sweet old Spanish ballad she sang. There was no other light than the pale gloaming; the song was low and wild, and mournful, and the singer's voice full of pathos, that went to his heart. Philip Sutherland was listening just outside the window with his heart in his eyes. Poor Philip was wildly, and hopelessly, and deeply in love with the little Creole beauty, and made no secret of it; and was madly jealous of Arthur, and every other single man in the neighborhood, under forty, who spoke to her. Augusta and Lucy were spending the evening out—his mother sat at the other extremity of the apartment, reading a magazine by the last rays of the daylight. Arthur went over and sat beside her, and plunged into the subject head-foremost.

“Mother,” he said; “how long have you known Mr. Rohan?”

Mrs. Sutherland looked up and laid down her book.

“How long have I known Mr. Rohan? Not very long. When Augusta was at school in Montreal, I met him there. It is about three years since I saw him first.”

“Do you know anything of his history? I am curious to know the meaning of that settled melancholy of his.”

"I cannot tell you ; unless it be continued grief for the death of his only son."

"His only son ! Eulalie's father ! But he has been dead for upward of eighteen years. A tolerable time to blunt the edge of any sorrow."

"It has not blunted his, it seems ; and I am at a loss to account for his gloom in any other way. His son married very young, before he was twenty, and went with his bride from Louisiana to Cuba, and died there ten months after with yellow fever. His wife, a poor little helpless thing of sixteen, wrote to Mr. Rohan, who went out there immediately, to find her utterly prostrated by the blow. She idolized her young husband, it seems, and never held up her head again. A few weeks after Eulalie's birth, she was laid beside him in the ground ; and Mr. Rohan bought the estate there—Eden Lawn—and devoted himself to the child she had left. Eulalie grew up there, and never quitted it until three years ago, when she was fifteen ; and he placed her in the Sacred Heart at Montreal, to complete her very imperfect education. That is all I know of their history, and this much Mr. Rohan told me himself."

"Poor little thing !" said Arthur, looking pityingly over at the orphan heiress. "She is poorer than other girls, notwithstanding her grandfather's millions. And

you think the loss of his son has been preying on his spirits ever since?"

"It is the only way in which I can account for his singular gloom; and his continual watchful anxiety about Eulalie no doubt springs from excessive love. He seems very unwilling to speak of himself or his family affairs at all—in fact, I believe he never would talk if he could help it."

"The Rohans are English, you told me, by descent. What was Eulalie's mother?"

"A lovely French Creole, I have heard; and Eulalie inherits all her gorgeous Southern beauty. She is like some Assyrian princess, with those luminous eyes and that wonderful fall of hair."

The last cadence of the song died out as Mrs. Sutherland said this—died out as sadly as the last cadence of a funeral hymn. Arthur looked over at the twilight picture; the old man was asleep in his chair, and the little white figure specking the blue dusk free from his surveillance for once. The opportunity was not to be lost. Arthur rose and crossed the room, and Eulalie's pensive face lit up with a beautiful, shy, welcoming smile.

"Your song is a very sad one, Miss Rohan," he said; "but all your songs are that. Is it the old story of the nightingale with its breast against a thorn?"

“‘The sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought,’” quoted Eulalie; “grandpapa loves those old Spanish ballads, and at this hour so do I. I used to sit and sing to him by the hour, in the twilight, at dear old Eden Lawn.”

She struck a few plaintive chords of the air she had been singing, and looked up, dreamily, at the evening star, whose tremulous beauty she had often watched through the acacia leaves, at this hour, in her sunny Cuban home.

“What a lovely night it is!” she said.

“Yes,” said Arthur; “too lovely to spend in the house. Will you not come down to the terrace, to see the moon rise?”

Philip Sutherland, watching them, jealously, in the shadow of the elematis vines, gnashed his teeth at this rather sentimental request, but Eulalie only smiled and shook her head.

“You forget, Mr. Sutherland, grandpapa objects to the night air for me. I don’t think it does me any harm, but he does, and that settles the matter.”

“You are obedience itself, Miss Rohan.”

“Grandpapa loves me so very much,” she said, simply; “it is the least I can do, surely.”

There was a pause. Mrs. Sutherland was ringing for lights, but the moon streaming in through the waving foliage lit up this window with silvery

radiance. The little white figure, the tender, beautiful face, the drooping head, with its cloud of shining tresses, made a very pretty picture, which stamped itself indelibly in the memory of the two young men, when the poor little beauty's tragic story was all over.

"I thought you were to dine this evening at Colonel Madison's with Lucy and Augusta," he said, presently.

"I was invited, but grandpapa did not wish me to go."

"Your grandpapa is as surly an old Turk as ever I heard of!" thought Arthur; "his love is more like tyranny than anything else."

"And I preferred staying home myself," said Eulalie, lifting her earnest, dark eyes to his face, while the thought passed through his mind. "I am always happier at home with grand--"

She stopped and sprang to her feet. Arthur and Philip darted forward, and all stared at the old man. He was still asleep, but in his sleep he had screamed out—a scream so full of horror that it had thrilled through them all. His face was convulsed, his hands outstretched, and working in agony.

"It is false!" he cried, in a voice between a gasp and a shriek. "She is mine, and you shall not take her from me? Oh, Eulalie! Eulalie! Eulalie!"

He awoke with that scream of agony on his lips, his

face still convulsed with the horror of his dream, his fingers working, his eyes wild. Eulalie knelt beside him, her face ashen white, and caught his hand in her own.

"I am here," she said; "dear, dear grandpapa, what is the matter?"

With an unnatural cry he caught her in his arms and strained her to him, his whole form quivering with convulsive emotion.

"Thank God!" he cried; "it was all a dream! Oh, my darling! my darling! I thought they were going to tear you from me!"

He dropped his head on her shoulder, and burst out into a passion of hysterical sobbing, dreadful to hear. Eulalie looked up at Arthur with a face like marble, but trying bravely to be calm.

"Will you help him up to his room, Mr. Sutherland? Dear, dear, dear grandpapa, don't cry! You are breaking my heart! Dearest grandpapa, don't. Eulalie is here—it was only a bad dream! Nobody shall ever take me from you!"

She kissed him, and caressed the poor old head; and strove by every endearment to soothe him, her voice trembling sadly. The rest stood by, pale, startled, and wondering.

The old man lifted his head at last, and saw them. The sight of those pale, grave faces seemed to restore

him magically, and he arose, still sustaining his clasp of his granddaughter, the horror of his dream yet vibrating through all his frame.

"I have had a terrible dream!" he said; "I fear I have startled you all. Eulalie, will you help me to my room?"

Arthur came forward.

"Miss Rohan is not strong enough," he said; "permit me to assist you up-stairs."

But the old man would accept no assistance save his granddaughter's; and Arthur had to stand and watch them toiling wearily up the great staircase, he leaning on her arm. Not one of the three spoke when they were gone. Mrs. Sutherland retreated to her sofa with a very grave face. Philip went up to his own chamber. The drawing-room was a dreary desert, now that she was gone, and Arthur stepped out of the open window on the moonlit lawn to smoke, and cogitate over this queer business.

"There is a screw loose somewhere," he thought; "there is no effect without a cause. What, then, is the cause of this old man's morbid dread of losing his granddaughter? It haunts him in his sleep—it makes his waking life a misery. There must be some cause for this fear—some grounds for this ceaseless terror; or else, through sheer love, he is going mad. In either case, she is much to be pitied; poor little thing! How

white and terrified that pleading face was she turned to me. Poor child—she is only a child! I pity her very much!”

Yes; Mr. Sutherland pitied the black-eyed little heiress very much, forgetting how near akin pity is to that other feeling he was resolutely determined not to feel for her. He pitied her very much, with this dreadful old grandfather, and paced up and down the lawn in the moonlight, thinking about her until the carriage that had been sent to Colonel Madison's returned with his sister and cousin. It was very late then—past midnight—but he could see the light burning in Mr. Rohan's room; and the shadows cast on the blind, the shadows of the old man and his grandchild, sitting there, talking still.

Yes, they sat there talking still; the terror of his dream so clinging to him that he seemed unable to let her out of his sight. He sat in an arm-chair, she on a low stool at his feet, her hands clasped in his, her eyes uplifted anxiously to his disturbed face, her own quite colorless.

“You are better now, grandpapa,” she was saying. “Will you not tell me what that terrible dream was?”

The bare memory of the dream made him shudder, and tighten his clasp until her little hands ached.

“O my darling, it was only the great troubles of my life haunting me in my sleep. The horrible fear

that never leaves me, night or day, realized in my dreams."

"The horrible fear! Oh, grandpapa, what do you mean? What is it you are afraid of?"

"Don't ask me!" exclaimed the old man, trembling at her words. "Don't ask me! You will know it too soon, and it will ruin your life as it has ruined mine."

"Grandpapa, is it for me or for yourself you fear?"

"For myself?" he echoed. "Do you think any fear for myself could trouble me like this? My life, at the best, is near its close. Could any fear for myself, do you think, disturb the few days that are left like this? No, it is for you—for you, my cherished darling—that I fear, and one of the greatest horrors of all is to have to tell you what that fear is!"

There was a long pause. Eulalie's face could not grow whiter than it was, but the great black eyes were unnaturally dilated. Through it, all this dark, troubled mystery, she was trying to keep calm, all for his sake.

"You spoke, grandpapa," she said, "of my being torn from you. Could any one in the world do that?"

She glanced up at him, but his face was so full of anguish that she dared not look again.

"Heaven pity you, my poor girl, they could! You are my dead son's only child, but I should be powerless to prevent it! If all the wealth I possess

could save you, I would open my hands and let it flow out like water. I could die happy, leaving you penniless, and knowing you were safe."

"Safe! Safe from what?" she repeated, in vague horror

"From a fate dreadful to think of—from a fate the fear of which is shortening my life."

"Grandpapa!" she broke out, passionately, "this is cruel! You frighten me to death with vague terrors, when I could far better bear the truth! Tell me what I have to dread—the truth will be easier to bear than this horrible suspense!"

"Not now! Not now!" he cried out, imploringly. "O my Eulalie! I do not mean to be cruel! If I have said this much, it is only to prepare you for the truth. If this intolerable pain at the heart and this blinding giddiness of the head mean what I think they do, my time is very short. Rest content, my darling, in a very few weeks you shall know all!"

"Only tell me one thing," she pleaded, with new energy; "have I enemies? Is there any one in the world I have cause to fear?"

She listened breathlessly for the answer, her great wild eyes fixed on his face.

"Yes, there is one, and only one, whom you have intensest cause to fear. It is the dread of meeting this one enemy that has caused me to keep you secluded—

that has caused me to wish you so ardently to bury yourself in a convent! I have been battling with fate for the past eighteen years, and yet I know it is all in vain. I may take what precautions I please; I may seclude you in the farthest corner of the world; and yet when the time comes you and that man will meet!"

"Hitherto I have never seen him, then?"

"No—that is, since you were an infant."

"Then, grandpapa, how should he ever know me?"

The old man looked at her with infinite pity in his eyes.

"My poor child! I will show you here!"

He drew from around his neck a thin gold chain, with a locket attached. He touched the spring and handed her the locket.

It contained two portraits—one of a bright, boyish handsome face; the other, dark and beautiful, the pictured image of the living face looking down upon it. Under each was a name, "Arthur—Eulalie."

"It is your mother and father, my darling!" he said. "Look at your mother's face. Do you not think that any one who ever saw that face in life would recognize you, her living image?"

"And her name was Eulalie, too. I never knew that before. 'Eulalie—Arthur!' My father's name was Arthur?"

"Yes," said Mr. Rohan, sorrowfully. "His name was Arthur."

"Arthur!—Arthur!" she repeated softly. "I like the name."

"You like it, Eulalie. Is it for the sake of the father you have never seen, or the young man downstairs, whom you have seen?"

"Oh, grandpapa!" was Eulalie's reproachful cry.

"My dear little girl, I can read your heart plainer, perhaps, than you can yourself. You must not fall in with this young man, Eulalie. It will be folly—worse than folly—madness—for you ever to let yourself love him or any one else."

"Grandpapa!" rather indignantly, "I never thought of falling in love with him!"

"No, my poor dear, you never thought of it, I dare say. But it may happen for all that; and you cannot prevent him from admiring and loving you. That is why I wished you to return to Eden Lawn the other night—that is why I wish you to go still."

"Would it be so very dreadful, then," Eulalie asked, a little embarrassed, and not looking up, "if he—if I—I mean if we did?"

"Yes," said Mr. Rohan, solemnly. "It would be dreadful, circumstanced as you are. I shall tell you all very soon; until then, you must neither give nor take

any promises from any man. When what I have to tell is told, you shall be as free as air—you shall do what you please, go where you like, act as your own conscience may suggest. And now go to your room, my darling, for it is very late, and remember me in your innocent prayers!"

He kissed her, and led her to the door; and as she walked down the hall to her room, she heard him lock himself in. She was hopelessly mystified and dazed, poor child! and the blight of that fearful unknown secret was falling upon her already. She might go to her room, but it was to cry herself to sleep like a little child.

Mr. Rohan did not appear in the drawing-room for the remainder of the week. The excitement of that night threw him into a kind of low nervous fever, that kept him in his own apartment, and kept Eulalie there most of the time, too. She was the best and most devoted of nurses, reading and singing to him, scarcely ever from his side. But Arthur Sutherland saw the sad, pale face that he remembered so brightly beautiful, and pitied her every day more and more.

He, too, was battling with fate, and failing as miserably as we all do in that hopeless struggle. For he found himself thinking a great deal more of this Creole heiress than was at all wise or prudent, considering he was not in love with her, and never meant to be.

Those large, starry black eyes ; those floating ink-black curls, soft and feathery as floss-silk ; that dainty, fairy form, and that soft, sweet voice, haunted him too much by night and by day for his own peace of mind. He wanted to be true to his blue-eyed, golden-haired ideal ; he wanted to go back to New York and marry Miss Vansell. And, wanting to do all this, he yet lingered and lingered at Maplewood, and found it more and more difficult every day to tear himself from the enchanted spot. He did not want to marry a woman with big black eyes and a dark skin ; he did not want to marry a foreigner ; he did not want to marry any one about whom there hung the faintest shadow of mystery or secrecy. And yet he lingered at Maplewood, fascinated by that lovely Creole face, and the spell of that musical voice, watching for her coming with feverish impatience, and chafing at her absence or delay. He did not want to fall in love with her himself, but he hated Philip Sutherland with a most savage hatred for having had that misfortune. He could not help admiring her, he said to himself ; no one could, any more than they could help admiring an exquisite painting or the marble Venus de Medicis ; but he meant to be faithful to the old ideal, and make his pale saint with the halo of golden hair Mrs. Arthur Sutherland. Was he not as good as engaged to Isabel ? What business had those raven tresses and dark oriental eyes per-

petually to come and disturb all his waking and sleeping dreams? He battled conscientiously with his fate—or fancied he did—and the more he battled, the more and more he thought of Eulalie!

CHAPTER V.

FATE'S VICTORY.



IN the very plain parlor of a very unpretending house, in a very quiet street of that lively little tree-shaded city, Portland, Maine, there sat, one lovely afternoon in June, a woman busily sewing.

The woman sat at the open window, and the window commanded an exquisite view of beautiful Casco Bay, but she never once stopped in her work to glance at it. Perhaps she had no time to spare, perhaps Casco Bay was a very old song, or perhaps its sunlit beauty was beyond the power of her soul to appreciate. She sat and stitched and stitched and stitched, with dull, monotonous rapidity, on the child's dress she was making, a faded and fretted-looking creature, with pale hair and eyes, and shrunk, thin features. She was dressed in rusty black, and wore a widow's cap, and her name was Mrs. Sutherland—Lucy Sutherland's mother. Two or three small children rolled over on the threadbare carpet, playing noisily with rag dolls and with tops, and two or three more of a larger growth were down

in the kitchen, regaling themselves with bread and meat, after school.

It needed no second glance at the worn-out carpet, the rheumatic chairs, the shabby sofa, the cracked looking-glass, and the seedy garments, to tell you this family were very poor. They were very poor, and of that class of poor most to be pitied, who have seen "better days," poor souls! and who struggle, and pinch, and tell lies, and eat their hearts out, trying to keep up appearances. They were in mourning for the husband and father, half-brother to the late James Sutherland, Esquire, of Maplewood, as Mrs. Sutherland never was tired telling her neighbors.

They had been very poor in his lifetime, for he was of dissipated habits; but they were poorer now, and Mrs. Sutherland had no time to admire Casco Bay, for patching and darning, and making and mending, from week's end to week's end. There were six besides Lucy; and Lucy and her salary, as paid companion to the lady of Maplewood, was their chief support.

Lucy Sutherland's life had been a hard one. Six years before this June afternoon she had gone first to live at Maplewood—gone to eat the bitter bread of dependence. But Lucy Sutherland was morbidly proud; Mrs. Sutherland, of Maplewood, haughty and overbearing; and Augusta too much given to fly out into gusts of bad temper. Of course, the cold pride and

the hot temper clashed at once, and Mrs. Sutherland swept stormily in, boxed Augusta's ears. A scolded Lucy stoutly. Lucy retorted with flashing eyes, and banged the door in the great lady's face, packed up her belongings, and was home before night. But there were too many at home already. Lucy went out once more as a nursery-governess; and for four years led the wretched, slavish life that nursery-governesses mostly lead. She was perpetually losing her place, and perpetually trying the next one, and only seeming to find each worse than the last. Four years of this sort of life broke down and subdued Lucy Sutherland enough even to suit Mrs. James Sutherland, of Maplewood. That lady, finding herself very lonely when Augusta went away to school, and remembering how useful she had found Lucy, presented herself at the house in Portland one day, and asked her to come back. Lucy was out of place, as usual. Mrs. Sutherland offered a higher figure than she had ever received as nursery-governess, and Lucy, neither forgiving nor forgetting the past, took prudence for her counselor, and went back. Whatever she had to endure, she did endure, with stony patience—her heart rebelling fiercely against destiny, but her lips never uttering one complaint. She had been the chief support of the family since then, not through any very strong sisterly love, but because of that very pride that would have them keep up ap-

pearances to the last gasp. She did not visit them very often; she wrote to her mother once a month, a brief letter, inclosing a remittance; and she endured her life with hard, icy coldness, that was anything but the virtue of resignation.

Mrs. Sutherland, sitting sewing this afternoon, was listening for the postman's knock. It was the time for Lucy's letter, and the remittance was truly needed. While she watched, a cab drove up to the door; a tall young lady, dressed in black, and wearing a black gauze veil over her face, alighted, and rang the bell. The next moment, there was a shout from the girls and boys below of—

“Oh, mamma! Here's Lucy!”

Mrs. Sutherland, dropping her work, met her eldest daughter in the doorway, and kissed her.

The children, playing on the floor, suspended their game to flock around their sister. Lucy kissed them one after the other, and then pushed them away.

“There! there!” she said, impatiently. “Run away, now. Bessy, don't stand on my dress. Franky, go along to your tops, and let me alone. I am hot, and tired to death!”

She dropped into a seat, still pushing them away—her face looking pale, and haggard, and careworn. Mrs. Sutherland saw her daughter was in no very sweet temper, and hustled the noisy flock out of the

room, and came back and sat down with a face full of anxiety.

"What is it, Lucy dear?" she asked. "Have you left your Aunt Anna's again?"

They were very much alike, this mother and daughter—alike outwardly and inwardly. Lucy Sutherland looked at her mother, and broke into a hard laugh.

"Your welcome is not a very cordial one, mamma! You ask me if I have lost my place—hasn't that a very pleasant housemaid-like sound?—before you invite me to take off my bonnet. I suppose if I had lost my place you would find me another before dark."

Mrs. Sutherland took up her sewing and recommenced.

"Take off your bonnet, Lucy," she said. "We have not much; but, whatever we have, you are welcome to your share of it. Have you quarreled with your Aunt Anna?"

"No, I have not quarreled with my Aunt Anna," replied Lucy, with sneering emphasis; for Lucy never deigned to call her rich relative aunt; "but my Aunt Anna has sent me home on her service for something not to be had in St. Mary's, and which it is not worth while sending for to Boston. I think I will take off my bonnet, mother, since you are so pressing!"

Mrs. Sutherland took no notice of her daughter's ill-temper. She was too much dependent on Lucy to afford the luxury of quarreling with her; so she laid aside her bonnet and mantle, and produced some crackers and a glass of wine.

"I don't want anything," said Lucy, impatiently. "Drink the wine yourself, mamma, you look as if you needed it. What are you making there?"

"A dress for Fanny! The child is in tatters, and not fit to go to school. I had to get it on credit."

"Pay for it with this," said Lucy, throwing her wallet into her mother's lap. "There is fifty dollars. Mrs. Sutherland is charitable enough to give me all her old black silks that are too good to give to the cook, and I make them over and save my money."

"How long are you going to stay with us, Lucy dear?"

"Very delicately put, mamma! But don't be afraid, I shall not trouble you long. I return to-morrow by the earliest train."

"And what is the news from Maplewood?" inquired Mrs. Sutherland. "Has Arthur returned?"

"Yes, Arthur has returned."

She spoke so sullenly, and with a face that darkened so ominously that her mother looked up from her work once more.

"How long is it since he came?" she asked, almost afraid to ask anything in her daughter's present frame of mind.

"Not a month yet; but long enough to make a fool of himself! He and Phil Sutherland came together; and Phil, perhaps, is the greatest fool of the two. He is the noisiest, at least."

"My dear Lucy! how strangely you talk! What do you mean? In what manner are they making fools of themselves?"

Lucy Sutherland laughed a hard and bitter laugh; but her eyes were flashing blue flame, and her lips were white with passion.

"Oh, about a pretty little puppet they have there, mother—a wax doll with a little waist, and dark skin, and big vacant black eyes—an insipid little nonentity, who can lisp puerile baby-talk about grandpapa and Cuba, and who is to be heiress of countless thousands. They are making fools of themselves about her, mamma. It is for this little foreign simpleton that they are both going mad!"

Mrs. Sutherland was a woman of penetration, but not of much tact. She saw at once that something more than mere feminine spleen was at the bottom of this bitter, reckless speech, and was unwise enough to utter her thoughts.

"I know you always liked Arthur," she said.

“And I hoped, when he returned, and you were thrown so much together, it might be a match. Lucy! Good Heavens!”

She started up suddenly in consternation; for Lucy, at the words, had broken into a violent fit of hysterical sobbing. It was so unexpected—so foreign to the nature of one so self-restrained and calm, this stormy gust of passionate weeping, that her mother could only stand and look on in blank dismay.

It did not last long, it was too violent to last. Lucy Sutherland looked up, and dashed the tears fiercely away.

“There!” she said. “It is all over, and you need not wear that frightened face. It is not likely to happen again. I am a fool, I dare say; but I think I should go mad if I could not cry out sometimes like this. I am not made of wood or stone, after all, though I gain credit for it; and this is all that keeps me from going wild.”

“My dear girl!” her mother anxiously said. “My dear Lucy, there is something more than common the cause of this. Tell mother!”

“It is only this, then,” cried Lucy, passionately, “that I hate Arthur Sutherland, and I hate Eulalie Rohan; and I hate myself for being the wretched, pitiful fool I am!”

Mrs. Sutherland listened to this wildly-desperate

speech in grave silence; and, when it was over, sat down and resumed her sewing, still in silence. Her woman's penetration saw the truth—that her quiet daughter was furiously jealous of this foreign beauty.

“She always was more or less in love with Arthur,” the mother mused. “And the ruling passion of her life was to be mistress of Maplewood. She has found out how hopeless her dream has been, and this insane outcry is the natural result. It is not like Lucy, and it will soon be over.”

Mrs. Sutherland was right. The first wild outburst was over, and Lucy was becoming her old self again.

“I suppose you think that I am going mad, mamma,” she said, after a pause; “and I think I should, if I could not cry out to some one. I wanted to be rich. I wanted to be Arthur Sutherland's wife, for your sake and the children's sake, as well as for my own. But that is all over now. He will marry this Creole heiress before long, if something does not occur to prevent it.”

“What should occur to prevent it?” replied her mother.

“Arthur Sutherland's own pride. There is something very strange, to say the very least, and very suspicious, in the manner of this girl's grandfather, who seems to be her only living relative. There is

some mystery—some guilt, I am positive—in his past history, which may be visited yet on his granddaughter. He lives in constant dread of something, and that something threatens her whom he idolizes as only these old dotards ever do idolize. My suspicions have been aroused from the first; and if I fail to find out what it means, it will be no fault of mine. I hate you, Eulalie Rohan”—she exclaimed, clenching her little hand, while her blue eyes flashed—“I hate you, and Heaven help you if ever you are in my power!”

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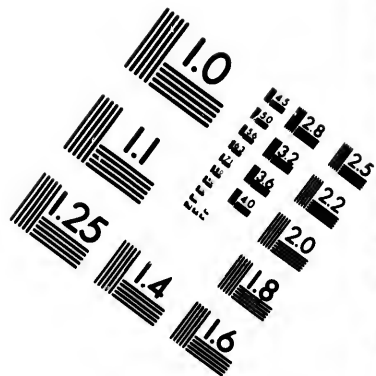
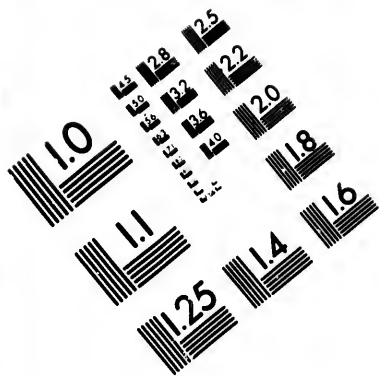
In the misty twilight of the evening following this, Lucy Sutherland returned to Maplewood. There was a dinner-party at the house, and the family and the guests were yet at table. Sarah, the housemaid, told Miss Lucy this, while arranging a little repast of strong tea and toast in the young lady's room, and further informed her that Mr. Rohan was not yet well enough to appear in the dining-room, but that Miss Rohan was down-stairs, and was looking beautiful. Even the very servants (she thought, bitterly) were bewitched by the black eyes and exquisite face of the Creole heiress; while she was looked upon, perhaps, as almost one of themselves.

Lucy drank her tea and ate her toast, and made her toilet, and descended to the drawing-room to report the success of her mission to the lady of the house. Eulalie

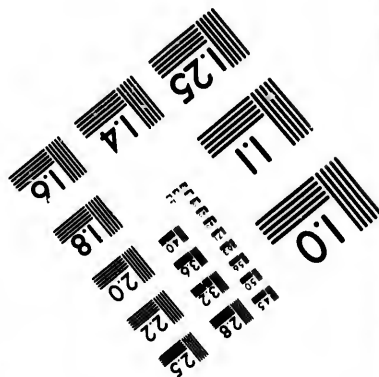
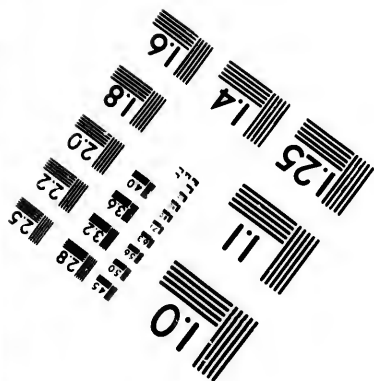
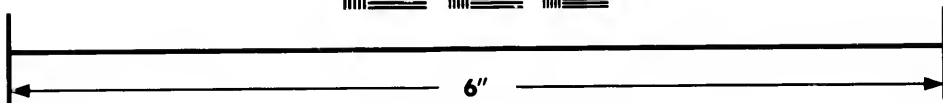
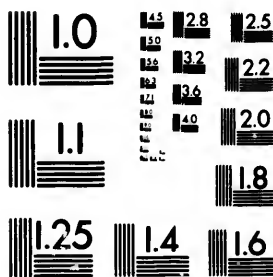
was at the piano, looking beautiful indeed in amber silk, and with rich gems flashing through the misty lace on her neck and arms. There was a tinge of melancholy in the large dark eyes, that added the only charm her beauty lacked. And Lucy Sutherland hated her for that beauty, and that costly dress, and those rare gems, with tenfold intensity. She knew how her own commonplace prettiness of features and complexion paled into insignificance beside the tropical splendor of such dusky beauty as this; and she envied her as only one jealous woman can envy another, with an envy all the more furious for every outward sign being suppressed.

Lucy reported her successful mission to Mrs. Sutherland, and then retired to a remote corner, as a discreet companion should. She saw the gentlemen enter the room presently, and flock about the piano, and press Miss Rohan to sing. Philip Sutherland was at their head; but Arthur, seeing the instrument besieged, went and sat down by his mother. There were no lady-guests for him to devote himself to, and the gentlemen were all engrossed by the black-eyed pianiste. Lucy's remote corner was not so very far off but that, by straining her ears, she could hear the conversation between mother and son; and Lucy did not scruple to listen. The talk at first was desultory enough. Mrs. Sutherland crocheted, and her son





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toyed with her colored silks and made rambling remarks, but his gaze never wandered from the piano.

"He is thinking about her," thought Lucy, "though he speaks of the heat and the dinner, and he will begin to talk of her presently."

Lucy was right. Arthur was thinking of the Cuban beauty, as he seemed always to be doing of late. He had no idea of falling in love with her; it was the very last thing he wanted to do. He had come home determined to dislike her—to have no yellow-skinned heiress forced upon him by his mother; and yet here he was walking into the trap with his eyes wide open. He despised himself for his weakness, but that did not make him any stronger. He wished his mother would broach the match-making subject, that he might raise objections; but she never did. He wished now she would begin talking of her, but she crocheted away as serenely as if match-making had never entered her head, and he had to start the subject himself.

"How long before Mr. Rohan leaves here?" he asked, carelessly.

"Not for months yet, I trust," replied his mother; "he promised to spend the summer with us. We should miss Eulalie sadly."

"He will return to Cuba, I suppose, when he does leave here?"

"I presume so."

"What a lonely life Miss Rohan must lead there!" said Arthur, thoughtfully.

"Yes, it is lonely, poor child. Arthur,"—looking up suddenly, and laying her hand on his arm—"why should Miss Rohan return to Cuba?"

"It is coming," thought Lucy Sutherland, setting her teeth.

"Why should she return, mother?" said Arthur, coloring, consciously, while he laughed. "Why should she not return? It is her home."

"I said why should *Miss Rohan* return. I say so still. I have no objection to Eulalie's going to Cuba—only let her go as Mrs. Arthur Sutherland."

"My dear mother!"

Mrs. Sutherland smiled.

"That astonished look is very well feigned, Arthur, but it does not deceive me. It is not the first time you have thought on this subject; though why it should take you so long to debate, I confess, puzzles me. There never was such a prize so easily to be won before. If you do not bear it off, some one else will, and that speedily."

"But, my dear match-making mamma," remonstrated her son, still laughing, "I do not like prizes too easily won. It is the grapes that hang above one's head, not those ready to drop into one's mouth, that we long for."

"Very well," said Mrs. Sutherland, gravely, "you will please yourself. While you are struggling for the sour grapes overhead, some wise man will step in and bear off the prize within reach. It is your affair, not mine."

She closed her lips, and went industriously on with her work. Arthur looked over at Miss Rohan, the shimmer of whose amber silk dress and flashing ornaments he could see between the dark garments of the men about her.

"After all, mother," he said, "is not your castle built on very empty air? I may propose to Miss Rohan, and be refused for my pains. The heiress of a millionaire is not to be had for the asking."

"Very true! You must take your chance of that. But you know, Arthur, it is the grapes that hang highest you prefer. Perhaps you will find Miss Rohan beyond your reach after all."

Her son made no reply; he had caught a glimpse of Lucy's black barege dress, and crossed over to where she sat at once.

"Why, Lucy, I didn't know you had returned," he cried. "You come and go like a pale, noiseless shadow, appearing and disappearing when we least expect you."

A faint angry color flushed into the girl's pale face, but Arthur did not see it as he leaned over her chair.

"When did you arrive?"

"About an hour ago."

"And how did you find the good people of Portland? Your mother and the little ones are well, I trust."

"Quite well, thank you!"

"You should have made them a longer visit, Lucy. It is rather unsatisfactory running home, and—"

He stopped abruptly in the middle of his own sentence. He had been watching Eulalie and thinking of Eulalie all the time he was talking. He had seen her leave the piano five minutes before, and cross to the open windows fronting the lawn, and his sister take her place. He saw her now step through one of the windows, and disappear in the moonlight, and Philip Sutherland striding after her.

Arthur's brow darkened, and his face flushed. In some strange, magnetic manner the conviction flashed upon him that another was about to ask for the prize he would not seek. If Philip Sutherland should succeed! He turned sick and giddy at the thought, and in one instant the scales dropped from his eyes, and he saw the palpable truth. He loved Eulalie Rohan; and what he felt for Isabel Vansell was only calm, placid admiration. He loved this glorious little beauty; and now he was on the point of losing

her, perhaps forever! "How blessings brighten as they take their flight." In that moment he would have given all the wealth of the Sutherlands and the Rohans combined to have forestalled his cousin Philip.

"Lucy," he said, "will you come out for a walk? The evening is too lovely to be lost here."

Lucy Sutherland silently arose. She saw his ashen face, and read his thoughts like a printed book. She, too, by that mysterious *rapport*, guessed Philip's errand, and from her heart of hearts prayed he might succeed.

The group gathered around the piano paid no attention to them, as they went out through the open window, upon the lawn, where the moonlight lay in silvery sheets. Silently, and by the same impulse, they turned down the chestnut avenue that led to the terrace. Two minutes and it came in sight, and they saw Eulalie Rohan standing by the low iron railing, her silk dress and the brilliants she wore flashing in the moon's rays, and the tangled black ringlets fluttering in the breeze. She wore a large shawl, for she was a chilly little creature; and, even in that supreme moment, Arthur could notice how gracefully she wore it, and how unspeakably lovely the dark face was in the pale moonlight. The lilacs waved their perfumed arms about her head, and she broke off fragrant purple

bunches as she watched the placid moonlit ocean. He saw all these minor details, while he looked at Philip Sutherland coming up to her, and breaking out vehemently and at once with the story he had to tell. Such an old, old story ; but heard for the first time, this June night, by those innocent ears. Arthur Sutherland set his teeth and clenched his fists, and felt a mad impulse to spring upon his cousin and hurl him over the iron-work into the sea. They both stood still—Lucy nearly as white as her companion, but as calm as stone, and looked at the scene. They were too far off to hear what was said ; but in the bright moonlight they saw Eulalie turn away, and cover her face with her hands, and Philip fall down on his knees at her feet. There was white despair in every line of his face, and they knew what his answer had been.

“She has refused him !” Arthur cried. “Thank God !”

“Let us go back to the house,” said Lucy, icily ; “Miss Rohan might take us for eavesdroppers if she saw us here.”

She was deadly pale, and there was a strange, unnatural glitter in her blue eyes ; but Arthur never once looked at her or thought of her as they walked back to the house.

“I will ask Eulalie Rohan to be my wife, before the

sun goes down to-morrow," was his mental determination by the way.


Miss Rohan returned to the house ten minutes after, looking pale, and with a startled look in her great dark eyes that reminded Arthur of a frightened gazelle. She quitted the drawing-room almost immediately after, to see if her grandfather had been made comfortable for the night, and did not return; and the long drawing-room became all at once to Arthur Sutherland as empty as a desert.

It was late when the guests departed, although their host was the reverse of entertaining, and he was free to go out and let the cold night-air blow away the fever in his veins. He felt no desire to sleep, and he wandered aimlessly through the far-spreading grounds of his ancestral home, tormented by conflicting doubts, and hopes, and fears.

About ten minutes' walk from the grassy terrace, half-buried in a jungle of tall fern and rank grass, and shaded by gloomy elm-trees, there was the ruins of an old summer-house. A lonely and forsaken summer-house, where no one ever went now, but a chair of twisted branches and a rickety table showed that it once had its day. Lying on the damp, grass-grown floor of this old summer-house, his arms folded and his face resting on them, lay poor Philip Sutherland, doing battle with his despair.

CHAPTER VI.

TOLD IN THE TWILIGHT.

“ WILL propose to Eulalie to-morrow!” was Arthur Sutherland’s last thought, as sometime in the small hours he laid his head upon his pillow, to toss about restlessly until daybreak.

“I will ask her to be my wife to-day!” was his first thought as he arose in the morning. “There is no use in struggling against destiny; and it is my destiny to love this beautiful, dark-eyed creature beyond anything in this lower world.”

The heir of Maplewood made a most careful toilet that morning, and never was so little pleased with his success. It was still early when he descended the stairs, and passed out of the hall-door to solace himself with a matutinal cigar, and think how he should say what he had to say. Conscience gave him some twinges still, and would not let him forget that in some manner he stood pledged to Miss Vansell, and that it was hardly honorable to throw her over like this. The

still, small voice was so clamorous that he turned savage at last, and told Conscience to mind her own business and let him alone. After that Conscience had no more to say; and he went off into long, delicious, day-dreams of the bright future, when this beautiful Creole girl should be his wife.

The ringing of the breakfast bell awoke him from his castle-building. He flung away his cigar, and went into the house, expecting for certain to find Miss Rohan in the breakfast-room. She had never been absent once since his return home. The sweet, dark face, shaded by that glorious fall of perfumed hair, and lit by those starry eyes, had always shone on him across the damask and china and silver of the breakfast service. But, do things ever turn out in this world as we plan them? Eulalie was not there. His mother and sister and Lucy alone were in the room. As he entered, a housemaid came in at an opposite door, with Miss Rohan's compliments, and would they please not to wait breakfast; she had a headache, and would not come down.

Mrs. Sutherland dispatched a cup of strong tea and some toast to Miss Rohan's room by the housemaid, and the quartet sat down to the morning meal. A chill of disappointment had fallen upon Arthur. She had never been absent before. Was it an omen of evil? He had been so confident of meeting her, and he was

disappointed. Was this disappointment but the forerunner of a still greater?

The chill seemed contagious: all were silent and constrained; and the breakfast was unspeakably dismal. Mrs. Sutherland seemed absent and preoccupied; Lucy sat frigidly mute; and Augusta was, I regret to say, intensely sulky. Poor Augusta! She alone knew the secret motive prompting that postscript inviting Philip Sutherland down to Maplewood; and she alone knew how cruelly that hidden hope had been disappointed. She had dressed prettily, and looked charming—or at least as charming as that snub nose of hers would permit; and it had been all in vain. How could Philip Sutherland see her rosy cheeks, and dimples, and round blue eyes, while he was dazzled and blinded by the dark splendor of that Creole face? She had not been a spectator of that moonlight scene on the grassy terrace; but she knew as well as Lucy or Arthur what had happened last night, and what had occasioned the absence of Eulalie and Philip this morning. Therefore, Miss Sutherland was in the sulks, and had red rims round her blue eyes, and that poor snub nose swollen, as people's will when they cry half the night.

The meal was half over before Mrs. Sutherland, in her preoccupation, missed Philip, and inquired for him.

"Philip has gone," said Lucy, quietly.

"Gone! Gone where?" demanded her aunt, staring.

"Back to New York, I presume. He left very early this morning, before any of you were up."

Mrs. Sutherland still stared.

"Back to New York so suddenly! Arthur, did he tell you he was going?"

"Not a word."

"Where did you see him, Lucy?" inquired the astonished lady of the house.

"Leaving his room about six o'clock. I generally come down-stairs about that time; and, as I opened my door, I encountered him quitting his room, with his traveling-bag in his hand. I asked him where he was going, and he answered, 'To perdition! Anywhere out of this place!'"

Lucy repeated Philip Sutherland's forcible words as calmly as if it had been the most matter-of-fact answer in the world. She said nothing of the wildly-haggard face he had worn; but a blank silence fell on all, and his name was not mentioned again until the dreary meal was over.

Arthur Sutherland passed the bright morning-hours in aimless wanderings in and out of the house, and under the green arcades of the leafy groves, waiting impatiently for Miss Rohan to appear. He waited

for some hours in vain; and, when at last she did appear, it was only another disappointment. He had sauntered down through the old orchard, idly breaking off twigs, and trying to read the morning paper, when the sound of carriage-wheels brought him back. For his pains, he just got a glimpse of his mother and Eulalie and Mr. Rohan, as the carriage rolled away. If indisposition prevented Mr. and Mrs. Rohan from appearing in the breakfast-room, they were well enough to take an airing in the carriage, it seemed.

That was the longest day Arthur Sutherland ever remembered in his life. He kept wandering aimlessly in and out, smoking no end of cigars, and talking by fits and starts to Lucy, who was about as genial and sympathetic as an icicle. The first dinner-bell had rung, and the long red lanes of the sun set were slanting through the chestnuts and maples when the carriage-party returned. They all went up-stairs at once; and Arthur entered the dining-room to wait, feverishly, her entrance.

There was a letter awaiting Mr. Rohan, bearing the New York postmark. He opened it, and his face clouded as he read it. It was written by the solicitor of one Mrs. Lawrence, who lay dangerously ill, and requesting him to come to New York at once if he wished to see her before she died.

Mr. Rohan laid down the letter with a troubled face.

Mrs. Lawrence was a relative—a distant one—but his only living relative save his granddaughter, and the request must be obeyed. The trouble was about Eulalie. How could he hurry her off on such short notice, and how could he leave her behind? He walked up and down his room in perturbed thought, revolving the difficulty, and at a loss whether to take or leave her.

“She does not wish to leave this place,” he thought; “why should I drag her away, poor child? The time has come for her to know all—dreadful as it will be for me to tell it; why not leave her here and let her learn the horrible truth when I am gone? It would break my heart to see her first despair; if I let her find it out in my absence, the shock will be over before I return. Yes, I will go, and Eulalie shall remain, and I shall leave in writing the miserable story that must be told. My poor darling! my poor little innocent child! may heaven help you to bear the misery of your lot!”

The second bell rang, and Mr. Rohan descended to the dining-room, trying to conceal all sign of agitation. His granddaughter was there, talking to Arthur Sutherland, whose devoted manner there was no mistaking. The signs he could not fail to read deepened the old man's trouble, and his voice shook painfully in spite of himself as he announced his departure next day.

Every one was surprised. Eulalie uttered a little cry of distress.

"Going to New York, grandpapa? Are you going to take me?"

"No, my dear," the old man said; and Arthur, who had turned very pale, breathed again. "You could not be ready; and, as I hope to return in a week, it would not be worth while."

Almost immediately after dinner, Mr. Rohan returned to his room, pleading the truth—letters to write. But fate had declared against Arthur that day. Carriage-wheels rattled up to the door almost instantly after, and some half-dozen of his mother's most intimate friends came in. There were three young ladies, who at once took possession of Eulalie, and all chance of saying what he had to say was at an end for that evening.

Arthur Sutherland being a gentleman—what is better, a Christian—did not swear; but I am afraid he wished the three Misses Albermarle at Jericho. They were tall young ladies, with voluminous drapery and balloon-like crinoline, and his little black-eyed divinity was quite lost among them. The oldest Miss Albermarle presently made a dead set at him, and held him captive until it was time to depart; and then, when he came back from escorting them to their carriage, he just got a glimpse of Eulalie's fairy figure flitting up-stairs to her room.

No, to her grandfather's, for she tapped at that first

to say good-night. He was writing still, she could see, when he opened the door, and the old troubled look was at its worst. He would not let her come in; he kissed her and dismissed her, and returned to his writing.

It was a very long letter—written slowly, and in deep agitation. Sometimes his tears blistered the paper; sometimes he threw down his pen and covered his face with his hands, while his whole frame was convulsed. But he always went on again—scratch, scratch, scratch; the inexorable pen set down the words, and as the clock was striking two his task was ended. He folded the long, closely-written letter, placed it in an envelope, addressed to his granddaughter, and locked it in his desk.

“My poor, poor girl!” he said; “my little helpless lamb! How will you live after reading this!”

The Cuban millionaire passed a miserably restless night—too much agitated by what he had written, and the memories it had recalled, to sleep. Not that the tragical story of the past was ever absent from his sleeping or waking fancy, but this written record was like the tearing open of half-healed wounds. He could not sleep; and he was glad when the red dawn came glimmering into the east, to rise and go out, that the morning breeze might cool his hot head.

The sun arose dazzlingly. The scent of the long,

leafy avenues, the saline breath of the sea, was so refreshing, the songs of countless birds so inspiriting, that he could hardly fail to be benefited by his morning walk. When the breakfast-bell rang, he entered the house with a face even brighter than usual, and gave Eulalie, who came tripping to meet him, her morning kiss, with a smile.

"By what train do you go?" Mrs. Sutherland asked, as they sat down to breakfast.

"The twelve o'clock. I have a little business to transact in Boston, and shall remain there over night."

Mr. Rohan remained in the drawing-room the best part of the morning, while his granddaughter sat at the piano, and played and sang for him incessantly. She and Mrs. Sutherland were to see him off; and just before it was time to start, he called her into his room, and closed the door. Eulalie came in, looking darkly-bewitching in a little Spanish hat with long plumes, and a shawl of black lace, trailing along her bright silk dress. The smile faded from her red lips at sight of grandpapa's face, and she glanced apprehensively from him to a large sealed letter he held in his hand.

"Eulalie," he said, steadying his voice by an effort, "I promised that you should speedily learn the story that must be the secret of your life. I could not sit down and tell it to you—I could not; but I have written it here, and to-night or to-morrow you will read it,

and learn all. My poor little darling, if I could spare you the shock of this revelation with my life, God knows how freely that life would be given! But I cannot; you must know what is set down here. And all I can do is, to pray that the knowledge may not blast your whole life as it has blasted mine."

"Grandpapa! grandpapa! is it so very dreadful, then?"

"Yes, poor child, it is dreadful. Say a prayer, Eulalie, before you open this letter, for strength and fortitude to bear its contents."

She held the letter without looking at it. Her dilated eyes were fixed on his face—her parted lips were mutely appealing to him. He took both her hands and clasped them in his.

"Ask me nothing now, my darling. It is all written there. I shall return in a week, and you shall remain here, or go home, just as you please. May all good angels have you in their keeping, my precious child, until I return."

He kissed her passionately, and led her toward her own room.

"Lock up your letter," he said; "and bring the key with you. No eye must rest on this history but your own."

He quitted her and descended the stairs. The carriage was in waiting, and so was Mrs. Sutherland, in a

Parisian bonnet and cashmere shawl. She was going with Eulalie, to see him off, and a groom was just leading round Mr. Sutherland's horse.

"Your guard of honor is going to be a large one," laughed Mrs. Sutherland. "Arthur insists on escorting us to the depot. Where is Eulalie? Ah! here she is at last; and your grandpapa has no time to spare, Miss Rohan."

They entered the carriage, and drove away, Arthur riding beside them, determined this day should not pass without his speaking. They stood on the platform, watching the train out of sight, and then returned to the carriage.

"Crying! you foolish child!" exclaimed Mrs. Sutherland; "and grandpapa only going for a week! Come! I shall not permit this! I am going shopping in the village, and afterward I have some calls to make, and you shall accompany me. That will cheer you up."

Eulalie would have excused herself if she could, and gone directly back to Maplewood. She was dying to read that mysterious letter, and learn her grandfather's terrible secret; but there was nothing for it but submission. So the shopping was done, and the calls made, with Arthur still dutifully in attendance; and the sunset was blazing itself out in the sky before they returned.

A red and wrathful sunset. The day had been oppressively hot, and the sun lurid and crimson in a brassy sky. There was not a breath of air stirring, and there was an unnatural greenish glare in the atmosphere, ominous of coming storm. The trees shivered at intervals, as if they felt already the tempest to come; the glassy and blackening sea moaned as it washed up over the sands; the frightened birds cowered in their snug nests, and over the paralyzed earth, the hot, brazen sky hung like a burning roof. Eulalie glanced fearfully around as she was helped from the carriage by Arthur.

"We are going to have a storm," he said, answering her startled glance; "and that very soon."

It wanted but a quarter of seven, Eulalie's watch told her; and she hastened after Mrs. Sutherland, to change her dress. She resigned herself into the hands of her maid, with a sigh of resignation—there was no time for letter-reading now—and went down-stairs, when the dinner-bell rang. But dinner on such a stifling evening was little better than a meaningless ceremony of sitting down and getting up again. Eulalie, accustomed to a tropical clime, felt as if she were gasping for air, as if she could not breathe, and passed out through the open drawing-room window, down to the terrace. Now was Arthur's chance. Fortune, that had so long taken a malicious pleasure in balking him,

was in a favorable mood at last. He arose, with a heart beating thick and fast, and strode out after her, feeling that the supreme moment had come. He could see her misty white dress fluttering in and out among the trees, and came up to her just as she leaned over the iron railing, to catch the faintest breath from the sea. The lurid twilight was fiery-red yet, in the west, but all the rest of the sky looked like hot brass shutting down over their heads. Eulalie lifted her dark eyes to his face, in awe, as he stood beside her.

"How hot it is," she said; "and what an awful sky! The very sea seems holding its breath, and waiting for something fearful!"

"The storm is very near," said Arthur; "the sky over there looks like a sea of blood."

There was something in his voice that made Eulalie look at him instead of at the blood-red sky; and Arthur Sutherland broke out at once with what he had followed her there to say. That passionate avowal was the first he had ever uttered in his life; and the crimson west, and the lurid atmosphere, and the black, heaving sea swam in a hot mist before his eyes, and the scheme of creation seemed suspended, not awaiting the coming storm, but the answer of this black-eyed Creole girl.

* * * * *

Mrs. Sutherland, sitting in the entrance of the bay

window, too languid even to fan herself, this oppressive June evening, was disturbed five minutes after the departure of her son and Miss Rohan by the announcement of a visitor. A visitor on such an abnormal evening was certainly the last thing Mrs. Sutherland expected or desired ; but the visitor was shown in, and proved to be the Reverend Calvin Masterson, pastor of the fashionable church of Saint Mary's. The Reverend Calvin had come to solicit a donation toward a new pulpit and sounding-board, and being anxious to complete the affair as soon as possible, had ventured out this sultry evening to Maplewood.

Mrs. Sutherland, who had long ago set the Reverend Calvin down as a very desirable husband for Augusta, subscribed liberally ; and, knowing Eulalie's purse was ever open to contributions of all kinds, turned round to look for her ; but Eulalie was not to be seen. Lucy Sutherland, sitting pale and cool through all the heat, came out of the shadows to inform her that Miss Rohan had gone out.

"Then go after her, Lucy," said Mrs. Sutherland. "You will find her in the terrace, I dare say."

Lucy, who never hurried, walked leisurely down the chestnut avenue. Long before she came to the terrace, she could see the small, white figure, with the long, jetty curls, and that other tall form beside it. There could be no mistaking that they stood there as

plighted husband and wife now. If any doubt remained, a few words of Arthur's, caught as she noared them, would have ended it.

"And I may speak to your grandfather, then, my dearest girl, as soon as he returns?"

Perhaps Lucy's pale face grew a shade paler, perhaps her thin lips compressed themselves more firmly; but that was all. An instant after, she was standing beside them, delivering in her usual quiet voice Mrs. Sutherland's message.

"Masterson, eh?" cried Arthur. "He must be in a tremendous hurry for the sounding-board, when he comes up from St. Mary's such a hot evening as this."

He drew Eulalie's hand within his arm, with a face quite radiant with his new joy, and led her away. Lucy followed slowly, her lips still tightly compressed, and a bright light shining in her blue eyes. She did not return to the drawing-room. She went straight to her own apartment, and sat down by the open window, and watched the starless night blacken down.

An hour after, the Reverend Calvin Masterson drove away; and, as the clock struck ten, she heard Eulalie, Augusta, and Arthur come up-stairs.

"Mr. Masterson will have a dark night for his homeward drive," Arthur was saying. "We will have the storm before morning."

CHAPTER VII.

STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.



ULALIE ROHAN went to her room that hot June evening with a new and delicious sense of joy thrilling through every fibre of her heart. She had taken life all along as a bright summer-holiday, whose darkest cloud was a shadow of the past in her beloved grandfather's face; but, to-night, the world was all Eden, and she the happiest Eve that ever danced in the sunshine. She had never known, until she stood listening to his avowal on the terrace, how much she had grown to love Arthur Sutherland. She never dreamed how near and dear he had become, or why she had rejected poor Philip; but she passed from childhood to womanhood in one instant, and knew all now.

The wax tapers, held up by fat Cupids in the frame of her mirror, were lit when she entered, and Mademoiselle Trinette, her maid, stood ready to make her young lady's night-toilet; but Eulalie was not going to sleep just yet, and dismissed her with a smile.

"It is too hot to go to bed, TrINETTE," she said. "I shall not retire for an hour or two, and you need not wait up. Good night."

The *femme-de-chambre* quitted the room, and Eulalie seated herself by the window. The night was moonless and starless, and would have been pitch-dark but for a lurid phosphorescent glare in the atmosphere. In the unnatural stillness of the night, she could hear the shivering of the trees, the slipping of a snake in the under-brush, or the uneasy fluttering of a bird in its nest. No breath of air came through the wide open casement, and the waves boomed dully on the shore below with an ominous roar.

In her white dress and dark black ringlets, Eulalie sat by the window and thought how very happy she was, and how very happy she was going to be. She mused over the glorious picture of the future Arthur had painted while they stood in the red twilight of the terrace, the long continental tour through beautiful Italy, fair France, sunny Spain, and picturesque Switzerland; of the winters spent in her Cuban home among the magnolia and the acacia groves, and the summers passed here at Maplewood. It was such a beautiful and happy life to look forward to—almost too happy, she feared—too much of Heaven to be enjoyed on earth.

An hour had passed—two hours—before Eulalie

arose from the window and prepared to retire. As she stood before the glass, combing out her magnificent hair, her eye fell on the little rosewood desk in which she had locked that mysterious letter given her by her grandfather. She had forgotten all about it until now, and the memory sent a thrill of vague fear to her very heart. That mysterious secret that he told her would darken her whole life as it had darkened his—what could it be? She unlocked the desk—and took it out with fingers that trembled a little, and sat looking at it with a superstitious terror of opening it.

“How foolish I am!” she thought, at last; “it cannot be so very terrible after all. Poor grandpapa is morbid, and aggravates its importance. It is no record of crime, he says; it is no hereditary disease, physical or mental; and if it be the loss of wealth, even of my whole fortune, I shall not regret that much. I often think I should like to be poor, and wear pretty print dresses and linen collars, and live in a little white cottage with green window-shutters, like those in St. Mary’s, and take tea with Arthur every evening at six o’clock. I will say a prayer, as grandpapa told me, and read this letter, and go to bed.”

There was a lovely picture of the *Mater Dolorosa* hanging above her bed. Eulalie knelt down before it and murmured an *Ave Maria*, as she had been wont to do in her convent-days; and then, drawing a low chair

close to the dressing-table, opened the letter. It was very long—half a dozen closely-written sheets—and signed, “Your heart-broken grandfather;” and Eulalie, taking up the first sheet, began to read.

Arthur Sutherland felt no more inclination for sleep this oppressive summer-night than Eulalie Rohan. The closeness of his chamber seemed to stifle him, and he stepped out of the open corridor to the piazza that ran round the second story. He could see the lights from the other chamber-windows glaring across the dusky gloom, and he knew the others were as wakeful as himself. It was one of those abnormal nights—not made for sleep—in which you lie awake and toss about frantically, as if your pillows were red-hot and your bed a rack.

“I feel,” he thought—as he leaned against a slender column overrun with clematis, and lit a cigar—“I feel as though something were about to happen. I feel as though this intense happiness were too supreme to last—as though the tie that binds me and Eulalie were but a single hair. Good Heavens! if I should lose her—if something should happen to take her from me!”

He turned faint and giddy at the bare thought. Poor slighted Philip! he could afford to pity him now. Where was he this hot, dark night, and how was he

bearing the blow he had received? It was so impossible not to love this beautiful black-eyed enchantress that Philip was not so much to blame after all.

"I will run up to New York when Mr. Rohan returns and I have spoken to him, and hunt the poor lad up," mused Arthur. "I wish I had not brought him down. But how was I to know that my mother's heiress would turn out a little black-eyed angel!"

He walked slowly up and down the piazza, smoking and thinking, for over two hours. One by one, the lighted windows darkened—Eulalie's alone shone bright still. He wondered what she could be doing to keep her up so long; and while he watched her window, there shot athwart the sultry gloom a sheet of blue flame that almost blinded him. A moment's pause, and then a roll of thunder, as if the heavens were rending asunder. A great drop of rain fell on his face, then another and another, thick and fast; and the storm threatening so long had burst in its might.

Arthur stepped hastily through the window and closed it. A second sheet of lurid flame leaped out like a two-edged sword, and lit up, with an unearthly glare, the woods and meadows and gardens of Maplewood. A second roll of thunder, nearer and more deafening than the first, and a deluge of rain. The sky had kept its promise, and the tempest of rain and lightning and thunder was appalling in its fury.

Arthur Sutherland put his hands over his dazzled eyes, feeling as though the incessant blaze of the lightning were striking him blind. Flash followed flash, almost without a second's intermission, blue, blinding, ghostly—the continual roll of the thunder was horrible, and the rain fell with a roar like a waterfall.

“Good Heavens!” thought Arthur, “what awful lightning! My poor little timid Eulalie will be frightened. I remember Augusta telling me once how terrified she was at thunder-storms.”

He opened his door, crossed the hall, and tapped at his sister's. It was opened immediately by Augusta, who looked like a picture of the tragic muse, with her hair all disheveled, and her white morning-dress hanging loose about her.

“Have you not retired yet, Augusta?” her brother asked.

“No, I staid up reading a novel until the lightning commenced; and now it is of no use thinking of bed until this storm is over. Good Heaven! what awful lightning!”

A sheet of blue lambent flame that almost blinded them lit up, for nearly three minutes, the hall, followed by a thunder-clap that shook the house to its very foundation. Augusta clasped her hands over her dazzled eyes, and her brother seized her wrist and drew her with him into the hall.

“Augusta,” he said, hurriedly, “you told me Eulalie was afraid of lightning. I wish you would go in and stay with the poor child until this storm is past.”

Miss Sutherland, just at that particular time, had no very especial love for the black-eyed beauty who had won her cousin Philip from her; but she tapped, nevertheless, at Miss Rohan’s door. There was no reply; Augusta rapped again, more loudly, but still no answer. She turned to her brother with a paling face.

“Try the door,” he said; “open it yourself.”

Augusta turned the handle. The door was not locked, and she went in. Went in, over the threshold, and recoiled an instant after, with a shrill and prolonged scream, that echoed from end to end of the house.

Arthur Sutherland, lingering in the hall, was standing in the doorway in a moment. In all the long years of his after-life he never forgot the picture on which he looked then. The tall candles flared around the mirror, but the perpetual flashing of the lightning lit the room with a blue ghastliness that quenched their pale light. There was a certain sulphurous smell in the chamber, too, that Arthur had perceived in the hall, but not half so strongly as here. Eulalie sat at the table, still in her dinner-dress, the shining skirt trailing the carpet, the jewelry she wore flashing wierdly in the unnatural light. She sat in an arm-chair, erect and rigid; her hands clasping the last sheet

of a letter, her large black eyes staring wide open, with an awful, glazed, and sightless glare. Not one vestige of color remained in the dead, white face; and with the staring, wide-open eyes, the marble stiffness of form and face, she looked like nothing on earth but a galvanized corpse. A terrible sight, sitting upright there, tricked out in satin and lace, and perhaps stone-dead. She had evidently but just finished reading her letter—the loose sheets lay at her feet, where they had fluttered down. The horrible truth flashed upon Arthur in a moment—she had been struck by lightning! With the awful thought yet thrilling to the core of his heart, he was bending over her, holding both her hands clasped in his. These hands were ice-cold, and she sat, neither hearing nor seeing him, staring blankly at vacancy.

“Eulalie!” he cried. “My darling! speak to me! Eulalie! Eulalie! do you not know me?”

She might have been stone-deaf, for all the sign she made of hearing him—stone-blind, for all the sign she made of seeing him—stone-dead, for any proof of life or consciousness.

There were others in the chamber now—looking on with pallid, awe-struck faces. Augusta’s scream had aroused the house. Arthur Sutherland saw a mist of faces around him, without recognizing one of them;

he could see nothing but that one white, rigid face, with the staring, wide-open black eyes.

“Arthur,” a quiet voice said, and a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder. He looked up, and saw his mother, in her dressing-gown, pale and composed. “Arthur, you had better go for Doctor Denover at once. The storm is subsiding and there is no time to lose. I fear she has been stunned by the lightning.”

The words restored Arthur to himself. He started to his feet, and was out of the room in a second. In another, he had donned hat and waterproof coat, and in five minutes was galloping, through darkness and rain, and thunder and lightning, as he never had galloped before.

Mrs. Sutherland had sal-volatile, cologne, and other female restoratives for fainting brought, but in this case all proved useless. She chafed the cold hands and temples, but warmth was not to be restored. She strove by caresses and endearing words to restore some sign of life into that death-like face; but all in vain; all in vain. Augusta and Lucy stood silently near; the servants were grouped in the hall, hushed and frightened; and the ghastly blue glare of the lightning still lit up, at fitful intervals, the room.

Mrs. Sutherland desisted at length from her hopeless task, and rose up, very pale.

“I can do no more,” she said. “It is the first case

of the kind that has ever come within my observation. I wish Doctor Denover was here! Lucy, what is that?"

Lucy had stooped to pick up the fallen sheets of the letter; and she looked up from sorting them at this abrupt question. One sentence had caught her eye on the last sheet, and set her curiosity aflame. The sentence was this: "Beware of that man, my child! I know not whether he is living or dead, but the fear has been the blight of my life, as it must be the bane of yours."

Lucy Sutherland had time to see no more. Her aunt's hand was outstretched to receive the letter, her aunt's haughty voice was speaking.

"That is Miss Rohan's letter, Miss Sutherland. Give it to me!"

Lucy silently obeyed. Mrs. Sutherland crossed to Eulalie's bureau, placed the letter in one of the drawers, without looking at it, locked the drawer, and put the key in her pocket. There was a significance in the act that made Lucy's light-blue eyes flash, and she turned and walked out of the apartment, up-stairs, to her room.

In her own room, she sat down by the open window, and looked out at the black, blind night. Ghastly gleams of lightning quivered zig-zag in the air yet, the rain still fell with an angry rush, and the thunder boomed sullenly; but the midnight storm was subsiding. Lucy Sutherland, sitting there, felt a fiendish joy

at her heart—a demoniacal sense of triumph and delight. In all the pride of her beauty and her youth, the fiery arrow from the clouds had struck her rival down. “She may die! She may die!” was her inward thought; “and he may be mine yet!”

She sat there the livelong night, looking out at the black trees, listening to the hurrying of feet down stairs, the opening and shutting of doors; careless what they thought of her absence, and thinking her own dark thoughts. Had Eulalie Rohan really been struck by lightning, or was it something in that letter that had struck her down, like a death-blow? “Beware of that man! I know not whether he is living or dead; but the fear has been the blight of my life, as it must be the bane of yours.” The strange words danced before her eyes, as if the letter were yet in her hands. She knew it was from Eulalie’s grandfather. She had seen the signature on that same last sheet, “Your heart-broken grandfather, Gustavus Rohan.”

It sounded very melodramatic, but there might be a terrible meaning in the words after all.

“If I could only get that letter,” she mused; “if I could only get it for ten minutes. There is some secret in that old man’s life, and that secret is to overshadow the life of his granddaughter. What can it be? Who is this man of whom he warns her—who has her in his power—the fear of whom is to be the bane of her life,

as it has been the blight of his? If I could only fathom this mystery, I might stop the marriage yet. Where there is secrecy there is apt to be guilt, and Arthur Sutherland would never ally himself with guilt. Oh! if I could only get that letter!"

She heard the return of Arthur and the physician, and stole on tiptoe to the head of the stairs to listen. Eulalie's room-door stood open this sultry night, and she could hear as plainly as if she were in the apartment. It was quite plain the doctor was as much puzzled as the rest, and failed as entirely to restore the stunned girl to consciousness. If she had really been struck by lightning, the fiery shaft had left no trace; it had benumbed her, as the whistling of a cannon-ball close to her head might have benumbed her. She sat there before them, an awful sight, in the dismal gray of the coming morning, decked in satin and lace and jewels, the white face stony and corpse-like, the black, staring eyes awfully like the eyes of the dead.

"It is a most remarkable case," Doctor Denover said; "a case such as has never come under my observation before. I have known cases where intense fear or sudden shocks have produced some such result. I cannot be certain that it was the lightning. Do you know if the young lady had received a shock of any kind? There are finely-strung, sensitive organizations that sudden shocks of any kind stun into a state like this."

“No,” said Mrs. Sutherland; “I am not aware of any. Miss Rohan spent the evening with us, and retired to her room about two hours before we discovered her, in excellent spirits. I am positive she received no shock.”

“Was she very much afraid of thunder-storms?” inquired Doctor Denover; “intense fear might have this effect.”

“Yes,” answered Augusta, “Eulalie was always terribly frightened by lightning, more frightened than any one I ever knew.”

“It may have been fear, then,” said the doctor; “as I said, I have known such things to occur, and the sufferers have been stunned into a state resembling death. Sometimes they have recovered, sometimes they have not. Sometimes physical animation returns, but the mind remains dead forever. In this case I cannot at present pronounce an opinion. The poor young lady had better be undressed and placed in bed, my dear Mrs. Sutherland, and we will try what a little blood-letting will do for her.”

“I wonder how he is bearing all this?” thought Lucy, at the head of the stairs, with a savage feeling of revengeful delight at her heart; “I wonder whose is the triumph now?”

She passed the remainder of the long night, or rather dawn, between her own chamber and the head

of the stairs, listening to what was going on below. She knew, with a horrible inward joy, that he had failed in every attempt to rouse her, and that he was going away in despair.

"I can do nothing more at present," she heard him say, as he was leaving; "it is an extraordinary case, and has had no parallel in my practice. I will return this afternoon, as you directed, Mrs. Sutherland, with Doctors Reachton and May, and we will have a consultation. Meantime, keep her quiet, and force her to take the nourishment I mentioned. I think, Mr. Sutherland, you would do well to telegraph for her grandfather at once."

"You think, then, doctor," Lucy heard Arthur say, in a voice that did not sound like the voice of Arthur, "that there is no hope?"

"By no means, my dear sir, by no means; while there is life there is hope."

"Which is equivalent to saying that her doom is sealed," thought the listener at the head of the stairs.

The doctor took his departure, in the dismal grayness of the rainy morning. A dull and hopeless day rose slowly out of the black and stormy night; a gloomy day at the best, depressing and wretched, even to the happy; doubly depressing and wretched in the silent house. Drifts of sullen clouds darkened the leaden sky; the rain fell with miserable persistence;

the wind howled in long, lamentable blasts through the wet trees; and the dull, ceaseless roar of the surf on the shore boomed over all. Inside the house, the silence of death reigned now; the noises of the night were replaced by ominous calm. If that pretty room below had contained a corpse, the old mansion could not have been hushed in more profound stillness.

A deep-voiced clock, somewhere in the silent house, struck nine, and the strokes sounded like the tolling of a death-bell. Luey, in a carefully arranged toilet, with neatly-braided hair, and spotless cuffs and collar, descended calmly to breakfast. The door of Miss Rohan's room stood ajar, and she caught a glimpse of her aunt, sitting by the bedside. She saw Arthur in his own room, too, as she passed the half-open door, pacing restlessly up and down, looking worn and haggard in the dismal daylight.

Augusta followed her into the breakfast-parlor, and they took their solitary meal together. When it was over—and a most silent and comfortless repast it was—Augusta went up to Eulalie's room; and Luey, with her everlasting work-basket and embroidery, took her seat near the window and calmly waited for events to take their course.

It rained all day, ceaselessly, wretchedly. The melancholy wind tore through the trees, and beat the rain against the glass, and deepened the white rage of

the surf on the shore. But through it all, the telegram recalling Mr. Rohan to Maplewood went shivering along the wires to New York; and through it all the three doctors of St. Mary's drove up to the house in the afternoon. There was an examination of the patient. They found the death-like trance as death-like as ever; and had a prolonged consultation afterward in the library. Lucy did not hear the result, but it was evident enough the case baffled the three. They staid for dinner, and talked learnedly of the eccentricities of the electric fluid; of people struck blind, or dumb, or deaf, or dead, by lightning. But all the precedents they cited seemed to throw no light on the present case, and they went away in the gloomy twilight, leaving matters much as they were.

Three days passed and still no change. She lay in her little white bed, as a corpse might lie on its bier, cold and white as snow. The soul looking out of that white face might have fled forever, for all signs of life in the vacant black eyes. She lay without speaking or moving, or seeming to recognize any of them. At intervals they parted the locked teeth with a knife, and forced her to swallow tea-spoonfuls of port wine and essence of beef. They gave her powerful opiates, and drew the curtains, and darkened the room; and perhaps in these intervals she slept; but whenever they drew near the bed, they found the great dark eyes wide

open and looking blankly at the white wall. They never left her, night or day; and Lucy, quietly observant of all, wondered if Arthur ever meant to eat or sleep again. Those three days had made him pale, haggard, and hollow-eyed, and revealed his secret to every one in the house.

On the fourth day there was a change. Some sign of recognizing Arthur had been given when he stooped over her, and she had articulated a word—"grandfather." But she had fallen off again, and they had failed to arouse her, as she lay vacantly looking at the blank wall.

"It is very strange, Arthur," Mrs. Sutherland said, as she stood with her son for a moment on the piazza, before descending to dinner—"it is very strange Mr. Rohan does not return."

"He may have left New York," said Arthur, "before the telegram reached there. He will be with us, no doubt, in a day or two."

Even as he spoke, carriage-wheels rolled rapidly up along the drive; and, an instant after, a conveyance from the railway emerged from the shadow of the trees, and they saw the Cuban millionaire sitting behind the driver.

Mrs. Sutherland and Arthur hastened down at once, and met the old man on the portico steps. His face

was ashen white, but there was a strange fire in his eyes, a strange and startling energy in his voice.

"Will she live?" he cried, grasping Mrs. Sutherland's hand, and looking at her with that startling fire in his eyes. "Will she live?"

"My dear Mr. Rohan," Mrs. Sutherland was beginning, sadly; but he cut her short, with a flashing glance and a stamp of passionate impatience.

"Will she live?" he cried out vehemently; "quick! Yes or no?"

"The doctors say no!"

"Thank God!"

Mother and son recoiled at that fearful thanksgiving, as if they had been struck. But he never looked at them as he strode straight on to his granddaughter's room.

CHAPTER VIII.

TAKEN AWAY.



ULALIE did not die. The doctors had said she could not recover, but, in spite of the doctors, she did. From that fourth day, on which she had spoken, vitality returned; and in the brief struggle between life and death, life had gained the victory. But the recovery was wearily slow, and very trying to those who loved her. She knew her grandfather when he bent over her, his tears streaming on her white face, but she knew him as if he had not been absent at all. She seemed to have forgotten that. Very slowly the fair, frail body began to recover, but the mind remained hopelessly benumbed. She knew them all when they spoke to her, but their presence seemed to convey no idea to her clouded brain. She had nothing to say to them; she had nothing to say to any one, except to her grandfather, and her poor, plaintive, childish cry to him ever was, "Take me home, grandpapa—take me home!"

In her sleep she wandered deliriously, and talked

of her Cuban home, her convent-school, her lessons, her tasks, her girl friends, but she never by any chance came back to the present. Maplewood and its memories seemed to have entirely faded out, and she was only the child Eulalie once more, crying out to be taken home.

During the three long weeks in which the poor little feet strayed wearily in the "valley of the shadow of death," Mr. Rohan scarcely left her side, night or day. There was no mistaking the passionate love, the devoted tenderness, the sleepless anxiety, with which he watched over her. There was no mistaking that all-absorbing love for his grandchild—sinful, beyond doubt, in its excess, despite that strange and unnatural "Thank God!" he had uttered so fervently when he heard she must die. It was wonderful inconsistency, surely, but so it was. He scarcely left her long enough to take sufficient food or sleep to support nature; his tears furrowed his aged cheeks as he watched that snowy face, so cold and deathlike, contrasting with the great, hollow black eyes and disbeveled raven hair.

Mrs. Sutherland had followed him to his granddaughter's chamber, on the evening of his arrival, and had been startled considerably by the vehemence with which he asked his first question. She had been narrating to him, by the way, the circumstances attending Eulalie's misfortune.

“Madam!” he said, cutting her abruptly short; “I sent my granddaughter a letter which she should have received on that day. Where is that letter?”

Mrs. Sutherland produced the key of the bureau drawer.

“We found the letter lying on the floor at her feet, as if she had just finished reading it, and I locked it in that drawer.”

Mr. Rohan crossed the room, opened the drawer, took out the letter, and placed it carefully in his pocket-book, before he sat down by his grandchild’s bedside.

He listened to what Mrs. Sutherland had to say, with his eyes fixed on that colorless face, and both wasted little hands clasped in his. He listened without answering—without taking his eyes once off that dear face, his own drawn and quivering with suppressed anguish.

“He is the strangest old man,” Mrs. Sutherland said to her son, afterward; “I sometimes think his mind is going. How extraordinary that he should utter that horrible thanksgiving when I told him Eulalie must die! and yet he loves her to idolatry.”

“Poor old man,” Arthur said, sadly; “how I pity him.”

“That letter, too,” his mother went on, musingly; “Why should he be so anxious about it the first moment he arrives? It is absurd to suppose that he

can have any secret to conceal ; and yet, dear me ! it seems very much like it."

Arthur did not reply ; he scarcely heard her. He only feared that the life and the reason of the woman he loved were in danger, and that dreadful knowledge blotted out everything else. The silent agony of those long days and nights that had intervened since the fiery bolt had struck her down in the zenith of her beauty and youth, had left traces in his pale, worn face that no one could mistake. Perhaps even that devoted grandfather, watching over his one ewe-lamb, suffered less than the young lover, who had yielded his whole heart to the spell of the dark-eyed enchantress, hovering now between life and death. He had spoken to that grandfather, or rather, his heart had broken out in spite of him, in his despair, and he had told the story of his love and his acceptance, and his anguish, with a passionate abandonment of sorrow that could not fail to touch any heart that loved her.

It was a silent, sultry summer evening, a week after the old man's return. The two went walking up and down the chestnut-grove, with the black shadows of the trees making flickering arabesques on the sward at his feet, and the yellow summer-moon flaming up in the low sky. He could not tell how the silent and self-contained old millionaire might take his revelations—just at that moment he did not care ; but he was cer-

tainly unprepared for having his hand grasped, as a father might have grasped it.

“My poor boy!”—the old man said, in a broken voice;—“my poor boy, I have foreseen this! I would have saved you—I would have saved her; but I could not! I could not! There is a fate, I suppose, in these things! May Heaven help you to bear your trial!”

“Then you would not have withheld your consent?” Arthur said. “I feared you would think me presumptuous in asking for her hand. I feared you might have higher views!”

“No, no, no!” cried the old man, vehemently. “God knows how gladly I would give my darling to you, Arthur Sutherland, for I believe you to be a good and honorable man; but there is an obstacle—an obstacle that can never be surmounted—between you.”

“An obstacle!” Arthur repeated, in astonishment. “What is it?”

“I cannot tell you,” said Mr. Rohan, turning his face away. “It is my secret and hers, poor child! and I fear it is the knowledge of that secret, and no lightning-flash, that has struck her down. I cannot tell you what it is, Mr. Sutherland. I can only say I fear it will keep you apart forever. If my poor darling lives, it will keep her Eulalie Rohan all her life.”

“This is very strange,” said Arthur, slowly; “I

have no claim to a knowledge of your secret, Mr. Rohan; but so far as it involves her who has promised to be my wife, I surely have some right to know why it is to keep us apart, and to judge for myself whether it is sufficient. It must be a very powerful reason, indeed"—with a tremor of the voice—"that will hold me for life from the woman I love."

"This is a powerful reason," said Mr. Rohan; "but not even so far as you ask have I a right to reveal this secret of my life. I have not the right; for it menaces Eulalie, not me."

"Menaces Eulalie! It is some danger, then?"

"It is some danger."

"Perhaps it is the loss of wealth you fear," cried Arthur, brightening; "if so—"

"No, no, no!" interposed the old man, hastily; "would to Heaven the loss of every farthing I possess could free my poor child from her danger! Most gladly, most thankfully would I become a beggar to-morrow!"

Arthur Sutherland's brow contracted. Was there really some dark and hideous secret involving his plighted wife, or was all this strange talk but the luxury of a monomaniac. There was a long and painful pause, broken at last by the younger man.

"You do not treat me well, Mr. Rohan," he said, the light of the yellow moon showing how pale his face

was. "You do not treat me generously. Have you no trust in me? Can you not rely upon my love for your granddaughter, to keep your secret and hers, and judge for myself whether it is sufficient to sever us forever. Is the whole happiness of my life to be lost, for a darkly mysterious hint that I cannot comprehend? Oh, Mr. Rohan! remember that I love her, that she loves me; and pity us both!"

They were standing on the terrace as he spoke, on the very spot where he had stood with Eulalie that fatal evening. The old man laid his hand kindly on his arm.

"My dear boy," he said, "I have no wish to distress you. I am the last in the world who would make a mystery or raise an obstacle were it in my power to avoid it. It would be the proudest and happiest day of my life, the day on which I could see my child your wife, if this reason did not exist to render that happiness impossible."

"Why impossible?" cried Arthur, vehemently; "why, if we love and trust each other? She has committed no crime, Mr. Rohan, that needs concealment."

"She? My innocent darling! who knows no more of the wickedness and misery of this big world than an infant! Oh, no!"

"Then," cried Arthur, still more vehemently, "she

shall not suffer for the crimes of others! Whatever your secret is, Mr. Rohan, keep it! I don't ask to know it. She is innocent of all evil; and, in spite of ten thousand secrets I claim her as my promised wife!"

Mr. Rohan caught none of his enthusiasm. His face only clouded the more.

"Poor boy!" he said, "it is hard to dash such high hopes. I shall not dash them—you shall take your answer from Eulalie, if she ever recovers sufficiently to give you an answer. When she promised to be your wife, subject to my consent, Mr. Sutherland, she was as ignorant as you are now of this hidden spring in her life. She learned it that night; and it was that knowledge, and not the lightning, that struck her down. If she ever recovers, she shall decide your fate herself, unbiassed by me, and you shall hear it from her own lips. If she thinks, in spite of everything, she can still be your wife, your wife she shall be, with my heartfelt blessing and prayers for you both."

Arthur grasped the old man's hand, and poured out such a flood of grateful acknowledgments as he never had listened to before. He looked at the flushed, handsome face, with a sad smile.

"Ah! it is very little, after all, that I am promising you; but Eulalie shall decide for herself. The poor child wants to go home. Let us take her home, Mr. Sutherland. Among the old scenes and the old,

faithful faces, she may recover. Do not come to us. Do not write to her. Give us time—say half a year; and then, when only the memory of this sorrowful time remains, come to our Cuban home, and say to Eulalie what you have said to me. She shall do as she pleases—go with you as your bride, or remain with me, without my speaking one word to influence her. Will you do this, Mr. Sutherland?"

Poor Arthur! Six months seemed a drearily long time. But what could he say, save yes?

"Will you write to me?" he said. "Will you not let me know how she is?"

"Most certainly! And she shall write to you herself, if she wishes it. As soon as she is strong enough to bear the journey, we shall start. The home air will restore her faster than anything else."

So it was arranged. The matter ended with these words, and no more was said on the subject.

The invalid still reiterated her mournful cry:

"Take me home, grandpapa! Take me home!"

And the old man's answer ever was:

"Yes, dear, we'll go home very soon now."

But, in spite of the anxiety of both, it was nearly a month before the frail invalid could start on that homeward journey. Before the expiration of a fortnight, she was able to rise and lie all day on the sofa, dozing the still, sultry hours away, or looking vacantly, with

large, haggard eyes, at the purple, sunlit sky. In another week she could go down stairs, clinging to her grandfather's arm—a poor, pale shadow—and, wrapped in a large shawl, walk out feebly in the lovely green arcades of Maplewood. Very slowly strength of body was returning to that delicate little frame; but strength of mind came slower still. Nothing could arouse her from that slow torpor—that dull apathy to everything and everybody. Whether it was Mrs. Sutherland, or Augusta, or Lucy, or Arthur, it seemed much the same to her. She was restless, and silent, and uneasy with them all. Only with her grandfather was she at rest and content.

At last came the day of departure. A very sad day in the Sutherland mansion, with none of the gay bustle, and pleasant confusion, and hurry, that usually attends departures. The trunks were packed and strapped in silence and gloom; the last meal was eaten together in a dismal and comfortless way; and Arthur lifted Eulalie into the carriage with a face nearly as pale as her own, and a heart that lay like lead in his bosom. His mother and sister drove with them in the roomy carriage to the depot, and he rode beside them at a funeral pace.

Little more than a month ago, he had ridden beside them, as he was doing now, to see Mr. Rohan off on his journey; and how his whole life seemed to have

changed since then! How bright the world had looked that day, taking its color from his own goodness of heart! What a desolate, blank waste it seemed now—all things darkened by his own gloom! He could see the frail little creature, who lay back among the silken cushions, languid, and wasted, and wan; and he remembered how bright, and beautiful, and radiant she had been that day! Only one month ago! It seemed to him that he had lived centuries since then.

The last good-bye was said, the train went shrieking on its western way, and the Sutherlands returned home. How still, how ghostly silent that home seemed? If a corpse had been carried out of the house and buried, the oppressive quietude and loneliness could not have been greater. They all felt it. There was so much to remind them of her—her empty and desolate-looking room, the music she loved scattered loose on the piano, the books she used to read, her vacant seat at the table, her empty sofa under the amber curtains of the bay-window—all telling of some one lost, and lost, perhaps, forever.

Mrs. Sutherland, standing by the drawing-room-window, in the gray twilight of that same evening, was revolving a plan in her mind for changing all this. It was a dull, sunless, airless, oppressive evening, with a low-lying gray sky, from which all rosy and golden clouds had gone; and the tall trees looked black against

the leaden background. There was a rustic bench, under a clump of bushes, visible from the window, and she could see her son lying, with his face on his arm, upon it, in a forlorn and hopeless sort of way. Augusta was gaping dismally in the ghostly twilight over a book; and Lucy, at the piano, was playing some mournful air in a wailing minor key, that was desolation itself.

“This won’t do!” thought Mrs. Sutherland, decisively. “We must have a change. That poor girl’s memory is like a nightmare in this house, making us all melancholy and wretched. There is that boy gone to a shadow, and as pale, and haggard, and miserable as if he had lost every friend he had in the world. Augusta, too, whose spirits used to be boisterous enough for anything, is moping herself to death; and I believe I am catching the infection, for I am nervous and low-spirited, and out of sorts. I shall leave Maplewood before the week ends, and take them both with me.”

Mrs. Sutherland was as good as her word, and went to work with energy. The bustle and hurry of preparation turned the quiet house topsy-turvy, and forced the most torpid of them into action.

“I am going to Saratoga, Arthur,” Mrs. Sutherland said, with calm determination. “Augusta wants change; and you are to accompany and remain with

us. The gay life there, the fresh scenes and fresh faces will do us all good. I shall probably remain until late in September, and pass a month or two in New York before returning here."

Arthur listened listlessly. He was not to see Eulalie Rohan for six months; and it mattered very little to him where these six weary months were passed. So he resigned himself, "passive to all changes," and saw to the huge pile of trunks and bandboxes, and attended them faithfully to their destination.

And Lucy Sutherland, the housekeeper, and the servants, had the old house at Maplewood all to themselves. Lucy might have gone to Portland, and spent those months with her mother; but she liked the grand house, and sunlit lawn, and green arcades, and spreading gardens, and sea-side terraces of Maplewood, far better than the dingy hired house looking out on Casco Bay. She had her books (and Lucy was fond of reading), her cousin's piano, and her eternal embroidery; and she liked being alone, and bore the departure of her aunt and cousins with constitutional calm. Mrs. Sutherland had informed them they were all three to be absent until the close of November. Great, therefore, was Lucy's surprise when, before the first fortnight had worn away, one of the two returned. She was sitting at the piano, playing softly in the hot twilight, when a tall form strode into the room,

and stood between her and the red sunset. She rose up, with a face that told no tales of the rapid heart-beating beneath, and looked at her cousin Arthur.

"I could not stay there, Lucy," he said; "I was sick of it all in ten days! What did I care for those crowds of strange men and women, and the dressing, and dancing, and drinking, and the rest of the foolery! I shall do far better here, in this quiet place, and with you, my quiet, fireside fairy!"

"And your mother?" Lucy asked.

"My mother adheres to the original programme. She and Augusta like the gay Saratoga life, and dress and drink water with the best. I am afraid they did not like my desertion; but they knew no end of people there, and were not likely to need me; and so I got desperate, and—here I am."

The two cousins sat in the twilight a long time talking, that still summer evening. Both of them thought of Eulalie, but neither spoke of her; and Lucy's hopes were high once more. She sat at her window until the midnight moon sailed up to the zenith, with a flush in her cheek, and a fire in her blue eyes, and a hopefulness at her heart all unusual there. The black-eyed siren, whose dusky beauty had bewitched him, was far away. All the long summer she would have him to herself, thrown entirely upon her

society in this quiet country-house! Surely, surely, her time had come!

Lucy Sutherland came out in quite a new character after that night. She who had always been as silent and as taciturn as an Indian became all at once conversable and entertaining. She played for him—not very brilliantly, perhaps. She walked out with him; and asked him to read aloud to her while she worked. The old housekeeper looked on approvingly; they were cousins, and it was all right; and Arthur talked to her, and read to her, and thought of her precisely as he would have talked, and read, and thought of Augusta. And he would have been almost as much amazed if any one had told him his sister Augusta was in love with him as his cousin Lucy.

There was but one woman in all the world to him, whose memory was a thousand times dearer than all the cousins in existence. How he passed all those long, long, purposeless days, and weeks, and months, thinking of her, dreaming of her, and praying for her, he alone knew. How his mind ever went back to that one absorbing subject, let him talk of what he pleased to Lucy; how her face came between him and the page from which he read aloud; how he would shut his eyes and lean back in his chair when Lucy played, and see the fairy figure once more, in Lucy's place, and hear the sweet old Mozart melodies she loved to play.

Poor Lucy! If you had only known how all those pretty, tasteful toilets were thrown away, how vain were all your efforts to please, you might have saved yourself a great deal of useless trouble during the weeks of that, for you, far too pleasant summer.

The close of the first month brought a letter bearing the Havana postmark. What an event that was, and how eagerly it was torn open and devoured! It was very short, and very cold, the feverish lover thought. Eulalie was greatly improved since their return; and he (Mr. Rohan) had strong hopes of her speedy and perfect restoration to health. That was all; but Arthur thanked God for the news it brought, and felt he could wait more hopefully now. He wrote often, and very long letters; but Mr. Rohan's replies were few and far between, and said very little.

July, August, and September passed. Mrs. Sutherland quitted the springs, and established herself for a couple of months in New York. It was bleak December, and the ground was white with snow; and the green arcades and long sunny gardens were drear and forsaken. Then maples, and hemlocks, and beeches, and chestnuts were gaunt and stripped, and the wintry blasts howled dismally around the old house, before the lady and her daughter returned to spend Christmas at home.

But while the world lay wrapped in its winding-

sheet of snow, and the old year was dying, with melancholy north winds shrieking its requiem, and the roses had faded from Lucy Sutherland's cheeks that the summer had brought there, Arthur was in an elysium of happiness. Christmas-eve had brought him joy, in the shape of a letter from Cuba. It was of the briefest, as usual; but it contained these words, and they had transformed the scheme of the universe:

“MY DEAR BOY:—The time of probation is past, and you have nobly kept your word. Eulalie is perfectly restored once more—a little quieter and more womanly than of old, but her restoration to health complete. You may come to us if you will. Eden Lawn is delightful this December weather; and we will both rejoice to see you.”

CHAPTER IX.

"COME WHAT WILL, I HAVE BEEN BLESSED."



THE long windows of the flat-roofed, foreign-looking mansion shone like sheets of red gold in the evening sunlight. The low, scented, tropical wind stirred the lime-trees and orange-trees, and swung the creamy magnolias and clustering acacias. It was a January evening. The snow was piled high and the freezing blasts howled somewhere; but not here, in this isle of the tropics. The red lances of the sunset kissed the sleeping flowers good-night as it dropped behind the rosy horizon, so resplendently brilliant that it seemed as if some of the glory of heaven shone through.

The girl who lay languidly on a lounge, with a book in her hand, looked out with dark, dreamy eyes on the fading radiance, her thoughts far away. The white-muslin wrapper she carelessly wore hung loose around her wasted figure, and was hardly less colorless than the face above it. That dark, pallid, Creole face

was unspeakably lovely still, though its brightness had fled; the profuse raven curls as beautiful and silky as ever, and falling dank and divided over her shoulders, like an ebon veil. The book she held in her hand was half closed. She was not reading, but thinking very sadly—thinking of a pleasant Northern household around which the snowdrifts were flying this January evening, and the desolate wind howling up from the angry sea. She could see the long drawing-room where the coal fire blazed in the polished grates, the lighted lamps, and the drawn curtains. She saw a stately elderly lady, with a face pale and proud, lying back in an arm-chair luxuriously, "in after-dinner mood," with half-closed eyes. She saw a plump, fair-haired, rose-checked damsel sitting at the piano, dressed in violent pink, playing noisy polkas or stormy mazurkas. She saw another young lady, robed in nun-like black, with a suppressed look in her pale face, and a clear, cold, fathomless light in her blue eyes. She saw these three women as she had often seen them; and she saw, with an aching sense of loss and desolation at her heart, a fourth form—a man's form—sitting reading by the light of a shaded lamp, as she had been wont to see him sit and read in the happy days gone by. Did they miss her at all? Did he miss her? In that New England mansion, on the stormy sea-coast, was even the memory

of the Creole girl, who had once been one of them, forgotten?

While she was thinking all this, the fading sunlight was darkened, and a stranger stood before the window. He had to pass it to reach the door; but the low cry the girl gave at sight of him reached his ear and stopped him. She had started up in a violent tremor and faintness, and he had caught sight of her. A moment more, and he was through the low, open casement, holding her in his arms.

"My darling!" he cried, "have I found you again?"

She was so agitated and so excited by the unexpected sight of him that she could not speak. She trembled so as he held her that he grew alarmed.

"My love!" he said, tenderly, "how you tremble! I have frightened you, I fear, coming so suddenly. Sit down here, my dearest, and try and be calm."

He seated her gently on the lounge. Her face, pale before, blanched now with the excitement of the moment, even to the lips. He was pale himself with suppressed agitation, but he was calm outwardly, for her sake.

"Will you not speak to me, Eulalie?" he said, holding both her hands in his. "You have not said one word of welcome yet."

She laid her face—her poor, pale face, down on the

dear hands that clasped hers, and he could feel them grow wet with her tears.

"Oh, Eulalie!" he said, in a distressed voice, "are you sorry I have come?"

"No! no!" said Eulalie, in broken tones, "no! Forgive me, Arthur. I am not strong—I am not what I used to be. I am very glad to see you, and I am very foolish to cry, but I cannot help it. Excuse my weakness. I will be better in a moment."

Presently she looked up, with a faint smile breaking through her tears.

"I am sorry to distress you by crying so," she said; "but I have been weak and nervous ever since I was ill, and those tears flow too easily. Thank you for not trying to stop me!"

"You are not well yet," Arthur said, with an anxious glance at the thin, pale face. "Your grandfather told me you were."

"And I am. I am quite well again, only not so strong as I used to be. When did you come?"

"I reached Havana last evening, and have lost as little time as possible in arriving here."

"How are all at Maplewood—your mother, and sister, and Lucy?"

"They are all well, and all miss you very much."

There was a blank pause. How difficult it is, in that first meeting, after an absence of months from

those who are dear to us, to say what we want to say most. The wretched feeling of restraint we cannot overcome—so much to say, that we grow confused and say nothing at all, or only ask trivial questions. It was so with Arthur and Eulalie now. With the questions that were to decide the whole future lives of both pending, they sat and talked the commonest commonplace, and with long embarrassing gaps between.

“Where is your grandfather?” Arthur asked.

“Here!” said a familiar voice, before she could reply. “Welcome, my dear boy, to Eden Lawn!”

He had entered quietly, unobserved, and came round from behind Eulalie’s lounge, with outstretched hand and friendly smile. There was a heartiness in his voice, a hospitable warmth in his manner, that was a new revelation. The cold, watchful, silent, gloomy old man, who had been the nightmare of their lives at Maplewood, was an entirely different person from this courteous and gentlemanly host, welcoming his guest.

“I heard your voice as I descended the stairs,” he said. “And how are all at home?”

Arthur answered; and the three sat long in the rosy twilight, talking. Mr. Rohan was genial, and the most fluent talker of the three. The change in him for the better was really marvelous. It was as if some unendurable weight had been lifted off from his mind, and that, relieved of that oppression, his nature re-

sumed its natural bent again. But the spirits he had gained, his granddaughter seemed to have lost.

Arthur Sutherland looked at her with a sense of indescribable pain at his heart. Let her change as she might, he could never love her less. He had given her his whole heart, and that faithful heart grieved now, to see how altered she had grown. He could remember her, a bright little tropical flower—as radiant a little beauty as ever danced in the sunlight; and he saw her a woman, with haggard cheeks and great melancholy, dark eyes. No common illness could have wrought a change like this. Was it, then, that dark, that impenetrable secret, that was to stand between them all their lives? Had the old man cast off its burden when he told it? and was its shadow, that had darkened his life so long, darkening hers now?

Arthur Sutherland asked himself those questions in the solitude of his own room that night. He loved her so well and so truly—he trusted in her truth and her innocence so implicitly, that, despite this dark barrier of a secret he was never to know, he could take her to his heart to-morrow, and thank God for the gift. His pride and his sense of honor were as of old; but he loved this dark-eyed enchantress, and he felt that his life without her would be a dead and dismal blank—useless to himself or his fellow-beings. He had tried, in the days gone by to look his worst fate in the

face—a life apart from hers—but he never could, he never could! She seemed to have become part of his very nature; and he felt—it was very wrong, no doubt—that a life separated from Eulalie was a life not worth having.

With all this, Arthur found it was not so very easy to regain his old place—to bridge over the chasm of six months, and stand on his former footing. He found it hard to speak of the subject that had brought him to Cuba; but he was so happy, only to be with Eulalie once more, that waiting was not so very trying. A week passed away before he ventured to speak; a blissful week, that brought back the old delicious time when he had read and walked with his dark-eyed divinity in the summer twilights and sunsets, and listened to her playing all the long, sultry afternoons. She was changed since then. She was grown so very quiet; and the beautiful eyes were so mournful in their subdued light; but no change could make her less lovely to him. Mr. Rohan was invariably kind; he seemed trying to atone for his past coldness and reserve by his genial warmth and cordiality now; and it was to him the young man first found courage to speak.

They were walking up and down the lime-walk, in the coolness of the early morning, when Arthur broached the subject.

"You know, Mr. Rohan," he said, with an agitation in his voice no effort could quite overcome; "you know the object that has brought me here. I have not said one word to Eulalie yet. Have I your permission to speak to her?"

Mr. Rohan looked kindly at the agitated face of the speaker.

"Most certainly," he said. "Most certainly, my dear boy. I told you, when you spoke to me last, that my granddaughter should never be influenced one way or other by me in this matter. I told you this, and I have kept my word."

Arthur grasped the old man's hand in his fervent gratitude.

"Then I have your permission to speak to her at once, to end this suspense?"

"Yes," said Mr. Rohan; "whatever Eulalie says, I agree to beforehand. You have acted nobly and self-denyingly, my dear boy, and you are worthy of her. Tell her what I have said; that she is free to act as she pleases. Heaven knows, the only desire for which I live is to promote her happiness!"

Arthur waited for no more. He knew where Eulalie was to be found, and he sought her out with a radiant face. She was reclining, as usual, on a lounge in the breakfast-room, in a loose, white wrapper, reading from a volume of poems he himself had given her.

She dropped it suddenly, for Arthur was beside her, pouring out, with new-found eloquence, the words he had come to say.

"I have waited so long, Eulalie," he cried; "I have remained away from your dear presence for six long months, at your grandfather's desire, and surely now I have some claim to speak. When will you keep your promise, Eulalie—when will you be my wife?"

She dropped her book, and sat up, and looked at him with a frightened face.

"Oh, Arthur!" she exclaimed, "you must never ask me that question again! I can never be your wife!"

Arthur Sutherland stood staring at her, utterly confounded.

"Oh, forgive me!" she said; "forgive me, Arthur! It is breaking my heart, but I cannot help it! When I made that promise, I did not know what I know now. I can never be your wife, Arthur—never, never!"

"Never!" repeated Arthur, white to the very lips. "Have I thus been the dupe of a coquette from first to last? Was I only mocked when you told me at Maplewood that you loved me?"

"No, no, no!" Eulalie cried out, vehemently. "I spoke the truth. It is because I love you that I cannot be your wife!"

That darkly-mysterious secret again! He knew she referred to that. Was it to be a stumbling-block in his way to the very end.

"I cannot understand this, Eulalie. What is to prevent your keeping your promise—what is to prevent your being my wife?"

She turned away from him, and hid her face in her hands.

"Because—because there is a secret I can never tell you—a secret of shame, and horror, and humiliation. I cannot tell you what it is; and you yourself must see that it is impossible for me ever to become your wife."

"What if I do not see it?"

"Arthur!"

She dropped her hands, and sat looking at him, in wonder.

"I do not know what your secret is. I do not ask to know it," he said, resolutely. "I only know that I love you, and that you have never committed any crime to be afraid or ashamed of. The crime and shame of others, however near to you they may be, shall not wreck the happiness of our whole future lives. I hold you to your promise, Eulalie. I ask you again, when will you be my wife?"

Her breath came quick and short; too amazed, too happy to speak.

"Arthur! Arthur! you are speaking hastily and impulsively now. You may repent your rashness hereafter."

"I shall never repent. I am not speaking hastily or impulsively. I am saying what I said six months ago. I am saying what I should say six years from now, if you kept me waiting so long. Eulalie, I ask you once more, when will you be my wife?"

"And you can trust me still, in spite of this secret I can never tell?"

"I could trust you, my dearest, in spite of ten thousand secrets. I should never ask any woman to marry me whose truth and honor I could insult by a doubt."

"And in the future," Eulalie said, pale and breathless, "if any evil should come, you will not forget that I have warned you, and that you take me in spite of everything."

"I shall never forget. No evil the future can have in store for me can be half so terrible as losing you. I shall be able to meet the worst evil undauntedly, so that I have you by my side."

Her dark eyes filled with tears as she laid both her hands in his.

"You are very, very good," she said. "It shall be the study of my life to be worthy of such confidence as this. Does grandpapa know of this?"

"I spoke to him before I came to you. Whatever you say, he has promised to indorse. Dear little hand," he said, lifting it to his lips with a radiant face; "mine for life now!"

CHAPTER X.

THE LULL BEFORE THE STORM.



AR away from the orange and citron groves of sunny Cuba, with its mellow sunshine and fragrant breezes, the snowdrifts were flying and the wind howling dismally this January month. At Maplewood, the tall trees rattled their skeleton arms, and the snow was piled high in the long meadows and spreading gardens. Fence and lawn were deserted, the double windows made fast, heavy curtains shut out the bleak daylight, and sparkling fires blazed in the polished grates. But life was very pleasant in-doors at Maplewood, this stormy New-Year season ; for Mrs. Sutherland had friends from the city spending the holidays under her hospitable roof ; and laughter and merry voices rang from early morning until late at night through the lately silent rooms. Half a dozen gay girls, with portly mammas and tall, mustached brothers, filled the empty chambers ; and it was nothing but party-going and party-giving, and general jollification these merry New-Year times.

There was one young lady at Maplewood who took very little share in these gay doings. If an extra partner was wanting to fill a quadrille or cotillon, or a second needed in a duet, or a supernumerary in a charade or tablean, her services were called into requisition; and she always did what she was asked to do with the readiness of an automaton or living machine. But she never joined them for all that. She mixed among them, and yet was as far aloof as though she dwelt in a desert. She was not of their kind, and they disliked her instinctively for it, as cordially as she detested them in the depths of her heart. But her face—the rigidly pale face of Lucy Sutherland—was too well trained to show any of this detestation. The paid companion knew her place a great deal too well for any such atrocity. She flitted in and out among them—a pale, silent, inscrutable shadow, puzzling to some, convenient to others, and liked by none.

With the low, leaden winter twilight of a bleak January day darkening around her, Lucy Sutherland stood at the library window looking at the snow beginning to fall. A high gale surged through the maples and hemlocks with a roar that nearly drowned the roar of the surf on the sands. There was a sobbing cadence in the wind this wild winter evening, and the snow fluttered through the leaden air, faster and faster, as the darkness came on. A black sky frowned over all,

and the scene was the very dreariness of desolation; but it suited the mood of the girl who watched it, far better than the hilarious gayety within. She could hear them in the drawing-room—some one at the piano singing "Thou hast Learned to Love Another"—sweet girlish voices blending musically with men's deep tones, and their laughter coming softly in with the music. But what had she, the paid dependent, to do with music and laughter, and rich and happy people? She was not missed or wanted, and so she stood brooding darkly over her own morbid thoughts, while the snow beat against the window glass, and the stormy night shut down in blackness.

A servant came in and lit the gas. As she went out there was a rustle of silk, a waft of perfume, and Mrs. Sutherland swept in, an open letter in her hand, and her face radiant.

"Augusta! are you here?" she cried. "Oh, it is only you, Lucy. Have you seen Augusta?"

"I think I saw her going into the conservatory with Mr. Halcombe, half an hour ago. Shall I go in search of her?"

"Yes, go. I must tell her the good news. I have just had a letter from Cuba, Lucy, and Arthur is married!"

Some one says of Talleyrand, that if he were kicked from behind, his face would not show it.

Diplomacy, perhaps, gave the great statesman that wonderful command of countenance, but it comes by nature to women. Lucy Sutherland heard the news as Mary Stuart heard her death-bell toll, without flinching. She might have caught one gasping breath, with the agony of the first sharp, sudden pang; but even that, her face did not betray. Its pallor was habitual now, and the gaslight befriended her. Even her voice was quite steady when she spoke.

“Permit me to offer my congratulations. He is married to Miss Rohan?”

“Yes, to Miss Rohan; and his letter is one outburst of ecstacy. As it was written the day after the wedding, that was to be expected; and Eulalie is an angel; and he is in paradise. He writes to say good-bye, for the happy pair start for the continent without coming near us. Go find Augusta, Lucy; I must tell her at once.”

It was something quite foreign to the usual order of things for Mrs. Sutherland to converse in this friendly manner with her niece-in-law, but she was so uplifted on the present occasion as to forget, for the time being, how much she disliked her.

“Tell Augusta to come at once,” Mrs. Sutherland called after Lucy; “I must put a stop to her flirting with that popinjay Halcombe. Don’t tell her what I want her for, either.”

Lucy found Miss Augusta and Mr. Halcombe deep in a desperate flirtation among the rose-bushes and geraniums, and delivered her mamma's message. The dinner-bell rang at the same moment, and Lucy went in after the rest with no shadow on her stony face of what her heart was feeling. She listened, still with that shadowless calm, when Mrs. Sutherland came back with Augusta, and made public the tidings of her son's marriage to the Creole heiress, whose fabulous wealth and beauty was an old story to all. She ate and drank, while a little tumult of congratulation went on around her, and all the time her heart seemed to lie dead in her breast. How desperately, how passionately, how insanely she had learned to love Arthur Sutherland she had never dreamed, until this night, when the last flickering hope died out, and she knew she had lost him forever. With that face of stone, she sat eating and drinking mechanically, the voices around her blended in one confused discord, and a dull sense of horrible despair filling her breast.

"Their tour is to be a prolonged one"—the voice of Mrs. Sutherland made itself distinct, saying—"Eulalie has never been abroad, and they purpose remaining two years. I doubt it, though—that devoted grandfather and granddaughter cannot remain apart half the time."

Of course there was nothing else talked of all

through dinner but the wedding, and the great riches and greater beauty of the Creole bride. Arthur Sutherland was the most fortunate of men, all agreed; and the ladies wondered what the bride wore, and how many bridesmaids she had; and whether she was married in a bonnet, or bridal-veil and wreath; and if it was at church or at home.

“In church, I dare say,” Augusta said; “these Catholics like to be married in church, I believe; and Eulalie was always very devout.”

Lucey Sutherland, wearing that ineffably calm face of hers, made herself very useful that evening, as usual. She walked through two or three sets of quadrilles—she played waltzes and polkas for the rest—and went up to her room past midnight, and was alone with her despair for the first time. She had loved him, she did love him—and she had lost him forever! Thousands of other poor hearts have wailed out daily, and do wail out, that same pitiful cry; but that, I am afraid, makes it none the easier to bear. She had been a block of stone down-stairs, but here, locked in her own room, with no witness save Heaven, she could be a woman, and do battle with her womanly agony, and go down among them when to-morrow came, a statue once more.

The holidays passed very pleasantly at Maplewood. The merry ringing of sleigh-bells, or the joyous

laughter of skaters, made music in the January sunshine all day long, and dancing, and dressing, and feasting, and flirting, stole away the "rosy hours" of the wintry night. It was all very delightful indeed, and everybody said Maplewood was the dearest old place in the world, and hated to tear themselves away when the month of February came round. With her guests departed Mrs. Sutherland and Miss Augusta, for the gay life of the city.

"It will be so horribly lonely, you know," Mrs. Sutherland said; "after the pleasant time we have had, for me and Augusta to mope ourselves here until next summer. Besides, it would be unfair to her, to bury her in her very first season in an old country house. I shall leave Lucy Sutherland in charge and go to New York."

So, early in February, to New York they went, and Lucy was once more alone. Perhaps not one of the gay, fashionable, frivolous people who bade her adieu, thought whether or not she, a young girl like them selves, might not find it lonely, immured in this big, empty house all alone, like Marianna in the moated grange. She was scarcely a human being to them; only a pale, silent, noiseless shadow, coming and going, and forgotten as soon as out of sight.

How that long winter did drag itself out, she alone ever knew. About once a month came a letter from

Augusta, bringing spasmodic scraps of news from the great outer world. She and mamma were having, oh, such a splendid time; and there was another letter from Arthur and Eulalie, and they were in France, or Germany, or Switzerland, or somewhere else, and too happy for words to tell.

Mrs. Sutherland found the city so pleasant that the genial spring months found her lingering still. May came, and June, and July; and the mistress of Maplewood and her daughter were at New York, and Augusta was having a more splendid time than ever. Once again the maples, and hemlocks, and pines, and tamaracks, were out in their green summer dress, and the shadows flickered and fell on the velvety terrace overlooking the sea, where Arthur Sutherland had wooed his bride. Once again, the songs of countless birds made the amber summer air vibrate with wordless melody; and the August and September roses lifted their flushed heads in the golden heat.

The long summer wore itself out as the winter had done; and still Lucy was the pale recluse of Maplewood, seldom, save on Sunday morning, passing beyond the great entrance-gates. But when, in the glorious autumn the maples and hemlocks burst out in an oriflamme of crimson and yellow, and the apple and pear and plum trees in the orchard were laden to the ground with their luscious load, Mrs. Sutherland came

home, with her daughter and another flock of city-friends, to spend autumn and Christmas and New Year's in her New England homestead.

"Goodness gracious me, Lucy Sutherland!" Augusta cried; "what have you been and done to yourself all these ages? You look like somebody that had been dead and buried and come to life again by mistake. Can't you do something for her, Phil, in the pill or powder line, to keep her from looking so awfully corpse-like as that?"

For Philip Sutherland was back again at Maplewood. "Time, that blunts the edge of things, dries our tears and spoils our bliss"—time had brought such balm to him, that he could bear once more to look on the scene of his love and his despair. Fifteen months is a tolerable time to heal a broken heart, particularly when that heart belongs to a man; and Philip Sutherland could eat, drink—ay, and be merry, too, though the woman he loved was the wife of another man. But the great trouble of his life had left its indelible traces, as all great troubles must do; and he had grown ten years older in gravity and staidness, during these fifteen months. He looked at Lucy now with that grave face that was so new to him.

"My solemn Lucy, you do look old enough to be your own grandmother," he said; "no wonder, though, shut up here all alone, like an oyster in its

shell. The only wonder is you have not gone melancholy-mad long ago."

Lucy looked at him with a contemptuous smile. "He talks of what he knows nothing about," she thought; "I shall be lonely now that all these men and women are here. I was not before they came."

So the weeks went on, with Lucy counting them in their flight. Christmas and the New Year came in robed in snow, and departed, and Mrs. Sutherland and her friends departed, too. They had flown back to the city, not to return until June, when Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sutherland were expected home.

But Lucy's solitude was over, for April brought a troop of workmen—carpenters and masons and landscape-gardeners and upholsterers—to refit and refurnish the old mansion for the reception of its master and mistress; and workmen and laborers were in and out, and up and down stairs, and the sound of hammer and plane resounded from morning till night. But out of the chaos of noise and dirt and confusion, order and harmony came at last. Most elegant harmony, too. The house was like a palpable fairy-tale, in its new beauty and splendor, and June roses waved in a sort of modern Garden of Eden. The house had been fitted up superbly, and landscape-gardeners had been working miracles. Mrs. Sutherland and Augusta went into feminine raptures over their old home in its trans-

formation. They had come alone this time. It was hardly likely Arthur and Eulalie, weary of traveling, and longing for the peace and rest of home, would care to find a houseful of fashionable strangers in possession before them. And besides, there was poor dear Eulalie's mourning for her grandfather; for, nearly six months previously, the old millionaire had gone to that world of shadows from which all his golden thousands could not save him one poor second. He had gone—and how the granddaughter, who had loved him so devotedly, had mourned him, they could only conjecture, for her brief letters did not tell. Those countless thousands were all her own now; and the baby that opened its eyes first in this mortal life in Florence the Beautiful, was surely born with a golden spoon in its mouth.

“I do want to see the baby, you know,” was Augusta's cry; “because the idea of Arthur's baby is something too absurd. If I had only been born to fifty or sixty hundred thousand, I dare say my snub nose would not be thrown in my face every day of my life, as it is now.”

It was in the golden haze of a June twilight that the travelers came. Mrs. Sutherland, Augusta, and Lucy stood in the doorway to welcome them, and Lucy's face was whiter than snow. Arthur, sunburnt and bearded and bronzed, and handsomer than ever, kissed

them all round ; and Eulalie, beautiful as a dream, in her deep mourning, wept on the motherly breast of Mrs. Sutherland. A little paler than of old, a little less brilliantly bright, but indescribably more lovely. Wifehood and maternity, too holy and intense in its happiness for words to tell, had wrought their inevitable change in her. But the entrancing beauty was all the more entrancing for the change ; and it needed only one look to tell you that this man and wife were truly united, and as perfectly and entirely happy as it is possible for creatures in this lower world to be.

A Swiss nurse, with a round, high-colored face and a funny cap, got out with a bundle in her arms. The bundle turned out to be the baby ; and Augusta, with a little screech of delight, made a grab at it, and tore off its wrappings, to the unspeakable dismay of baby's little mamma.

"Oh, what a beauty ! Oh, what a perfect love of a baby !" was Aunt Augusta's cry. "Oh, what lovely black eyes and black curly hair. It's the very image of Eulalie, and not a bit like you, Arthur."

"I like it all the better for that," smiled Arthur. "Louisa, don't let her tear your nursling to pieces, if you can help it. It is in imminent danger of being kissed to death."

The Swiss *bonne* came forward, and took the little black-eyed atom from Augusta, and followed the rest

into the house. It had its mamma's wonderful Creole eyes, this tiny, pale-faced, solemn-looking baby, and had not one look of the Sutherlands in its infantine physiognomy. It was Eulalie Rohan over again, as Eulalie Rohan must have looked at five months old—not beautiful now, but with the serene promise of future beauty in its baby face.

Lucy Sutherland, pale, silent and shadowy, hovered in the background, like any other shadow, all that evening, and watched the wife of Arthur Sutherland furtively but incessantly from under her pale eyelashes. The change in the Creole puzzled her. Two years ago, she had been the most childish of spoiled children; now she was a woman. A woman, with deep-dented lines of care and thought in her smooth forehead, with gravely earnest, almost mournful, dark eyes. The gaslight fell dull on her black dress; but neither the outward nor the inward mourning for that beloved parent could have wrought this change; for she was unspeakably happy, you could see, loving that handsome husband of hers with a passionate devotion that it falls to the lot of but few men to be loved. She loved and trusted him with her whole heart and soul, as these impassioned daughters of the South have an unfortunate way of doing, and she was happy and blessed beyond the power of words to tell. What, then, was the trouble that had wrought a revolution in

her whole nature, that had furrowed so early that young brow ?

In the solemn and lovely starlight, Lucy sat up in her own room, watching the big round midnight moon sailing through a cloudless, serene sky, and asked herself the question. The life that lay before these two promised very brightly to-night ; but far off, invisible to every eye save her own, the pale watcher saw a dark cloud, slowly gathering.

“I hate her !” Lucy Sutherland said to her own heart ; “I hate her, and I hope and pray and trust I may live to see her ruined and disgraced. There is a secret in her life—a dark, disgraceful secret, that I will find out, if I spend my life in the search ; and when I see you down in the very filth under my feet, I will cry quits with you, Mrs. Arthur Sutherland !”

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE CONCERT.



THE prettiest of little ormolu clocks, standing on the low marble mantel, struck up a lively Swiss waltz, preparatory to striking eight, as Lucy Sutherland, in full dress, opened the heavy oaken door, and entered the boudoir of Mrs. Arthur Sutherland. In full dress, with Miss Lucy Sutherland, meant a robe of pale lavender erape, as dim and shadowy as herself, and a few knots of ribbon, a shade or two deeper in tint. The charming boudoir of the charming wife of Arthur Sutherland was a miracle of taste and luxury and beauty—a fitting nest for the tropical bird who owned it. The bright June moonlight, streaming in between the curtains of rosy silk, fell in squares of silvery luster on the thick, soft Persian carpet and the gems of pictures on the tinted walls. Opposite the door was an archway hung with rose silk. Lucy lifted the curtain, and stood in the dressing-room of her cousin's wife.

A beautiful room.—more like a sea-nymph's grot

than an apartment for anything mortal. A carpet that looked like tangled moss; pale green walls, with painted panels, where mermaids and mermen disported themselves in foamy billows; with couches and ottomans, cushioned in green velvet, and great mirrors flashing back on either hand this sea-green grot. A lovely room, for the lovely little lady standing before the exquisite dressing-table full in the light of a dozen wax tapers, taking a last look at her own enchanting beauty. She wore black lace that swept the carpet with its filmy flounces; and pale oriental pearls glimmered like wan stars in midnight in her hair, and around the perfect throat and arms. Beautiful she looked, this starry-eyed, jetty-haired little Creole wife—a beauty born—and looking lovelier to-night than ever before, Lucy thought, bitterly, in the depths of her envious heart.

A vivid foil to the glowing little southern beauty, in her dark drapery, stood Augusta, in a violet pink dress, and flashing diamond necklace and cross. Trifine, Eulalie's maid, was just fastening the barbaric diamond eardrops in her ears when her cousin entered.

"Dressed, Lucy," Mrs. Arthur said, with that radiant smile of hers, "and not fifteen minutes since you went up-stairs. There is an example for you and me, Augusta."

"I don't care about following Lucy's example,"

said Augusta, with a French shrug, leaning from Trifine. "The role of the Princess Perfect never suited me, but Lucy takes to it as naturally as life. You have moped and moped, and grown dismal and corpselike, shut up in this big barn of a house from year's end to year's end, and Prince Perfect is very long in coming. Isn't he, Lucy, dear?"

"Yes," said quiet Lucy, "perhaps so; but no longer coming, Miss Sutherland, than the Prince for whom you have been angling so desperately these last two years."

Eulalie laughed; and Augusta, conscious of being well dressed, and of looking her best, made a little wry face.

"Don't be cantankerous, Lucy, it's an old maid's privilege, I know, but don't use it, dear. There! that will do, Trifine! How do I look?"

"Charming!" cried Mlle. Trifine; and Mrs. Arthur Sutherland echoed the flattering; but Lucy only eyed her with a little sour glance of disdain.

"Don't you think I look charming, too, Lucy, dearest and best?" inquired Augusta, provokingly. "Of course, you do; but the extent of your admiration renders you speechless. Don't trouble yourself to put it in words, love—I'll take it for granted. Bye-bye, Eulalie. I must go and display myself to

mamma, to be revised and corrected before going down."

Off swam Miss Augusta, making a mock obeisance to Lucy in passing. The old armed-neutrality existed still between these two; and Lucy and Augusta hated each other with a cordial intensity truly womanly. Lucy's position in the family, hitherto painfully undefined, had latterly been more decidedly fixed. When Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sutherland had returned, she spoke one day to the new mistress of Maplewood of leaving, and had been met with an earnest protest.

"I shall feel lost if you go, Lucy," Eulalie had said, imploringly. "You don't know how ignorant I am, and how stupid I am about housekeeping. I couldn't order a dinner, you know, or see after the servants, or know whether anything was done right or wrong, and you will do me the greatest favor, my dear cousin, by stopping here and taking all the trouble off my hands. Besides, Lucy, Maplewood would not be Maplewood without your quiet face within its walls."

"You mean, Mrs. Sutherland," Lucy said, coldly, not deigning to notice the caressing words—"you mean you want a housekeeper, and you offer me the situation."

"O you dreadful matter-of-fact Lucy," laughed Eulalie. "You are as matter-of-fact as some grim old man of business. Yes, if you will put it so, I do want

you to be my housekeeper. My poor, dear Arthur must go dinnerless, I am afraid, if you do not."

Lucy Sutherland, homeless and friendless, was only too glad to accept an offer which meant nothing to do and a high salary for doing it. But she closed with it as coldly and thanklessly as she had hitherto accepted, ungraciously, a home in the family. So she was housekeeper at Maplewood now, and jingled the keys at her girdle, and issued her mandates to the servants, and came to Mrs. Arthur in a coldly formal way for her own directions; and hated her all the while, and watched her like a spy by night and by day. Eulalie, with the princely spirit nature and education had given her, heaped costly presents on this pale, silent, impenetrable cousin-in-law, whom she could not take to kindly, somehow; and Lucy accepted everything, still thankless and still unthawed. The costly jewelry, the rich dresses, Eulalie forced upon her with a lavish hand, were so much "portable property," she might one day turn into current ~~coin and use~~ to bring about Eulalie's own downfall. She took ~~the~~ gifts and hated the giver, and Eulalie knew it by ~~some~~ inscrutable second-sight.

"She doesn't like me, poor soul!" she said to her husband. "I suppose she thinks me foolish and ignorant; and I know I am, too."

"Because you don't understand the art of cooking

breakfast and making coffee, my dear little good-for-nothing wife," laughed Mr. Sutherland. "I don't think it would accord with the universal fitness of things to see my elegant little Eulalie bending over a cook-stove, or simmering over jellies in a hot kitchen. Still, I think you mistake about Lucy: she is one of your silent, impenetrable sort—human icicles, that wouldn't thaw in the tropics. Her lines have not fallen in very pleasant places, poor girl! and her loveless life has intensified her reserved and undemonstrative nature."

Mrs. Sutherland, senior, going back to the city very soon, was only too thankful to have the responsibility of Lucy shifted off her shoulders.

"She is, without exception, the most disagreeable creature I ever met," said the elder lady to her daughter-in-law; "but, I dare say, she will serve you well enough as a housekeeper. I never liked her; the mere sight of her irritates me, and I am glad to be so well rid of her."

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sutherland's dear five hundred friends had called upon them immediately after their return; and now a ball was to be given at Maplewood, to which the dear five hundred were invited. Mrs. Sutherland and Augusta departed for Saratoga directly after; but Mr. and Mrs. Arthur remained for the summer at home, by the young wife's desire.

"We have had enough of sight-seeing and gayety and society while we were abroad, dear," she said, clinging lovingly to her husband; "and I am so tired of it all, and I want to be at home, and at peace, with only you and baby. I want to stay at home, Arthur, in this beautiful old home of ours, where so many happy days have been spent, and shut out the great big tumultuous world outside, if I can."

Lucey Sutherland watched her this night of the ball as she always watched her, furtively, as a cat watches a mouse. She looked after her, with a sinister look in her pale eyes, as she went into the nursery before descending to the ballroom. It was a dainty little apartment, all gauzy white drapery, with a carefully shaded lamp, and the most elegant and exquisite of tiny cribs for the heiress of all the Sutherlands. It was the first time in nineteen years there had been a baby in Maplewood; and from stately grandmamma down to Betty, the cook, baby was in a fair way of being kissed to death. There never was a baby in the world like it, of course; everybody said so but Lucey Sutherland, and Lucey never had anything at all to say on the subject. She was the one Mordecai at the king's gate; and she watched Eulalie bend over the crib now with a cold, hard, evil glitter in her eyes. It was a pretty picture, too—the lovely young mother in her misty lace dress and floating black curls, looking little more than a child

herself, bending over the cradle of her first-born. But Lucy hated mother and child—hated them with a vindictive intensity that these frozen natures are capable of once in a lifetime.

The happy wife of the man she had loved and had lost could not fail to be other than an object of abhorrence to her; and the beauty, the grace, and the fabulous fortune of the young Creole wife were each an item to render her more and more abhorrent.

The ball that night at Maplewood was a brilliant success. The dusky splendor of Mrs. Arthur Sutherland's beauty had never before so dazzled the eyes of the good people of St. Mary's. She was like some little tropical bird, in her glowing and dusky loveliness, that had fluttered by chance down here, in this staid New England home.

"By George? what a perfect little beauty she is!" more than one enthusiastic gentleman cried. "Sutherland's the luckiest fellow alive, to win such a wife, and such a fortune."

Lucy Sutherland, never relaxing that pitiless watch of hers, saw Mrs. Arthur some half dozen times during the night glide out of the heated and gas-lit and crowded ball-room, up stairs, to that pretty room where her baby slept. "Where the treasure is, there shall the heart be also." And Enlalie, bending down to kiss the sweet baby-face, was far happier than when sur-

rounded by her hosts of admirers. Lucy's pale-blue eyes saw this with a gleam of demoniac triumph in their steely depths.

"If I fail every other way," she thought, "I can strike her at any time through that child. It would be a very stupid way, though; and I think the mystery that is hidden in her life will come to light yet, and save me the trouble."

The ball passed off brilliantly; and in the gray and dismal dawn, the guests drove away from Maplewood. Two days later, Mrs. Sutherland and Augusta took their departure for gayer scenes, promising to return for the Christmas holidays; and the family at Maplewood were left alone to begin their new life.

A very quiet life. No visiting, no calling that could be avoided, no party-giving or going. Mrs. Arthur Sutherland had grown strangely quiet, grave Lucy could hardly be more of a recluse than she. If she went out at all, she went reluctantly, and under protest. She was so happy at home; she said she wanted nothing of the world outside, and she had acquired a nervous dread of meeting strangers. If she rode out, or walked out, it was always closely veiled—she, who had never been in the habit of wearing a veil. Even in her visits of charity to the sick and the poor of the neighborhood, even in her Sunday drives to and from the church, she never went now without a screen-

ing vail. Her husband laughed at and ridiculed her strange whims; but he remembered all these wretched details afterward, in the miserable days so near at hand.

So near at hand, and yet just now how cloudless the sky looked—how very, very happy those married lovers were? Too happy to last; for this perfect bliss cannot long endure in this lower world. Eulalie—taught in her convent-school that perfect happiness is only to be found in heaven—nestling sometimes in her husband's arms, would look up in his smiling face with great solemn black eyes.

“Oh, Arthur, we are too happy!” would be her cry. “It makes me afraid, this great and perfect bliss. What have we ever done to deserve it, when so many better than we are have nothing but suffering and misery all their lives! Arthur, dearest, I am afraid it cannot last.”

“My foolish little pet,” her husband would laugh, “what put such dismal notions in your curly head? Deserve it? Why, are you not a sort of uncanonized saint? And as for me—well, I don't set up for an archangel; but then I never murdered any one. Of course, it will last. What can possibly happen to mar our bliss?”

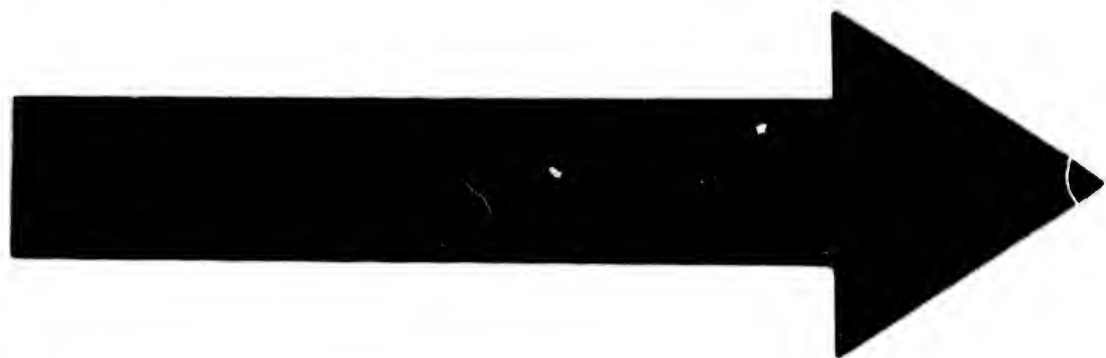
“What!” Eulalie repeated, her dark face paling,

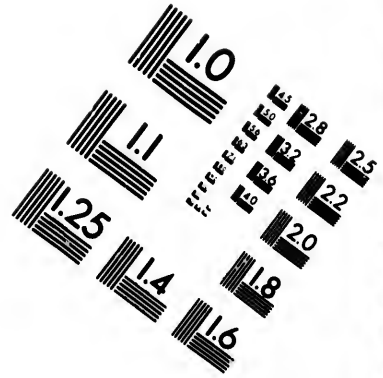
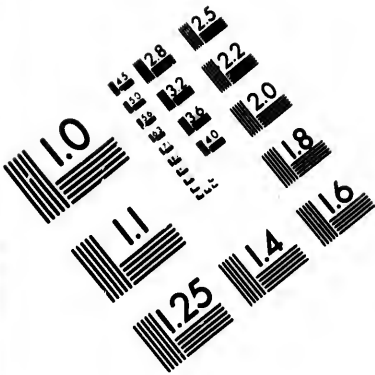
and her dark eyes dilating with a sort of horror. "Oh, Arthur, Arthur! if I lost you, I should die."

Arthur Sutherland stooped down and kissed the lovely face with all the passionate devotion of his wooing-days.

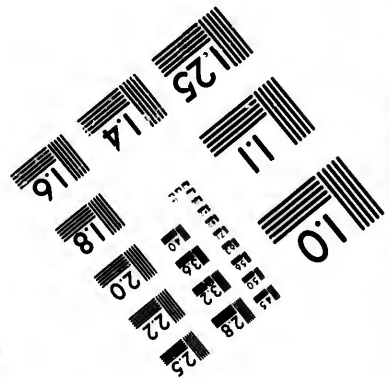
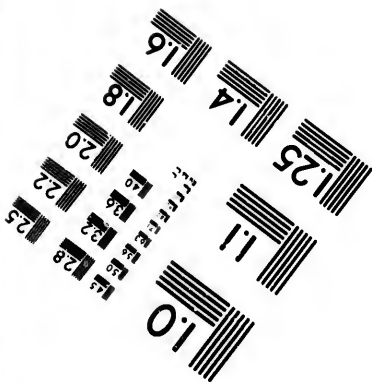
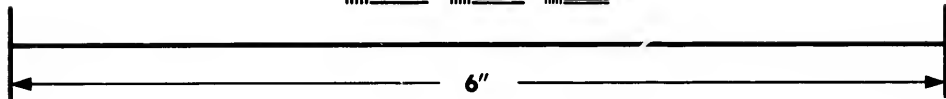
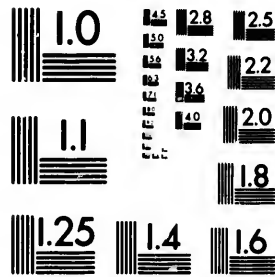
"My love, how can you talk of such dreary things? I know how it is—you are growing morbid and melancholy and dismal, shut up here from week's end to week's end. You must go out more, my little wife. Not a word, now. I am going to turn tyrant, and will have it! You have been shut up long enough like a nun in her cell."

The evening after this conversation, Mr. Sutherland, riding home in the twilight, found his wife, as he had first beheld her, lying in the recess of the drawing-room window, wrapped in a crimson shawl, and nestling luxuriantly among the silken pillows. Unlike that first evening, this summer twilight was black and overcast. The sky above was leaden, without one relieving streak of light; the rain lashed the windows ceaselessly, and the wind wailing through the maples had a melancholy moan in its voice that was like a human cry of pain. A wild, wet, windy evening without, but the long drawing-room looked cozy and home-like. Eulalie nestled among her cushions like a little dark sultana; Lucy bent over a book at a distant window, only pausing now and then to look out at the storm; and Louise,





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the Swiss *bonne*, with little black-eyed baby Eulalie in her lap, sat on a low rocker, swaying to and fro, and singing softly some lullaby of her native land. Mr. Sutherland bent over his wife, and aroused her with a kiss.

"Oh, Arthur, I am so glad you have come!" Eulalie cried, clinging to him, with that dusky pallor in her Creole face, and that terrified look in her great eyes, that sometimes startled him. "I have been asleep and dreaming—oh, such a terrible dream!"

"Terrible dreams, I dare say! It's raining like a water-spout, and the wind is howling among the trees out there in a way that would give any one the horrors. What have you been dreaming about, *petite?*"

"Oh, Arthur, about grandpapa."

"Well, and what about grandpapa?"

Her arms tightened around his neck, and he could feel the frightened throbbing of her heart.

"Arthur, I saw him. I saw him as plainly as ever I saw him in my life. He came and stood here beside me, looking down on me as he used to look—poor, dear grandpapa!—only far more sorrowfully, and far more warningly. He did not seem to speak, and yet I felt as though he had come to warn me of some awful danger near at hand. Oh, Arthur, I am afraid! What do you think it can mean?"

She clung to him as a scared child would cling to its father, looking up at him with her great, wild, wide eyes.

Arthur Sutherland, for the first time, became really alarmed. The old fear that had come to him the very first night that they had met—the fear she was going insane—struck on his heart like ice. He folded her close to his breast, while he tried to laugh.

“My foolish Eulalie! Who would have thought you so superstitious—so silly? The rainy day has made you low-spirited, and you have had a dismal dream; and here you are trembling with the dread of you know not what! Come! I have a cure for the blues. You and Lucy are to go out with me this evening.”

Lucy Sutherland lifted her head from her book for the first time. Not once had she stirred. Not once had the colorless lashes lifted off the pale blue eyes; and not one word of the conversation between husband and wife had escaped her. But Lucy did not believe in dreams, and her face was immovably calm as she looked at her cousin.

“Go out this rainy evening?” she said, in a tone of calm inquiry.

“In the carriage you can defy the rain. All St. Mary’s are on the *qui vive*. All St. Mary’s

are going ; and the ladies from Maplewood must go, too."

He drew from his pocket, as he spoke, a huge play-bill, with letters a foot long, and flourished it before their eyes.

"Here you are!

"'The Ethiopian Troubadours! Positively two nights only.'

"That means a week, at least."

"'Unrivalled attraction! The audience kept in roars of laughter.'

"Do you hear that, my solemn Lucy? 'Go early if you wish good seats.' Mrs. Sutherland, will you have the goodness to be dressed by half-past seven?"

"Arthur, I don't care to go."

"That does not make the slightest difference, madam. I have issued my sovereign commands, and on your peril you and Lucy are to disobey. You are to dress in your prettiest; and no vails, remember. I won't have it. And be ready precisely at half-past seven. I would not miss hearing the Ethiopian Troubadours for a kingdom."

Of course, after such imperious orders, there was nothing for it but obedience. Under his jocose tone, Arthur Sutherland was very much in earnest. He saw that his wife needed change—needed society—needed amusement—and he determined to insist for the future

on her going out more. But she was strangely and unusually reluctant to leave home to-night. All might have been the effects of her dream; but her mind was full of ominous forebodings all the while her maid was dressing her. Arthur, waiting for her in the drawing-room, took both her hands in his when she came down, and looked at her.

“My pale little girl, what have you done with your rosy cheeks? You are as white as a winter snow-wreath, and your hands are like ice. Oh, this will never do! I shall take you away from Maplewood over the world again, if you keep on like this.”

“No, no!” Eulalie cried. “Not away from Maplewood, where I have been so very, very happy! I am only a foolish child, as you say; but I will try and grow wise and womanly for your sake, my darling.”

Lucy came in with her noiseless tread as she spoke; and Mr. Sutherland, offering an arm to each, let them to the carriage. As it drove through the blind darkness of the sultry night, the rain beat ceaselessly against the glass, and the wind shrieked dismally up from the sea.

The stormy night, however, seemed to have little effect on the music-loving people of St. Mary's.

The long concert hall, ablaze with illumination, was

filled to repletion when the Sutherlands entered, and a low murmur of admiration ran round the crowded hall at sight of the beautiful wife of Arthur Sutherland. That gentleman, with his wife on his arm, and Miss Lucy following close behind, made his way to three reserved seats near the stage, nodding to his friends right and left as he passed along. The drop-curtain was down, but the orchestra was in full blast as they settled themselves in their seats.

“Here are programmes for you, ladies,” Mr. Sutherland said. “Up goes the curtain !”

The drop-curtain rose as he spoke, disclosing the Ethiopian Troubadours, nearly a dozen in number, with shining black faces, standing in semicircle, and bowing to the audience. The orchestra struck up a symphony, and one of the Troubadours, in a very fine tenor voice, had just commenced one of the popular songs of the day, when the concert-hall was electrified by a wild, prolonged shriek—a woman’s wild scream—a sudden disorder and commotion in front of the stage, and every one up on their feet in consternation, demanding to know what was the matter. In the midst of it all, a gentleman (Mr. Arthur Sutherland) went past, white to ghastliness, carrying a fainting lady in his arms. The lady was his wife, and Miss Sutherland was hastily following.

It was some time before the startled audience could

find out what it was. Then a rumor ran round. Mrs. Sutherland, apparently in the best of health and spirits, had been reading the names of the Troubadours, on her bill, when she had suddenly sprang up with that terrifying shriek, and fallen forward in a dead swoon.

9

CHAPTER XII.

MR. GASTON BENOIR.



THE thriving village of St. Mary's contained, among its other public buildings, two hotels—the Weldon House and St. Mary's Hotel. The Weldon House was the popular stopping-place of all strangers in the village; whether it was owing to the capital table and beds you got there, or the charms of the buxom widow lady who kept it, or her four fair daughters, it is impossible to say. The Ethiopian Troubadours, coming to St. Mary's strangers, and inquiring for the best hotel, were directed to the Weldon House; and accordingly in the Weldon House these eminent gentlemen had pitched their tents.

On the morning after the concert, quite a lively crowd were assembled in the spacious parlor of that establishment. There were the four Misses Weldon, some two or three lady boarders, a few of the village young ladies, and half a dozen of the Troubadours. They were animatedly discussing the concert, with the

exception of one young lady, who sat by a window, and whose foot kept beating an impatient tattoo on the carpet, while her eyes never left the door; a remarkably pretty girl, with long golden-brown curls, violet-blue eyes, rosebud cheeks, and lips as sweet as ever were kissed. This young lady was Miss Sophie Weldon, second daughter of Madame Weldon; and that she was impatiently waiting for the entrance of some one was very evident. Her silence and distant manner at length struck the lady who sat placidly crocheting beside her.

"What's the matter with our Sophie this morning?" demanded the lady. "She has generally enough to say for herself, but to-day she sits as solemn as an owl, saying nothing, and watching that door."

"Watching that door!" repeated Miss Sophie's eldest sister, maliciously, "which, being interpreted, means watching for Mr. Benoir."

The rosebud tinge on Sophie's fair cheek turned suddenly to big round roses, and there was a general laugh among the company.

"Benoir's a lucky fellow," said one of the Troubadours; "but then he's used to that sort of thing. I don't know what kind of taste the women have got, for I'll swear he's next door to a nigger."

"Who is?" inquired a new Troubadour, sauntering lazily in; "you don't mean me, do you?"

There was a pause of consternation, and Miss Sophie's violet eyes grew as bright as stars.

"Speak of the—! no, I'll not say it, ladies being present," said another Troubadour. "Brown's just called you a nigger, Benoir—meaning no offense. By-the-bye, have you got over the shock yet of having your song interrupted last night?"

"Who the deuce was it?" inquired Mr. Benoir; "I mean the lady who screamed and fainted."

"Mrs. Arthur Sutherland, of Maplewood," replied the eldest Miss Weldon. "I suppose it was the heat, and she is a delicate little thing, any way."

"I had a good look at her," said one of the Troubadours; "she sat right in front, and, by George! she is the stunningest little beauty I ever saw in my life."

"Oh! she's lovely!" cried Miss Sophie, rapturously, "I could sit and look at her for a week. She is prettier than any picture I ever saw, with those great black eyes of hers, and that beautiful smile. And, do you know," exclaimed Miss Sophie, struck by a sudden inspiration, "I think she looks ever so much like Mr. Benoir!"

Mr. Benoir bowed profoundly.

"Thanks, Mademoiselle, you do me proud! I should like to have a look at this beautiful lady whom I resemble so much. Is there any hope of seeing her at the concert to-night?"

"Hardly, after her fainting-fit of last evening; and she scarcely ever goes out; or if she does, it is always closely veiled."

"Vails ought to be indicted as a public nuisance," said Mr. Benoir; "that is, on pretty women. Ugly ones, if there be such a thing as ugly ones, do well to mask their bad looks under—"

Mr. Benoir stopped short, for there was a little cry from Miss Sophie, who had glanced out of the window.

"Oh, Emily! I declare if here is not Miss Lucy Sutherland! What in the world brings her here?"

"She cannot be coming here," said the eldest Miss Weldon, going precipitately to the window; "she never was here but once in her life, and that was to collect money for the new church. She is too proud. My stars, though, if she is not!"

There was a general flutter of expectation among the company, in the midst of which Mrs. Weldon herself appeared, ushering in Miss Lucy Sutherland. Miss Weldon arose, and presented a seat.

"Don't let me disturb you," Miss Sutherland said, smiling graciously. "I called to ask after Fanny—I heard in the village she was ill."

"You are very kind, I'm sure, Miss Sutherland," said Fanny—the youngest Miss Weldon—answering

for herself. "I had a sore throat yesterday, but it is almost well now, thank you."

"And how is Mrs. Sutherland?" inquired Miss Weldon; "I was so sorry to see her faint at the concert last night. Is she better again?"

"No," said Miss Sutherland, whose eyes had been wandering furtively from face to face of the silent Troubadours ever since her entrance, "she is very poorly. She was ill and hysterical all night, and the doctor never left her. She fell asleep for the first time just before I came away."

There was a general murmur of sympathy among the ladies, and Miss Sophie inquired if she supposed it was the heat.

"I don't know," said Miss Sutherland; "it might have been, for poor Eulalie is not very strong."

Mr. Benoir, who had been leaning lightly over the back of a chair, taking very little interest apparently in the conversation, started as suddenly and violently at this last speech as if he had received a spear-thrust. He turned round and faced Miss Sutherland with a strange, eager look in his eye.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but did you call the lady Eulalie?"

Miss Lucy Sutherland lifted her eyes in calm surprise to his face, and took a long look before she answered him. He was a very handsome man, this

Mr. Benoir—Mr. Gaston Benoir, as his name read on the playbills—with a dark, Southern kind of beauty rarely perfect in its way. No features could be more exquisite; no eyes could be larger, blacker, or more splendidly luminous; no teeth could be whiter or more even; no hair could be darker, or more silken and curly.

He was tall and perfect of form as of face, with a clear, dark, olive complexion. He wore a thick, jetty mustache, and spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but in excellent English. To a casual observer, he was only an uncommonly handsome young man; but Lucy Sutherland was a physiognomist, and underlying all that dark beauty she saw that this man was crafty, and cruel, and selfish, and sensual, and a villain! She saw it all in that one glance; and then the light blue eyes shifted and fell.

“Mrs. Sutherland’s name is Eulalie,” she said, calmly. “May I inquire why you ask?”

“Because I once knew a person of that name whom I have not seen for years, and it is a name one does not often hear. It was in Louisiana I knew the person; but Mrs. Sutherland, I presume, has never been there?”

“I think not. Mrs. Sutherland is a native of Cuba.”

“Cuba!” Again Mr. Benoir started, and his dark

face flushed hotly. "Cuba!" he repeated eagerly. "May I ask if her maiden name was Rohan?"

Miss Sutherland and every one else in the room looked at Mr. Benoir in surprise.

"It was," Miss Sutherland said. "Did you ever know Eulalie Rohan?"

Mr. Benoir turned away suddenly, and looked out of the window in a manner that prevented them from seeing his face. When he spoke, his tone and words were carefully guarded.

"I have been in Cuba," he said, "and I have heard of Mr. Rohan and his granddaughter. No, Miss Sutherland, I never saw Miss Eulalie Rohan."

He turned as he spoke, and walked out of the room, bowing slightly to the company.

They all saw him as he went out, and the flush had left his handsome face, and he was white even to the lips.

Miss Lucy Sutherland only lingered a few moments longer, and then took her departure. Mr. Benoir was leaning over the balcony, smoking a cigar, as she passed; and she gave him a sidelong look from under her light lashes.

"It is as I suspected," she thought, as she walked slowly homeward. "It was never the heat made Eulalie Sutherland faint last night. What is she to this man? What is he to her? He is handsomer

than any one I ever saw ; and he has known her in Cuba. I am sure of that, in spite of his denial. Is this the dark mystery that overshadowed her grandfather's life and hers ; and is the day of her disgrace and downfall nearer at hand than ever I thought ?”

Mr. Gaston Benoir lingered so long on the balcony smoking cigars, that pretty Sophie Weldon lost patience waiting for him, and made her appearance there too. Mr. Benoir started up, flung away his cigar, and offered her his arm.

“I am tired of solitude and my own thoughts, Miss Sophie,” he said ; “and was just wishing for you. It looks delightfully cool down there in the orchard, under the trees. What do you say to a walk ?”

Miss Sophie had no objection. It would have been a strange proposal, indeed, she would have objected to, coming from Mr. Benoir. She had seen him the day before for the first time ; but pretty, blue-eyed Sophie had a susceptible heart ; and Mr. Benoir's handsome face had wrought fearful havoc there already.

There was no one in the long orchard, where the apple-trees were in bloom ; and the handsome Troubadour and the pretty village girl walked up and down uninterrupted. Mr. Benoir was a good talker, and told Sophie charming tales of his wanderings by sea and land. But, presently—Sophie, thinking of it in the tragical after-days, never knew how—he led the

conversation round to the Sutherlands, to Mrs. Arthur Sutherland particularly ; and Sophie found herself telling him all she knew of that lady. It was not a great deal. She remembered when she had first come to St. Mary's, with her grandfather, and Mrs. Sutherland, and Miss Augusta, from Cuba, and what a sensation her beauty created far and wide. Then came Mr. Arthur, who fell in love with her at once, as all St. Mary's knew ; and then followed the time when she was struck by lightning, and lay ill unto death. Then came the journey back to Cuba ; the dreary probation Mr. Arthur spent at Maplewood ; and then his own departure for Cuba, and the wedding which followed. Then there was the long bridal-tour, the grandfather's death, and the return with the foreign nurse and the baby. They had been at Maplewood ever since, going out very little, and seeing little company, and loving each other, as every one knew, better than ever husband and wife loved one another before.

Mr. Gaston Benoir listened to all this with a very attentive face. He did not speak during the recital, until his fair companion had done. Then he asked a question :

“These Sutherlands are very proud people, are they not?”

“Proud ! Yes ; the proudest family in St. Mary's. Mrs. Sutherland would not think a princess too good

for her son. If Miss Rohan had been less of a beauty, and less of an heiress, and less grand every way, she never would have consented to the match."

Pretty Sophie Weldon, in saying this, was not looking at Mr. Benoir, or she might have been startled by the change in his face. Such a look of triumphant malice overshadowed it, such a derisive light flashed from his black eyes, that Sophie might well have been staggered to know what it meant.

"I think I hear some one calling you," was Mr. Benoir's first remark; and "Sophie, Sophie, where are you?" shrilly called in the eldest Miss Weldon's voice, confirmed his words.

Sophie, only too happy to be just where she was, frowned; but Mr. Benoir, with all his politeness, looked relieved as he led her back to the house. The other Troubadours, scattered about the balcony smoking and reading, smiled significantly as the pair came up; but Mr. Benoir paid no attention to any of them. He turned off up the road, walking slowly; and one of the Troubadours, taking his pipe out of his mouth, hailed him:

"I say, Benoir! where are you bound for?"

"To see the lions of St. Mary's," Mr. Benoir replied, without looking round.

"And don't you want company," pursued the speaker, winking at a fellow-Troubadour.

“Perhaps so ; but not yours !”

With which rebuff Mr. Benoir walked on. Not to St. Mary's, however. A sudden bend in the road hid him from sight, as he turned his back upon that pretty village, and bent his steps in the direction of Maplewood.

“At last !” Mr. Gaston Benoir was thinking, as he walked along, “at last my time has come ! I have waited for it many a year. I have traveled over land and sea until I have almost given up in despair, when lo ! I come to this one-horse village, in a lost corner of Maine, and find my Lady Highropes. At last my time has come ! Old Rohan had the reins in his hands long enough ; but it is my turn now. What a pity he's dead ! I owed him a long debt of hatred ; and pretty Eulalie must pay his share as well as her own. At last ! at last ! Gaston Benoir, your lucky star is in the ascendant ! No wonder she fainted at the concert. She'll come through more than that before I have done with her. Good-bye to the Troubadours, my future's made !”

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. BENOIR'S LETTER.



HE great iron gates of Maplewood stood wide open as Mr. Benoir drew near, as if inviting him to enter. He paused for an instant to glance at the prospect, the broad sweep of carriage-drive, the waving trees, the gleams of bright parterres, the splash of distant fountains, and the stately old house just showing in glimpses in the distance. The songs of countless birds made the air melodious; the June sunlight lay in golden sheets on the velvet sward; the hush of the place was deep and unbroken in its noonday summer rest.

“A fine old place,” Mr. Benoir thought; “a place a man might be proud of! And Eulalie Rohan is mistress of all this, and the wife of an honorable gentleman. A proud man this Mr. Sutherland, they tell me, and come of a proud race. All the better, I’ll lower his pride for him one of these days, or I’m mistaken.

He entered the wide open gates, and walked up the

broad graveled drive. For nearly ten minutes he went on without meeting any one; then a bend in the drive brought him in view of a rose garden, where a gardener was at work. The man looked up at the sound of footsteps and stared at the stranger.

"My good man," Mr. Benoir said, condescendingly, "I hope I don't intrude. I am a stranger here, and, seeing the gate open, took the liberty of entering. If I trespass, I will leave."

The gardener touched his hat to the handsome and gentlemanly stranger.

"No, sir; it's no trespass. Maplewood is free to all strangers, by Mr. Sutherland's orders. You can go over the grounds if you like."

"Thanks, my friend," Mr. Benoir said, politely. "I think I will."

He turned away, following the drive until it took him to the lawn in front of the house. He paused, looking thoughtfully up at its long, low, old-fashioned front.

"A fine old house—old and historic for this new land. I wonder which is her room—I wonder if she is thinking of me now. Oh, my pretty little Eulalie! do you dream how near I am to you this minute?"

He walked on; for a servant girl, coming out, was staring with open-eyed admiration at the dark stranger. He strolled through the old orchard, through the woods

and fields; and, coming round the end of the house, found himself on the grassy terrace overlooking the sea. He leaned over the iron railing, and looked down at the placid waves murmuring upon the shore.

"A nice place to commit suicide," Mr. Benoir said to himself. "One leap over this railing into that calm, sunlit, treacherous water, and all one's troubles are ended. My pretty Eulalie! if I were in your place, I should know how to defy Gaston Benoir!"

The footpath through the woods to his left caught his eye. He followed it, and found himself presently in the half-ruined old summer-house where Philip Sutherland had long ago fought with his despair. He sat down in the rustic seat by the rickety table, and looked complacently out at the pleasant view of the terrace which it commanded. He sat there, and no shadow of the awful tragedy so soon to take place within these four walls came darkly over his mind to warn him. He sat and looked out at the terrace, his mind in a state of soliloquy still.

"A capital place for a rendezvous," thought Mr. Benoir. "Silent as the grave, lonely as the heart of some primeval forest. A murder might be done here and no one be the wiser! I wonder if Mrs. Arthur Sutherland ever walks in that terrace? If so, I could sit here safe and unseen and have a look at her. I really should like to see her. That pale-faced, fair-

haired young lady, down at the hotel, this morning, disbelieved me, I think, when I said I never saw Miss Rohan. I wonder if she looks like—”

Mr. Benoir checked his own thoughts abruptly to light a cigar. When the weed was in good going order, he rose up and sauntered slowly back again toward the gates. The gardener was at work still, and paused, as the stranger drew near, leaning on his rake.

“Well, sir,” he asked, “and how do you like Maplewood?”

“A charming place,” said Mr. Benoir. “I had no idea there was anything like it in St. Mary’s.”

“There’s nothing like it far or wide!” said the gardener. “And there isn’t as old a family, or as rich now, as the Sutherlands, in the State.”

“Indeed! I heard,” Mr. Benoir said, politely, “that Mrs. Sutherland was ill. She is better, I hope?”

“Getting better, sir. She is able to be up, they tell me. We’ll have her out here to-morrow, may be. She’s uncommon fond of walking through the grounds when she’s in her health.”

“I suppose she has her own particular walk, too?”

“Yes, sir, yes! The terrace down there by the water. That’s Mrs. Sutherland’s daily walk up and down when she’s well, and of moonlight nights with her husband. It’s a lonesome sort of place, but she likes it best.”

"There is no accounting for a body's tastes," said Mr. Benoir. "By the way, I intend making some stay in St. Mary's; and if I should choose to come here occasionally, would Mr. Sutherland have any objection?"

"Why!—no, sir, I think not," said the gardener, on whom the stranger's handsome face, pleasing smile, and insinuating address had made a very favorable impression; "leastways, he never does object, and he ain't likely to begin with you. All that's wanted of visitors is not to pick the flowers, and they may come as often as they please."

"Mr. Sutherland is very kind, and I am much obliged to him and to you. Good day, my friend. I'll saunter up to-morrow again, I think, to kill time."

Mr. Benoir was absent and distrait all the rest of that day. Blue-eyed Sophie, fluttering around him like a butterfly round a flower, wondered what was the matter, and pouted her rosy lips to find how little notice he took of her. He avoided his brother-Troubadours, and loitered by himself in the orchard, smoking endless cigars, and thinking and thinking.

The concert that night was very successful. Mr. Benoir's singing charmed everybody; but none of the Sutherlands were present. So successful, indeed, was the concert, and so crowded the house, that the Troubadours had big posters put up next day to inform the

good people of St. Mary's, that, as a particular favor, they would remain for the rest of the week.

Immediately after breakfast, Mr. Benoir started for Maplewood, one pocket filled with cigars (for this mysterious gentleman was an inveterate smoker) and a novel borrowed from Sophie in the other. He made his way to the old summer-house without meeting any one, and sat down on the rustic chair beside the old table to smoke and read, and keep watch. But all his watching was useless. One of the gardeners and a maid-servant appeared on the terrace for a few moments, but no Mr. or Mrs. Sutherland. Mr. Benoir's watch, pointing to three, reminded him that two was Mrs. Weldon's dinner-hour, and that he was hungry; so he rose up, pocketed his novel, and started for home.

The Troubadours stayed all week, according to promise, and every day found the handsome tenor at his post in the summer-house. Not quite unrewarded either, this patient watching; for one day Mr. Sutherland appeared on the terrace—he knew it was Mr. Sutherland from the description he received of him—loitered up and down for half an hour, as if to afford the watcher a good look, and then retired.

“A proud man”—was the Troubadour's criticism while he looked—“A proud man, who would prefer ten thousand deaths to dishonor. You're a very fine

fellow, and a very fine gentleman, no doubt, Mr. Arthur Sutherland, but I have you under my thumb for all that."

Mr. Benoir's extraordinary conduct puzzled his brother-Troubadours beyond everything. He had changed so suddenly and unaccountably from being "hail fellow! well met," the life of the company, to a thoughtful, silent, and steady man. His prolonged absence, too, could not be accounted for. They had traced him morning after morning to Maplewood but, as the spies said, what the deuce did the fellow do there? He couldn't have fallen in love with Miss Lucy Sutherland that first morning, could he? Hardly, for he made love most devotedly to pretty Sophie. It wasn't to see the place—once or twice would surely suffice for that. The Troubadours were puzzled, and Sophie Weldon with them.

It was quite true Mr. Benoir made love to her between whiles, he being no more insensible than the rest of mankind to the influence of azure eyes, golden-brown ringlets, and rose-bloom cheeks. He could hardly be insensible to the flattering import of rosy blushes and eyelid-droopings at his coming. So he found time to do a little courting, even while he kept that daily watch at Maplewood. But, right in the middle of his love-making, he had a habit of breaking abruptly off and falling into a moody silence, and being a thousand

miles away from Sophie in half a minute. His handsome dark face would cloud over as suddenly as an April sky; and Sophie, afraid of him in those gloomy fits, would glance shyly and wistfully at him from under her eyelashes, and steal away and leave him alone.

Before the end of the week, the concert-going folks of St. Mary's began to grow tired of the Troubadours, and the houses they drew were wofully thin. So they made up their minds to pack and start on Monday morning, and were all ready to go, when Mr. Benoir, their very best singer, electrified them by announcing his intention of remaining where he was.

"I entered into no engagement with you," Mr. Benoir coolly said to the head of the Troubadours. "I merely came with you here to kill time. Now that I am here, I like the place, and don't choose to leave it just yet—that's all."

"I say, Benoir, is it Maplewood or our Sophie that's the attraction?" demanded a Troubadour; to which Mr. Benoir's reply was to turn his back upon him and walk away.

Sophie was in ecstasies, and set it all down to her own account; but, then, why was Mr. Benoir so moody? Surely she gave him encouragement enough, yet despite all, that absorbed, gloomy, and drait manner remained.

The daily visits to Maplewood were continued; the very servants there began to notice him now, but still all in vain. Mrs. Sutherland was better, report said; but, let him watch as he would, she never appeared on the terrace. Did some secret prescience tell her he was there, and warn her to keep away? Mr. Benoir got desperate at last.

"I'll dilly-dally no longer," he said to himself, setting his white teeth savagely. "I'm about tired of this game of solitaire. If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain. I can't go to my lady, so my lady must come to me."

That evening, in the solitude of his own chamber, Mr. Benoir wrote a note. A brief and abrupt note, without date, or address, and almost without signature.

"You know that I am here; and that I will not leave until I see you. The time of meeting I leave with you—the place I take the privilege of naming myself. The old summer-house at Maplewood, facing the terrace, is the best place in the world for a clandestine meeting.
G. B."

Mr. Benoir took a great deal of pains with the address on the envelope—"Mrs. Arthur Sutherland, Maplewood, St. Mary's." He had written the note in a bold, dashing fist, but the address was in a pale, wo-

manish scrawl, that would not have disgraced a school-girl.

"If they see it," said the scribe to himself; "they'll think it's from a lady, and won't suspect. I rather think, Mrs. Sutherland, these few lines will bring you to it!"

Mr. Benoir dropped this letter into the post-office, and waited patiently for three days for an answer. During those three days he forsook Maplewood, and played the devoted to Sophie Weldon. On the third morning he presented himself at the post-office, and inquired if there was a letter for Gaston Benoir. The postmaster fumbled through a pile in the "B" department, and at last singled out one for the name. Mr. Benoir glanced at the superscription. It was post-marked St. Mary's, and the address was in a delicate and rather peculiar female hand. His fingers closed tightly over it, while a smile so evil, so triumphant, so sinister, came over his handsome face, that it altered so you would hardly have known it. He had not patience to wait to reach the hotel. He tore off the envelope the moment he was outside the door, and went along the quiet village road, reading. The note was as short and abrupt as his own.

"I will meet you to-morrow night at nine, in the place you have named. Destroy this as soon as read."

That was all. Not even an initial at the end; but then, it was hardly needed. As Mr. Benoir looked up from the paper, at the sound of an advancing footstep, he found a lady passing by, staring at him as if he were the eighth wonder of the world. It is a lady's privilege to stare; so Mr. Benoir lifted his hat politely, and walked on. The lady was Miss Lucy Sutherland; and, an instant after, she stooped hastily to pick up something white, lying in her path—the torn envelope of a letter, over which her hand closed as if she had found a diamond. Not until she was some yards away—not until she made sure there was no living creature to watch her, did she unclasp the envelope and look at it. No earthly emotion could redden the pallid face of Lucy Sutherland, but it almost flushed now, and her eyes kindled with a steely, fiery gleam.

“So she writes to him,” she thought; “the wife of Arthur Sutherland writing to this handsome strolling vagabond. That was her letter he was reading as I passed him. It is coming—it is coming—the day of her downfall; and meanwhile I will keep this piece of paper—it may be of service before long!”

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BENOIR'S SHADOW.



ULALIE SUTHERLAND sat in that favorite seat of hers, the deep, curtained recess of the drawing-room window, watching the summer night fall. It had been a dull day—a day of hopeless chill and drizzle, with a low, complaining wind, that had moaned and sighed drearily through the trees, and a sky of lead closing down over all: a wretched day, that unstrung your nerves, and made you cross and miserable, and the highest-spirited agree with Marianna, that “life was dreary.”

The night closed in early this gray July day, and a servant came in to light the gas. Mrs. Sutherland turned round—she was alone in the drawing-room—and forbade her.

“I don't want lights yet, Martha. Where is Miss Lucy?”

“In the drawing-room, ma'am, helping Susan to sort the silver.”

“Very well; that will do. Mr. Sutherland has

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gone out to spend the evening, so there is no need of lighting the gas, just yet. That will do."

The servant left the room, wondering, perhaps, at her mistress's strange fancy for sitting in the dark, and Eulalie sank back in her seat. There was just light enough coming palely through the large window to show the change which a few days' illness had wrought in the Creole's dark face. So thin, so haggard, so worn it looked, you might have thought she had been sick for months; and the black, starry eyes looked unnaturally large and bright. Some inward excitement or other sent a feverish fire burning in their dark depths this evening, and on the haggard cheeks glowed two deep, crimson spots, quite foreign to her usual complexion. Her very stillness, as she sat staring straight before her at the darkening day, was full of the same suppressed excitement. Her long black hair fell loose and uncared-for over the scarlet shawl folded around her, a silky mass of ripples and ringlets.

The house was very still. A golden canary-bird fluttering faintly in its gilt cage above her head; the tick, tick, of a little French clock on the carved chimney-piece; the wailing of the evening wind, and the dull tramp of the waves on the shore—all were sharply audible in the deep hush. She was quite alone; Mr. Sutherland had gone to a dinner-party, reluctant, but with no excuse for absenting; Lucy was busy in the

household department, and the Swiss *bonne* and the baby were up in the nursery. So Mrs. Sutherland sat alone in the rainy twilight, looking steadfastly out at the creeping blackness, and never seeing it. Her hands lay folded in her lap, except when she pulled out her watch to look at the hour; but her burning impatience, her intense, suppressed excitement, showed itself in every line of her altered face.

As the dark day shut down in darker night, Lucy, her housekeeper's task ended, came into the drawing-room. A faint light from the hall illuminated the long room, and showed her quick eyes the scarlet drapery, and the tangled waves of dead-black hair.

"You here, Mrs. Sutherland?" she said, in a voice of quiet surprise; "and sitting in the dark!"

Eulalie turned round, but in such a way that the deep shadow of the amber curtains concealed her face.

"Yes," she said, trying to speak in her usual voice. "I preferred the twilight. Ring for Martha if you wish."

"I wish! Oh, no! If there is nothing you want me to do, I will take my work up to my room and finish it."

It was one of Miss Sutherland's unsocial customs to take her work up to her chamber of an evening, instead of sitting with her cousin and his wife. She

gathered up her spools and cambrie now, and left the drawing-room, as was her wont. On the threshold she paused to ask a question.

"Do you intend sitting up for Mr. Sutherland?"

"Yes, I think so. Why?"

"Because it will be unwise. He will probably not return until late, and you are not strong enough yet to lose your night's rest. Good-night!"

"Rest?" Eulalie repeated, inwardly, looking out at the darkness with a sort of despair. "Shall I ever find rest again in this world? Shall I ever rest now, until they lay me in that last home, where all find rest alike?"

Tick, tick! The golden hands of the little French clock told off the minutes of another hour, and struck up a waltz, preparatory to striking eight. A watery moon, struggling feebly through banks of rugged clouds, gleamed athwart the blackness of the night, and hurriedly hid itself again in billows of black. The hush of the house was profound. Eulalie sat in the stillness and darkness, like a figure of stone. Rain-drops, pattering softly against the glass, told the storm was increasing, and the wailing wind was rising high among the rocking trees. The French clock set up a lively waltz again—the hands pointed to five minutes to nine. At the sound, Eulalie started up, wrapping the large crimson shawl over her head, and around her fig-

ure, crossed the drawing-room swiftly, opened noiselessly the long window, and stepped out into the rainy grass. Then a sudden panic of irresolution seized her. The night was raw and dark, the wind cried out like a human voice in agony, the trees rose up around her on every hand, tall grim goblins. The roar of the surf on the beach struck a chill of cold nameless terror to her heart. The awful mystery of night and solitude chilled the blood in her veins. She stopped, afraid to go on, and looked back. Some one was entering the drawing-room from the hall, and the dread of being seen there, counteracted that other dread. She went on through the wet grass, and struck into the path leading to the terrace. The memory of the night when she had walked that path with her dead grandfather, and heard the first warning of her mysterious danger, came back to her, with a pang like death.

“Poor, poor grandpapa,” she thought, “the danger you dreaded so much has come at last. Thank God you have not lived to see this night!”

On the terrace she lingered for a moment, out of breath. She leaned against the iron railing, and looked down at the black gulf of water, roaring at her feet.

“If the worst come,” she thought, “and it were not a crime, how easily one could escape, after all.”

She drew back, shuddering at her own temptation,

and turned toward the tangled path leading through the wood to the ruined summer-house.

"No, no, no!" she said, inwardly; "never that! If what I fear does come, there will be no need of suicide. My days in this world will be few indeed. May Heaven strengthen me to meet the worst!"

She had to feel her way among the trees along the dark pathway. A faintly glimmering light from the broken window of the summer-house told her the man she had come to meet was there before her. Her heart beat so fast that she turned faint and sick. For a moment only—the next she was rapping at the closed door. It opened instantly, and Eulalie Sutherland and Gaston Benoir stood face to face.

There was a moment's blank pause. A dark lantern, brought thoughtfully by the ex-Troubadour, stood lighted on the old table; and by its uncertain glimmer the two stood looking intently at each other. Beside the lantern stood a black bottle, and a strong odor of whisky and cigar-smoke showed how the gentleman had beguiled the tedious time of waiting.

They stood and looked at each other. Miss Sophie Weldon had once remarked that Mrs. Sutherland and Mr. Benoir resembled each other, and Miss Weldon was right. There was a resemblance—something in the outline of the face, in the peculiar beauty of the

mouth and chin, and in the full oriental eye, not sufficiently marked to strike a casual observer; but there. In that interval of silence, during which the rain beat against the broken windows, and the wind howled dismally through the wood, the place looked strange and eerie enough, shadows lurking fitfully in every corner, and the man and woman mutely confronting each other. Only for an instant—all Mr. Benoir's suave politeness returned then; and, with a low bow and an easy, off-hand manner, he drew forward the only chair the summer-house contained.

“Good-evening, Mrs. Sutherland,” he said, in a tone of easy familiarity; “pray take this seat, and accept my thanks for the favor of this interview and your punctuality. You see,” pointing to the black bottle, and seating himself on the table, “I brought a friend with me to shorten the time of waiting. Pray sit down; you will fatigue yourself standing.”

Eulalie sank into the chair, her dilated eyes, unnaturally large and bright, fixed on his face with but one expression—that of intensest fear. She would have stood, but she trembled so it was impossible.

“That is right,” said easy Mr. Benoir, with a satisfied nod; “now we can talk comfortably. Were you surprised to receive my letter?”

“No.”

“Ah! I thought not! You recognized me at the

concert that night—that is to say, you recognized my name on the bills, and fainted. Well, I don't wonder; it must have been a shock. Do you know, Mrs. Sutherland, you gave me a shock, too, when you entered here five minutes ago?"

She did not speak. Some subtle fascination, beyond her power to control, kept her eyes riveted immovably to his face.

"My dear Eulalie—pardon the familiarity, but you and I don't need to stand on ceremony—you bear the most startling resemblance to your mother—you don't remember her, do you?—and for one second, when you entered, I fancied the dead had arisen. Your grandfather—he was a sly old fox, too—must have known, if ever I saw you, I should recognize you by the resemblance."

Still she sat silent; still her widening eyes never left his face. Mr. Benoir, no way disconcerted, talked on.

"You don't speak, Mrs. Sutherland, and you look frightened, I think. Don't be alarmed; there is not the slightest occasion, I assure you. I am the most conscientious of mankind where ladies are concerned, particularly to my own—"

He stopped. Eulalie had held out both hands with a sort of gasping cry.

"Don't!" she said, "don't! don't! don't! If you have any mercy, spare me!"

"My dear child," said Mr. Benoir, "if you cry out like that, some one may hear you. Compose yourself; I would not distress you for the world, especially in our first interview. By-the-bye, won't they miss you in there?" nodding toward the house.

"No."

"Does that pale-faced, fair-haired young woman, Miss Sutherland, know you are out?"

"I think not."

"That's right; keep her in the dark; she's as keen as a razor, that demure damsel. And now let's come to business; for it's confoundedly raw in here, and I have a long walk before me in the wind and rain. How long have you known your own story?"

"Not three years."

"Ah! that cunning old fox kept it as long as he could. You knew it before you were married?"

"Yes," she answered, shivering and drawing her shawl closer around her.

"Mr. Sutherland doesn't know, of course?"

"No."

"No one in all this big world knows it but you and I?"

"No one."

Mr. Benoir's black eyes flashed with triumphant

malice ; Mr. Benoir's handsome face wore the look of a demon.

"Then, my pretty little Eulalie, you are utterly and entirely and irrevocably in my power! Mine, almost body and soul!"

She rose up, came a step forward, and fell down on her knees before him, holding up her clasped hands.

"Spare me!" she cried ; "for God's sake have mercy on me! I am in your power beyond earthly hope ; but be merciful, as you expect mercy. For my husband's sake, for my child's sake, for my dead mother's sake, have mercy!"

His face darkened and grew stern as he looked down on her from under his bent black brows.

"Get up, Mrs. Sutherland," he said, "you look at me with your mother's face, and speak to me with your mother's voice, but it only hardens me the more. What did your mother care for me? What right have I to cherish her memory? I have a long debt of vengeance to pay off. I owe that dead grandfather of yours a long score, and I am afraid you must settle it. Get up, Eulalie Sutherland. I threaten nothing, I promise nothing. I only say this: I am not a man to forget or forgive. Get up, I say, and listen to me." He held out his hand to assist her, but she shrank from his touch, and arose, precipitately.

Mr. Benoir burst into a laugh.

"You don't like to touch me, my pretty Eulalie; there is pollution in it, isn't there? Is it the black blood in my veins you are afraid of, or what? Don't be too fastidious, my dainty little rosebud, you may find it in your way hereafter. I say, have you got any money?"

"No."

"You little simpleton! Let me see that ring on your left hand. A diamond, by Jove! Diamonds are very pretty—give it to me!"

Eulalie shrank back.

"I cannot," she said, "it is my husband's gift."

"Let him give you another, then; tell him you lost it. Give it me."

"No, no," she pleaded faintly, "not that! If you want money, you shall have it, as much as you desire, but not this!"

"I will have this and the money, too. Give me that ring."

She dared not refuse. She dropped the ring into his extended hand, trembling before him. Mr. Benoir held it to the light, the splendid jewel flashing forth rainbow-fire, and put it complacently on his little finger.

"Thanks, my pretty Eulalie. It is a tight fit, but I can wear it, I think. It will serve to remind me of you, my dear, until we meet again. When am I to have that happiness?"

"Why do you ask me?" said Eulalie, her voice trembling pitiably; "you know it must be whenever you wish."

"Very true—but I like to be as accommodating as possible. I don't know at present when I shall take a fancy to have another chat in this airy little rendezvous—when I do, I shall drop you a line. How much money can you conveniently spare me to-morrow?"

"How much do you want?"

"Let me see," Mr. Benoir said, reflectively. "I like to begin moderately. Suppose we say a thousand dollars."

"I cannot get you so much to-morrow," replied Eulalie; "you will have to wait a day or two. Is there nothing else—I must be going?"

"Are you in such a hurry to leave me? Well, I'm in a hurry myself; so it's no matter. No, there's nothing more at present—I'll see you again before long, and again and again. I don't mean to drop your charming acquaintance, my pretty Eulalie, now that I've made it. Fellows, like me, knocking about this big world and getting more kicks than halfpence, don't often get into such society as I'm moving in at present. Talking of knocking about, do you know, Mrs. Sutherland, I have searched every inch of this habitable globe for you, and was about giving up the hunt when I came here and met you. You'll send the money in a day or two without fail?"

"I will send you the money," Eulalie said "Heaven knows how gladly I would buy your silence with every farthing I possess. But before you go—you have not promised to keep my secret."

"No," said Mr. Benoir, getting off the table; "and what's more, I don't mean to promise. No, my pretty little Eulalie, you are the image of your mother, and I don't forget her or my own wrongs, or the debt I owe old Rohan, and old Rohan's son, and I won't promise. They're both dead, so they can't pay the debt; but you, whom they both loved, are alive, and must. I hate to be ungallant to a lady, particularly a young and pretty one; but, my little beauty, I really am afraid you must."

She covered her face with her hands, with a low, despairing cry. Mr. Benoir pocketed the black bottle, took up his dark-lantern, pulled up the collar of his overcoat, pulled down his felt hat over his eyes, and turned toward the door. Eulalie dropped her hands from before her face—her face, blanched to the color of death, and held them out to him in a last appeal.

"Can nothing buy your silence? Can nothing of all I possess tempt you to be secret?"

"Nothing, my pretty Eulalie."

"Have you no pity for me—a weak, helpless girl, who has never wronged you?"

"My dear Mrs. Sutherland," Mr. Benoir said, with

a sardonic smile ; “ you are a Christian, a most devoted daughter of the Old Church, they tell me, and you know where it is written ‘ The sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children, even unto the third and fourth generations.’ Satan quoting Scripture, eh ? Good night, my pretty little Eulalie ; don’t stand too long here, or you may catch cold. I shall expect to hear from you in the course of the week—until then adieu, and *au revoir !*”

He raised his hat with ceremonious politeness, but with that derisive smile still on his handsome, sinister face, and went out. The path through the wood was in inky blackness—the slanting rain drove in his face, and the blast waved and surged, like the voice of an angry giant, through the trees. The dark lantern he carried served to show him the way through the gloomy woodland aisle.

“ A bad night,” thought Mr. Benoir, looking up at the black sky ; “ and a dismal walk from here to St. Mary’s. But if it were raining cats, dogs, and pitchforks, I should go through it all for the sake of the interview that is just past. Poor little Eulalie ! what an unlucky little beauty it is, after all ! If the debt I owe the Rohans were a trifle less heavy than it is, I should be tempted to take her fortune, every stiver of it, and then let her go. As it is, that is out of the question. Gold is sweet, but revenge is sweeter. No,

my poor little, pretty little Eulalie, there is no help for you. Oh, confound it! I shall break my neck!"

Stumbling along in the darkness, under the dripping trees, with the wind and rain in his face, Mr. Benoir had enough to do to preserve the even tenor of his way, without looking behind him. A dark, shadowy figure, flitting noiselessly along after him, was therefore unseen—a figure that stopped when he stopped, that hurried on when he hurried on, and that never lost sight of him. A figure that had followed him from St. Mary's earlier in the evening, that had watched him through the grounds of Maplewood at a safe distance; and that, crouching under the trees behind the summer-house, had waited until the interview within was over. A figure that kept steadily behind him, like his own shadow—a woman's figure, slender and tall, wearing a long black mantle, with the hood down over her head. That shrouding hood would have hid her face, even if there had been light enough to show it—but she was only a blacker shadow among shadows, moving swiftly and noiselessly, as a shadow should. Mr. Benoir, absorbed in his own dark, vengeful thoughts, never once looked back, never once dreamed that the destroying angel was stealthily and surely on his own track!

CHAPTER XV.

REBECCA, THE HOUSEMAID.



MISS LUCY SUTHERLAND, in her capacity of housekeeper at Maplewood, was not very much liked. The servants had a way of stigmatizing her as "that sneaking cat," from a fashion she had of stealing upon them unobserved and noiseless, and at the most unexpected time. If Elizabeth the cook, or Fanny the waitress, smuggled their young men in for lunch in the kitchen, or a stolen tête-à-tête in the servants' hall, Miss Lucy glided down upon them, shod with the shoes of silence, pale and vengeful. Elizabeth the cook threw up her situation after a week or two, in disgust.

"I ain't no fault to find with you or master, ma'am," Elizabeth said, in explanation, to Eulalie; "you're as good as gold, both; and keep your places as ladies and gentlemen should, and does not go a pryin' and a sneakin' into the kitchen, where you ain't no business, at all times and seasons, hindering of folks from doing their work, and hunting round like an old

cat after a mouse, for followers. I can't stand it, ma'am, and I won't; so I give notice and leaves when my month's up."

Elizabeth left accordingly; and so did Fanny the waitress, and Sarah the housemaid. Another cook and waitress were procured, after some trouble; for Miss Lucy was hard to please in the matter of qualifications and reference, and applicants were few and far between. The housemaid seemed to be a still more difficult matter; half-a-dozen had applied, been weighed, and found wanting, and the office was still open.

Miss Sutherland sat in the housekeeper's room, in an arm-chair before a table, poring over accounts. A pretty room, and sacred to Miss Lucy; a bright-tinted carpet on the floor, pretty pictures on the papered walls, lounges and easy chairs scattered about. The table was strewn with bills, receipts, and passbooks; and Miss Sutherland, pen in hand, was busy balancing her ledger. The morning sunlight streamed in an amber flood through the open window, and the songs of countless birds and the scent of lilac and rose-tree came in on the morning breeze. No trace of last night's storm remained; the sky was as blue as Miss Lucy's blue eyes, and a great deal brighter. Suddenly, a shadow came between her and the sunlight; and, looking up, she saw Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland, arm in arm, loitering past, on their way to the terrace.

Arthur looked handsome and happy ; he was laughingly relating some incident of the previous evening's entertainment, and Eulalie looked, as she always did, beautiful. Her long black ringlets, falling behind her taper waist, were just shown off by the white muslin skirt, and the rosy ribbons that trimmed it lent a glow to the creamy pallor of the Creole face. Young and handsome, rich and happy, loving and beloved—surely they were an enviable pair. Lucy Sutherland's wrongs—the love she had given unsought, the miserable, sinful, hidden passion that gnawed at her heart still, and made her life a torment, rose up in wrathful rebellion as she looked.

“How long the time is coming!” she said to herself; “how long, how long! Of what use to me are my suspicions, or the tangible evidence of her own handwriting, addressed to this strange man, without further proof. Where was she last night, out in the storm? She looked like a living corpse, when I met her, stealing in, dripping wet, and started back from me as if I had been a ghost. How he bends over her, looking down in her sallow, baby face, and big, meaningless black eyes, as if there was no one in the world but herself! Arthur Sutherland, you are a fool where that pale-faced, foreign hypocrite is concerned; and I will prove it to your satisfaction and my own some day, before long. Well, what do you want?”

She turned harshly upon the servant who entered, and whose knock she had not deigned to answer.

"Miss Lucy, there is a young woman in the kitchen come after the housemaid's place."

"Who is she? Where does she come from?"

"From Boston, she says. She is a very respectable-looking young woman, and brings first-class references, she says."

"Show her in, then."

The girl retreated for a minute, and re-appeared, showing in the new applicant for the housemaid's place. Miss Sutherland, something of a physiognomist, was struck at the first glance by the young woman. She stood before her, stately and tall, slender and graceful—a handsome young woman, beyond a doubt. Her face was so thin and dark, and the crimson of her cheeks and lips so living and vivid, that it startled you strangely. Her eyes were as black and glittering as glass beads, and her coal-black hair was straight and thick as an Indian's. There might have been something fierce, perhaps, in those glittering black eyes; something bitter and shrewish in the sharply-compressed lips; but she stood respectfully enough before the young lady, to be inspected. Her dress was very simple, and exquisitely neat.

"You have come about the housemaid's place," Miss Sutherland said, at length, motioning her to a seat.

"Yes, Miss," the young woman replied, sitting down, with her gloved hands folded in her lap, and looking steadfastly at Miss Sutherland out of her shining dark eyes.

"What is your name?"

"Rebecca Stone."

"Where did you live last?"

"With a family in Boston, Miss; I have my references with me. I came to St. Mary's a few days ago, to see some friends; and hearing you wanted a housemaid, I thought I would apply for the place. I am sure I can give satisfaction, Miss."

The young woman spoke with a fluent ease and a quiet self-possession that impressed Miss Sutherland. She took another steadfast and suspicious look at her, but the black-eyed young woman did not flinch.

"How old are you?" was the next query.

"Twenty-five, Miss."

"And how long have you been at service?"

"A great many years, Miss, in the very best families. Here is my character from the last lady I lived with, Mrs. Walker, of Beacon street."

Lucy glanced carelessly over the paper.

"She speaks well of you," she said; "we are very much in need of a housemaid at present; and I like your appearance better than that of the other applicants; so, if the terms suit you, you may come."

"The terms suit me very well, Miss."

"Yes. And when can you come?"

"Right away, Miss. I can get my things fetched up to-night."

"That will do. Ring the bell, please."

The new housemaid obeyed.

"I suppose you understand," said Miss Sutherland, "that no followers are allowed?"

A faint smile dawned and faded on the young woman's face.

"I understand, Miss. I don't think I shall give you any trouble on that head."

Again Lucy looked at her suspiciously. There was something in her tone and manner of speaking unlike that of any one of her class she had ever had to deal with. But the handsome, bold, brunette face before her was as unreadable as a page of Sanskrit; and Rosa, the waitress, came in before she could ask any more questions.

"Rosa," Miss Sutherland said, "this is the new housemaid. Her name is Rebecca, and she can sleep with you. She is going to remain now; so fetch her up-stairs, and let her take off her things."

Rebecca followed Rosa out; and Lucy looked after the tall, stately figure of her new servant, with a glance of considerable interest.

"There is character in the gypsy face of that girl,"

she said to herself ; " those bold, black eyes of hers are very large print indeed. I don't think she has been a housemaid all her life, her assertion to the contrary notwithstanding. I shall keep my eye on her, I think."

Once again the sunlight was darkened. Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland were loitering back in most lover-like fashion, and the sight drove the new housemaid out of her thoughts. She resumed her work, but with a dark frown disfiguring her pale face. She could not grow used to the daily sight of the happiness of these two. It half maddened her sometimes to see them loving and beloved, and blessed with all earthly blessings, and feel that it was out of her power to blight that happiness. No Indian savage could have been more thoroughly cruel, and cold-blooded, and revengeful, than she. She could have seen the woman she hated tied to a stake, and burning to death ; and folded her arms, and smiled at the sight.

Miss Sutherland kept her promise to watch the new housemaid, but she only had her labor for her pains. Rebecca's conduct was above reproach. No housemaid had ever given such satisfaction at Maplewood before. No duty was left unfulfilled, no work was slighted or neglected. She had a rapid, tidy way of doing things, that left her considerable time to herself, but she never seemed to want it. When her regular duties were

concluded, and she might have amused herself gossiping in the kitchen with her fellow-servants, she would come to Miss Sutherland for sewing, and sit at one of the front windows by herself, stitching away industriously. She was altogether such a model, this Rebecca, that Lucy took quite a fancy to her, before the end of the first week. This in itself would have been enough to make her fellow-servants dislike her, but her silent and reticent manner had already done that. Cook and lady's maid, waitress and coachman, joined together in stigmatizing her as "that stuck-up thing," and lost no opportunity of making her feel their petty malice. But Rebecca had the temper of an angel, and nothing ever came of it. The black eyes might flash flame, the thin lips compress until nothing remained of them but a crimson line, the dark face might pale with suppressed anger, but no explosion took place. If she had a temper to match those flaming black eyes, it was well under control. The suppressed fire might break out to terrible purpose, you could see, but not while that iron will held it chained. She was Miss Sutherland's puzzle, still—the reticence of the girl matched her own, and baffled her, and she could learn nothing more of her past history than she had heard that first day. The handsome housemaid created more sensation at Maplewood than ever housemaid created before. Even Arthur was struck by her appearance.

"I say, Lucy," he said one day, when Rebecca swept in her stately way across the drawing-room, with baby Eulalie in her arms; "where did you pick up this new handmaiden? She looks more like an Indian queen than an every-day domestic."

Lucy explained.

"She's a remarkable-looking young person," said Mr. Sutherland, stretching himself on a lounge, and opening the morning paper; "and very decidedly good-looking. She'll have all the stable-boys about the place falling in love with her, if you're not careful, Lucy."

But Rebecca kept stable-boys and everything else masculine at a discreet distance. They might admire those flashing black eyes, and tar-black tresses, but they must admire afar off. She never gossiped, she never flirted, she never idled, this remarkable new housemaid. With the plain sewing Miss Sutherland gave her, she would sit at one of the front windows and work as if her life depended on it, until the stars shone in the sky. She was the pink and perfection of housemaids, but Lucy Sutherland was not satisfied. All secrecy, and self-suppression, and industry only made her the more suspicious.

"Why is she so secretive of her past life?" she thought; "why does she avoid her fellow-servants, and keep steadily to herself? Why is she in so much

hurry with her proper work, and so fond of sitting sewing at the front windows? There is more in all this than meets the eye."

Miss Sutherland, as usual, was right. Rebecca, the housemaid, like herself, was on the watch; and the person watched for came in the beginning of the second week. It was a sultry August evening—not a breath of air stirring the maples and hemlocks, and the setting sun piercing their greenish gloom with long lances of red fire. The girl sat watching the western sky, flooded with the scarlet glory of the sunset, and crossed with billows of yellow gold. The red light flashed back from her brilliant eyes, and wove gleams of fire in the waves of her ink-black hair, gilded the roses on her cheeks, and lighted her bright, dark face with a new beauty. She sat with her chin on her hand, looking at all this glory of coloring, her work, for once, dropping idly in her lap—lost in thought. The quiet house was as still, this hot August evening, as the enchanted castle of the Sleeping Beauty. No sound louder than the slipping of a snake among the dry underbrush, the chirping of a restless bird in its nest, or the mysterious fluttering of leaves stirred by no wind, came to disturb her reverie. The sound of the sea was like the faint, ceaseless sound of an æolian harp, and Maplewood was hushed in the deep calm of eventide. The servants had drawn their chairs out

into the cool porch, and were enjoying themselves there ; but this unsocial Rebecca had no desire to join them. She sat there as still as if the calm enchantment of the place and hour had fallen upon her, too : or as if, like the Sleeping Beauty, she waited for the coming of the prince to rouse her to life.

Slowly, out of the sunset sky, the blaze of the sunset fire died. Slowly it paled and faded, and the big white August moon sailed up, serene amid the constellations in the deep-blue arch. With the moonlight came the prince, as if he belonged to it, heralded by vapory, scented circles of cigar-smoke. Darkly splendid—handsome enough for any earthly prince—Mr. Gaston Benoir lounged up the avenue, smoking at his ease. Beauty unadorned is something very nice, no doubt ; but beauty adorned in the height of the fashion is something considerably nicer. The ex-Troubadour had rejuvenated his outward man within the last week, and appeared now arrayed within an inch of his life, but in perfect taste. Very few could have looked at Mr. Benoir, thus dressed, and in the dusky splendor of his southern beauty, without turning to look again, as they might at some exquisite picture. The handsome housemaid, from her post at the window, looked at him with a strange, wild fire gleaming in her black eyes. There was something fiercely-passionate, eager, and

tender, withal, in that look ; and the color came and went on her face, and her breath caught itself in fluttering gusts.

“ At last !” she said, between her set teeth, “ at last—at last he has come !”

Screened by heavy damask curtains, the girl sat and watched him, with that dusky fire in her eyes, and that passionate light in her face, until he turned off round an angle, and was hid by the trees. The last rays of the daylight had faded ; the moon’s silver radiance flooded the trees and lawns and gardens and terraces with the light of day. Rebecca rose up, pale with inward excitement, ran up to her room, threw a black shawl loosely over her head, came noiselessly down stairs, and left the house unobserved. There had been a dinner-party that day, and the family were assembled in the drawing-room. Miss Lucy, ever on the watch, was safely out of the way. Out in the moonlight, Rebecca turned in the direction of the seaview terrace, the path Mr. Benoir had taken, and beheld that gentleman leaning lightly on the railing, smoking still, and watching the boats gliding in and out of the moonlight. The housemaid stood still in the shadow cast by a clump of cedars, and waited. He had not heard her, and, enjoying his cigar and the view of moonlight on the ocean, was very slow in turning round. Her dark

dress and the gloom in which she stood kept him from seeing her at first, but she let the shawl slip loose off her head, took one step forward into the light, with his name on her lips : "Gaston !"

CHAPTER XVI.

A LITTLE TANGLE IN MR. BENOIR'S WEB.



R. GASTON BENOIR was a gentleman whose admirable self-possession was not to be easily disturbed; but he started back now in something that was very like consternation.

"The—devil!" said Mr. Benoir.

Lucy Sutherland's strange housemaid came fully out into the broad sheet of moonlight; her long, straight black hair tumbling loose about her shoulders; her great, fierce, black eyes shining like ebon stars.

"No, Gaston, not your master; only one of his angels. You hardly expected to find me here, did you?"

Gaston Benoir replaced his cigar, which, in the shock of the moment he had taken out—all his own cool, phlegmatic self once more.

"Expect to see you here!" he said. "I should as soon have expected to see Queen Victoria! Where did you drop from, Rebecca?"

"From New York last. I tracked you from that city here."

"Tracked me, did you! Come, I like that! And what are you doing here, pray?"

"I am the housemaid."

"The what?" cried Mr. Benoir, aghast.

"The housemaid," calmly replied Rebecca; "and I flatter myself Miss Lucy Sutherland never possessed such a domestic treasure before."

Mr. Benoir expressed his feelings in a prolonged whistle.

"Well," he said, "Solomon—I think it was Solomon, or some other wisacre—says, 'There is nothing new under the sun,' and I used to believe it; but hang me if I ever believe it after this. Rebecca Isaacs a housemaid! That goes a little ahead of anything I ever dreamed of."

"Rebecca Stone, if you please. There is no such person as Rebecca Isaacs. Are you not curious to find out how I discovered you were here?"

"No; it's clear enough. That confounded minstrel-troupe, I suppose."

"Exactly. I followed you from New Orleans to New York, from New York to St. Mary's, without pausing."

"The deuce you did!" said Mr. Benoir, with any-

thing but an expression of rapture. "And now that you're here, what do you want, Miss Stone?"

Miss Stone's big black eyes flashed.

"What do I want? And is it Gaston Benoir who asks that question?"

"At your service, Mademoiselle. I never change my name."

She stood and looked at him—very white, her black eyes fierce and wild in the misty moonlight.

"Then you have nothing at all to say to me, Gaston Benoir?"

"No, my dear," said Mr. Benoir, taking her fierce regards very quietly; "nothing that I know of except—good night."

He lifted his hat and was walking away; but Rebecca, the housemaid, stepped before him, and barred his path. With her wild black hair falling loose about her—her deadly pallor and flaming eyes, she looked like some dark prophetess of other days, or some tragedy-queen of modern times.

"No," she said, in a voice deep, suppressed, but none the less threatening. "No, Gaston—we do not part like this. I have not traveled over land and sea, for many a weary day and night, to be left at your sovereign pleasure. No, Gaston, not good night yet!"

"As you please, my dear Rebecca; only this place

being open to every one, and the distance to my hotel of the longest, do be good enough to cut it short."

The suppressed passion throbbing in the girl's white face might have warned him; but he was not to be warned. He stood, leaning carelessly against the trunk of a tree, slowly puffing out clouds of scented vapor, the moonlight illuminating his handsome face, and flashing back from the diamond ring he wore on his little finger. Provokingly nonchalant he stood there, returning Rebecca's fiery glare with supremest unconcern.

"My dear girl," he said, starting up, before the passion she was holding in check would permit her to speak; "if we have to enjoy a tête-à-tête by moonlight, we really must not stand here. Take my arm, and come this way; I know a nice, secluded path, where you can talk and I can smoke to our hearts' content, unobserved. By the way, I hope you don't dislike my cigar—you usen't to, I remember. Ah! this is quite like old times, is it not, Rebecca?"

He drew the girl's arm within his own, and led her down an avenue, lonely enough for anything; where quiet maples shut out even the moonlight. A few bright rays, slanting through the boughs, made lines of light on the turf; and no sound but the solemn murmur of the sea and the trees awoke the echoes of this lonesome forest aisle. Perhaps it was the solemnity of

the place—perhaps it was something in her companion's last words that made the girl's gypsy-face alter so. The white fury there an instant before vanished, and a look of impassioned appeal and despairing love came there instead. She clasped both hands round his arm, and looked up in his handsome face, with all a woman's love, and despair, and hope, in her great black eyes.

"Old times," she said. "Oh, Gaston! you have not forgotten old times?"

Some memory of the past rose up from her heart and choked her voice. Mr. Benoir took out his cigar and daintily knocked off the ashes with the tip of his little finger.

"Forget! of course not. Any more than I ever forget your own dark face, my gypsy! Oh, no; I have an excellent memory, I flatter myself."

"And remembering, you could meet me as you did, and speak to me as you did, not two minutes ago. Oh, Gaston, you have nearly broken my heart."

Again there came that hysterical choking in her throat. Mr. Benoir took out his cigar once more in some alarm. If anything in this mortal life disturbed his equanimity, it was a scene, and there seemed considerable danger of that annoyance just at present.

"Now, Rebecca, don't! don't, I beg! don't make a scene. Don't agitate yourself, my dear girl! it will do you no good, and it will ruffle my feelings beyond de-

scription. Say what you want to say quietly—there is nothing in this world like doing things quietly ; and the worst of you women is, that you never can be brought to understand it. You will flare up ; you will go off into hysterics at a moment's notice ; you will persist in being agitated, and ecstasie, and enthusiastic and ridiculous in the extreme. It is a universal failing of the sex, lamentable to a degree. Calm yourself, my dear Rebecca ; take your time ; don't be in a hurry. Say what you want to say, by all means ; but do it with Christian composure, I beg."

The black-eyed housemaid listened to this harangue as if she neither heard nor comprehended. Both hands were still clasped round his arm—the bold, bright eyes, looking straight before her, not at the leafy arcade through which the moon-rays sifted, but into the past, were soft and misty with love's remembrances. Mr. Benoir, resuming his cigar, regarded his fair companion in some perplexity.

"If pretty little Sophie were here now," he thought, "wouldn't there be a row ! Thank goodness she's not. Confound the women ! what a nuisance the whole race are ; and this she-devil beside me, the worst of all !"

"Gaston," said the girl, "you loved me once ; in those old days, when I was so very, very happy, when I believed, and trusted, and loved you with my whole heart. Gaston, you deserted me—no, do not deny it ; you know

you did. You grew tired of my dark face, and wild black eyes; and you left me. Once I thought, before I knew you, that no man could do that and live. I am a Jewess, and I suppose there is fierce blood in my veins; but I loved you so well!—oh, so well, Gaston, that you never can fathom one iota of that passionate worship. I loved you so well that I forgave your desertion, and became a coward; as poor, pitiful and weak a craven as any love-sick woman can be. I followed you here, caring nothing for long, weary days of travel, for hunger, sleepless nights, for no toil, or trial, or disappointment, so that I found you, so that I won you to love me again. I have found you, Gaston; and now, is all the love of other days dead so soon for poor Rebecca?"

She looked at him with a look that is sometimes seen in the eyes of dogs, crouching at their master's feet, expecting a blow. Usually her color was bright enough; but the pale, cold moonlight itself was not paler than her face now.

Mr. Benoir had smoked out his cigar, and threw it among the ferns and strawberry vines, where it glowed like a red sinister eye watching them.

"My dear Rebecca," Mr. Benoir began, in an expostulating tone, "I told you not to excite yourself—to be calm; and you are excited, and you are not calm. You are as white as a ghost, and your big black eyes

are flashing sparks of fire. Come, be a good girl; give me a kiss, and make up friends."

This was soothing; but, perhaps, not as satisfactory an answer as could be wished. Mr. Benoir kissed her as composedly as he did everything else; and the girl's head fell on his shoulder with a great gasping sob. Esau sold his birthright for something to eat—characteristic of the sex; had Esau been a woman, he would have sold it for a kiss, and thought he had a bargain! You see, a woman madly in love is blind, mad, and a fool; let the happy man tell her black is white, and she will believe him, against the evidence of her own eyesight and the assertion of all the world. Young women with big black eyes and tar-black hair are apt to love and hate pretty strongly; and really Mr. Benoir was as handsome as an angel. "Love me little, love me long," is the most sensible of old adages—this love at furnace heat is not the kind that lasts; and its unhappy victims, tortured by it for a time, are very likely to go off into the other extreme of hatred and abhorrence at a moment's notice.

Mr. Benoir came to a halt in the moonlit arcade, and put his arm round Luey Sutherland's housemaid's waist—it was the least any young man, not a St. Kevin, could do—and waited with exemplary patience for a fit of hysterical sobbing to pass off.

"It's very odd," said Mr. Benoir to himself, phil-

osophically, "the nature of these women. Now, if I had told this girl to go to the deuce, and be done with it, she would have flared up, no doubt—she's the kind to do it—but she would not have shed a tear. Instead, for the sake of peace and quietness, I give her a kiss, which, I suppose, is what she wants, and lo! she drops down and drenches my coat-collar immediately. I wish I had never made love in my life. I wish I was well out of this scrape. Rebecca Isaacs is not the kind of woman one can court for pastime and desert at pleasure. I shall have to tell lies by the yard to keep her quiet for the present, at least."

As telling lies was quite in Mr. Benoir's line of life, and as he was as perfect in the art as it is possible for poor human nature to be, it was no difficult task to deceive a woman who loved him.

"I acted wrong in going off as I did, beyond a doubt," Mr. Benoir admitted, with captivating frankness. "I don't ask you to excuse that, Rebecca; but believe me when I tell you no other has ever taken your place. I am not the sort of fellow to fall in love and out every other week, and I always intended when I had a few thousands saved to go South and be married. I knew you would wait for me, Rebecca; but, somehow, the thousands are very slow in coming. What with going round, and one thing and another, a fellow's money goes before he knows it, and it is as

much as he can do to keep himself, much less a wife. There, you have it; and I never mean"—said Mr. Benoir, with the air of a Spartan—"to marry until I can support a wife as a wife should be supported."

"Gaston," Rebecca said, her dark eyes soft and beautiful in their new and happy light; "do you think one who loved you would care for your poverty? Oh, my love! you know me better than that!"

"And I know myself," said Mr. Benoir, firmly. "I care for you a great deal too much to entail on you the trials of a poor man's wife. No, Rebecca, you must have faith in me, and wait a little longer. My prospects are brighter just at present than they have been for years."

Some secret exultation in his tone that he could not quite repress made the girl look at him, and notice, for the first time, the new broadcloth suit and flashing diamond ring.

"You have a prosperous look, Gaston," she said. "What are the prospects of which you speak?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Benoir, mysteriously, "that is my secret. A little speculation, my dear—a speculation, that, I think, will make me a rich man."

"Is it anything connected with Mrs. Sutherland?" she asked.

Mr. Benoir stood still, abruptly, his dark face paling, his eyes full of sudden alarm.

"Mrs. Sutherland!" he repeated. "What do you know of Mrs. Sutherland, Rebecca Isaacs?"

"So," said Rebecca, quietly, "I see I am right. It was Mrs. Sutherland, then, who met you last Thursday night in the summer-house over there. I never was quite sure of it until now."

With that startled pallor still on his face, the ex-Troubadour grasped the girl's arm with a grip that made her wince.

"I say, Rebecca," he cried, his eyes fierce, his mouth stern, "I want to know what this means. How came you to know anything of my meeting Mrs. Sutherland in the summer-house? Have you been at your old tricks—acting the spy?"

"Yes. Let go my arm, sir! You hurt me!"

"I shall hurt you worse, perhaps," said Mr. Benoir, between his set teeth, "before I have done. Tell me what you have heard?"

"I heard nothing. Let go my arm, I tell you, Gaston! You hurt me!"

"You heard nothing!" said Mr. Benoir, slightly releasing his grasp, but still stern and pale. "How do you come to know anything at all of the matter, then?"

"Simply enough," Rebecca replied. "I came to St. Mary's that very day, and stopped in the hotel opposite yours. From my window, I watched you loitering all the afternoon, in and out, on the veranda,

smoking and reading ; and at dusk, I saw you start for Maplewood. I followed you--don't scowl, Gaston—I had reason to distrust you—followed you to Maplewood through the rain and darkness, saw you enter the summer-house, and crouched down outside to watch and wait. Half an hour after I saw a woman enter ; a little woman, so muffled up that I could not see her face, although I did my best. Neither could I hear—again no fault of mine ; and when you left the summer-house, I followed you back to the village. I thought that night the woman who stole to meet you was my successful rival, and how I hated her, all unknown ! What dark thoughts the devil was putting in my head as I walked after you in the darkness, perhaps it is as well for your peace of mind not to know."

Mr. Benoir drew a long breath of unspeakable relief. He knew the woman he was talking to, he knew when to believe her, and when to doubt. She was telling the truth now, and he was safe—she had not heard what had passed, after all. Once more, he drew her arm within his own—they had been standing all this time—and recommenced his walk up and down the shadowy path.

"I don't doubt it ! You felt like running your stiletto into me—didn't you, my love ? Are you jealous still ?"

"No."

“And why not, pray?”

“Because I have seen Mrs. Sutherland since that night; and I know it was she who met you in the summer-house.”

“The deuce! How do you know it?”

“I looked well at my supposed rival, Gaston—her height, her gait; and no one at Maplewood corresponds with the height and gait of the woman who met you but Mrs. Sutherland.”

“Well,” said Mr. Benoir, looking at her sideways from under his eyelashes; “and supposing it to have been Mrs. Sutherland—Mrs. Sutherland is a very pretty woman: the prettiest woman I think I ever saw—your pardon, my love; why are you not jealous still?”

“Because Mrs. Sutherland does not love you!”

“Ah! Are you sure?”

“Quite sure,” said Rebecca, calmly. “Mrs. Sutherland does not love you, and does love her husband with her whole heart’s devotion. No, Gaston, I am not jealous. Mrs. Sutherland met you that night, I am convinced, but not to play the false wife. Whatever brought her to commit such an act of folly, love has no share in it.”

“You are right, Rebecca,” Mr. Benoir said, with saddened gravity; “love had no share in it. Since you know so much, I may as well tell you more. Mrs. Sutherland did meet me that night, very much against

her will, poor little woman; but the secret that gives me power over her is no guilty amour. She is no rival of yours, Rebecca. She hates me, as I suppose an angel would hate Lucifer; and there is little love lost. Some day I will tell you what this secret is; some day, when you are my wife. And," thought Mr. Benoir, considering the sentence mentally, "it is very likely I will, when you are my wife."

"When I am your wife," repeated the girl, wearily. "Ah! how very, very long that time is in coming. I had hoped long ago to have been your wife."

"The time will come soon now, my dear. Be patient and wait, and trust me a little longer, my own. And now, before we part, tell me how you ever came to be a servant here?"

"I had to do something; and I heard you came here every day. I found out a housemaid was wanted. I applied for the place, got it, and fill it admirably, as I told you before."

"You're a wonderful girl," said Gaston Benoir, looking at her in real admiration; "a genius, my gypsy! Will they not miss you within there; or is it 'my night out'?"

Rebecca laughed slightly.

"Oh, no! I have no night out, and no followers. Miss Lucy thinks me the pink and pattern of all housemaids."

"And how do you like Miss Lucy?"

"Not at all! I should hate her, if it were worth the trouble. She studies me, and I study her. I don't know what she makes me out, but I have set her down as the greatest hypocrite that ever lived."

"Strong language, my dear. What has Miss Lucy Sutherland done to offend you?"

"Nothing to offend me. We get on most amicably together, and I know her to be an arch-hypocrite all the time. How she does hate Mrs. Sutherland, to be sure!"

"Hates her, does she?"

"Yes, as only one jealous woman can hate another."

"Jealous! You never mean to say, Rebecca—"

"I do mean to say Lucy Sutherland is furiously jealous of her cousin's wife. She hates her for her beauty and her riches, and perhaps for her husband!"

Mr. Benoir uttered a very prolonged "Oh!"

"Trust one woman to read another, Gaston! And now, for to-night, we must part; Miss Lucy must not miss her model housemaid. I don't think she believes in me as entirely as she pretends; and, while I remain here, I don't wish to give her any grounds for suspicion. When can I see you again, Gaston?"

She clasped her hands again round his arm, and

looked up in his handsome face with eyes full of love and hope.

"Oh," said Mr. Benoir, "all times are alike to me; but, if you don't wish to excite talk, I suppose our interviews had better be clandestine. Let me see—this is Tuesday—suppose you meet me here Friday evening again. And, in the meantime, watch the Sutherland family—Mrs. Sutherland particularly—and fetch as much news with you as you can when you come. I feel an interest in that little lady. I shall tell you why when you are Mrs. Benoir."

He stooped and kissed her. They were out in the moonlight; and the gypsy face of the girl was radiant.

"Oh, my love! my love!" she cried, her face dropping on his shoulder, "you know I am your very slave; ready to obey your every command, ready to die for you, if it were necessary. Oh, Gaston! I have endured more than you can dream of to reach you. If you prove false to me now, I shall die!"

"No," said Mr. Benoir, laughing lightly; "you don't mean that, Rebecca! it is I who should die!"

Rebecca lifted her head, a strange, wild fire in the depths of her great black eyes.

"Yes," she said, slowly, "you should die!"

Mr. Benoir recoiled a little. The girl was terribly in earnest—terrible in her love, most terrible in her

hatred. For a moment, a chill of cold fear made the young man shiver in the warm air.

“Pshaw!” he said, impatiently, “what are we talking of? Good night, and pleasant dreams.”

There was a most lover-like embrace; and then the dark housemaid flitted into the house; and Mr. Benoir, with his hands in his pockets, went whistling softly on his way, in no pleasant humor, however, for his brows were knit, and his face stern.

“Confound the girl!” he thought; “has Satan sent her here to balk me! I wish he had her, body and bones; for she is as near akin to him as anything in woman’s shape can well be. I have heard of the transmigration of souls; and, if there be anything in the matter, I fancy the soul of a tiger must have got into her body. Rebecca Isaacs, I wish the old demon had you!”

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE SCENT.



LUCY SUTHERLAND stood in the beautiful breakfast-parlor of Maplewood, looking thoughtfully out at the summer prospect of swelling meadows, where the slow cows grazed ; of dark pine woods, cool and fragrant ; and the nearer prospect of lawn, and glade, and flower-garden, all steeped in the yellow glory of the August sunshine. The early breeze, with the saline freshness of the sea, fluttered the white lace curtains and stirred the roses and the geraniums and morning-glories in the parterre below. The sea itself, boundless and blue, and flashing back the radiant sunshine, spread out before her ; and over all, land and sea, brooded the blessed calm of country life. But Lucy Sutherland's blue eyes looked neither at the green fields nor the blue sea—they were turned inward in her dark thoughts. Very bitter thoughts for one so young and fair as she looked, standing there, with the sunshine making a halo on her fair hair, and the sea wind toying with the azure rib-

bons trimming her pretty morning-dress. Beautifully neat and fresh everything she wore ; she looked a very fireside-fairy, delicate and womanly in outward seeming, most evil and unwomanly at heart. She was alone in the room—that is to say, Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland were not down yet ; but Rosa, the waitress, was setting the table, humming a little tune to herself the while. Presently, Miss Sutherland turned round.

“Rosa, has James gone to the post-office yet?”

“Oh, yes, Miss, long ago.”

“It is time he was back. Go and—”

Miss Sutherland stopped. James, errand-boy of the house, came in with the letter-bag. Rosa laid it on the table, finished her task, and left the room, and Miss Lucy opened the bag and took out its contents. Some papers for Mr. Sutherland, half a dozen letters, one for herself from her mother, two for Mrs. Sutherland, one in the irregular scrawl of Augusta, the other—Lucy dropped the rest and stood looking at it.

“Postmarked in the village,” she thought. “Who can be her correspondent ? It is a woman’s hand surely ; but what woman in St. Mary’s writes to Mrs. Sutherland ? Can it be—”

She paused—stopped her very thoughts. An idea that was like an electric flash made her clutch the letter suddenly and fiercely, her heart throbbing against her side. The hall-clock struck nine—half an hour yet be

fore Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland would descend to breakfast. Hiding the letter in a pocket in her dress, she went up-stairs to her own room and examined it. It was a common buff envelope, the gummed flap stuck down in the usual way. She held it up between herself and the light, but the yellow envelope was too thick, not a word could be made out.

"I shall know for all that," thought Lucy, looking at the mysterious letter. "All is fair in war, they say. Eulalie Sutherland has no female correspondent in St. Mary's. I know as well as I am living that this letter is from that man, Gaston Benoir."

Miss Sutherland rose deliberately, lit her gas, held a knife in the flame until it was heated, and, with the utmost care and precision, opened the envelope without tearing it. She took out a folded sheet of note-paper, written in a bold, big hand, not at all like the spidery tracery of the address, and ravenously devoured its contents. It was very brief.

"MY DEAR MRS. SUTHERLAND:—Meet me to-morrow-night at our former trysting-place, and at the same hour. Don't let your pocket be quite so empty, please, as it was the last time. Devotedly, G. B."

Lucy Sutherland's heart stood still. Intense surprise was for the first moment her only feeling. Whatever she had fancied, she dreamed of nothing so bad as

this. A fierce light of vindictive joy flamed up in the pale blue eyes, and her little thin hand clenched itself, as if the woman she hated was crushed in the grasp.

“At last!” was the triumphant thought; “at last my hour has come! I have hated you for a long time, Eulalie Rohan, but this repays me for all.”

She refolded the letter, replaced it in the envelope, moistened the flap with some liquid gum, and sealed it. It wanted still ten minutes of the breakfast-hour when she returned to the parlor, and she had time to arrange the letters on the table before her cousin and his wife came down. They entered together—Eulalie in a loose white cashmere dressing-gown, leaning on her husband’s arm.

“Good morning, Lucy,” Arthur said. “Our letters have come, I see. Ah! one from my mother, too. You have one from Augusta, I see, Eulalie.”

Eulalie tore it open eagerly, without looking at the one below it. It was as brief and spasmodic as that young lady’s epistles generally were, and Eulalie looked up from it with a smile.

“Augusta’s opinion of Cape May is not very flattering to the place or the people. Philip Sutherland is with them, and she abuses him almost more than Cape May. He is the dullest and most insufferable of idiots, she says, and wanders about all day, smoking and bathing. and lying on the sands, too lazy to live. Cape

May is drearier than the New York Tombs, and the men in it are a set of simpering ninnies. Poor dear Augusta! I am afraid she was in very bad humor with the world and herself when she wrote this letter."

She laid it down and took up the other. Lucy, silently observant, saw the instantaneous pallor that blanched the girlish countenance—the cold turn that made every line of her face rigid. She saw how the hand that opened the letter shook, and how the two were thrust together into the pocket of her dress. She saw how effectually it had taken away her appetite, as she sat with her chocolate growing stagnant in her cup, and the toast untasted on her plate. Mr. Sutherland, absorbed in his own correspondence, saw nothing, so Lucy was good enough to call his attention.

"My dear Mrs. Sutherland," she said, with unwonted solicitude, "I fear you are not well. You eat nothing, and you are looking pale."

"I am very well, thank you," Eulalie said, but her voice faltered; and her husband, looking up, saw the white change that had come over her.

"My dear Eulalie," he said, anxiously, "what is the matter? Your face is as white as your dress. Are you ill?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then, why are you looking so pale, darling?"

She tried to smile, not brave enough to meet the strong, loving eyes fixed upon her.

"Nothing, Arthur. I am perfectly well, I assure you. My looking pale is nothing. Finish your letters and never mind me."

She poured the cold contents of her cup out, and passed it to Lucy to be refilled. Arthur, a little reassured, resumed his reading; but every few minutes his anxious eyes wandered from the paper to his wife's face. Lucy sat, pale, calm, and exultant, slowly eating her breakfast, and revolving in her mind a little plan of her own for the day. She looked at her cousin as he laid down his last letter, and found his anxious gaze still fixed on Eulalie.

"Arthur," she said, as if the thought had just struck her, "who is that young man who seems to have obtained the *entree* of Maplewood so much of late?"

"What young man?" inquired Mr. Sutherland.

"That is what I ask you. A tall, foreign-looking, rather gentlemanly person, dark, and very handsome."

"Dark and very handsome? Why, that must be the man whom Robinson, the gardener, was telling me about. I forget his name—it has a foreign sound, too—Lenoir, or something of that sort."

Eulalie arose suddenly, and walked to the window. Her husband glanced after her in some surprise.

"Have you finished breakfast, my love?"

"Yes, Arthur."

"And tasted nothing," said Lucy. "You really cannot be well, Mrs. Sutherland."

"I am perfectly well."

"And what about this very handsome young foreigner?" resumed Mr. Sutherland. "You have not fallen in love with him, have you, Lucy? Even Robinson was struck by his remarkable good looks."

"No," said Lucy, quietly; "I have not fallen in love with him. Are you aware he is here almost every day?"

"So Robinson tells me. It appears he has the good taste to admire the place, and comes here to smoke, and read novels. He is a gentleman of learned leisure, it seems, and walks to and fro, smoking for a living."

"It is really very remarkable," said Lucy. "Are you quite sure he has no sinister design, Arthur, in thus frequenting the place?"

"My dear girl, what sinister design can he have?"

"Burglary. Your plate-closet is no common temptation."

"I am not afraid. The plate-closet is in your keeping, my dear Lucy, and, consequently, quite safe."

"Well," said Miss Sutherland, rising, "if you feel no anxiety, of course I need not. But if I were you, I would ascertain whether this unknown person's intentions are as he pretends."

In setting back her chair, she tried to see Eulalie's face, but Eulalie evaded her. The vague distrust the Creole had felt from the first of this pale-faced, low-voiced, soft-stepping cousin, had returned this morning stronger than ever before.

Lucy rang for Rosa, and Arthur, coming over, put his arm tenderly around his wife's little waist, and looked down at the face she strove to hide by her falling curls. She was conscious how deadly pale she was, and how utterly unable to account for that paleness.

"My darling," Arthur said; "you are ill. Tell me, love, what is the matter?"

She did not speak. Her poor pale face hid itself on his shoulder, and her little hands clung to him, in the old childish terrified way. She was such a weak, frightened, timid little thing, this childish Creole wife, not a bit like a heroine, that she could only cling there mutely in her distress.

"Tell me, my dearest," Arthur said, more anxiously; "tell me what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing," Eulalie reiterated, trying to steady her rebellious voice, and keep down her frightened heart-beating; "don't ask me, Arthur; it is nothing—it is nothing."

He looked down at the clinging hands, all he could see for the tangled shower of curls, and something missing on one of them, struck him.

"Where is your ring, Eulalie—the ring I gave you last?"

She hurriedly snatched away her hand, and hid it in the folds of her dress. It was a child's act, but she was little more than a child in all things. Arthur stood in wonder; the ring had been his latest gift on her birthday—a cluster diamond his paternal grandmother had worn—an heir-loom in the family, newly set.

"Have you lost your ring, Eulalie?" he said, with a feeling of annoyance, in spite of himself.

"Yes."

Luey, lingering near the door, heard this answer, and passed out. Rosa was coming in, and Mr. Sutherland, looking unusually grave, lifted his wife's face resolutely. He could feel her cold and trembling; and some shadowy distrust, some cold, creeping feeling that all was not right, chilled him. He could see her face was colorless as that of a dead woman's, and her eyes wild with nameless dread.

What did it all mean? He drew her gently out of the room, his face troubled and perplexed. Luey saw him, half leading her up-stairs, and a cold, gratified smile passed over her thin lips.

"Your torments are only commencing, Arthur," she said, softly; "only commencing. The pain you have wrung my heart with—the jealous pain that

exceeds all other earthly torture—you shall feel in your turn. Mine was hidden, no living soul mocked me with their pity; yours shall be known to the wide world."

An hour after, Lucy left the house, in bonnet and shawl, and took the road to the village. It was a hot day—the sun blazing like a wheel of fire in the serene blue sky, and the young lady walked very leisurely. It was a long walk, but she was neither flushed nor dusty when she reached St. Mary's, and astonished Mrs. Weldon by her unlooked-for appearance.

"Dear me, Miss Sutherland," cried that good woman, rising in surprise; "who'd have thought it. Walk right up stairs; the girls are there, and will be right glad to see you! Beautiful day, isn't it?"

"Very beautiful," replied Miss Sutherland; "so much so, that it tempted me out; and feeling very thirsty, after so long a walk, I thought I would stop in here and trouble you for a glass of water."

"Certainly, my dear Miss Sutherland. Come into the parlor, and sit down, and I will fetch it up directly. And how is that pretty dear, Mrs. Arthur?"

"Very well indeed."

Mrs. Weldon threw open the parlor door, and announced Miss Sutherland to an audience of one. Only one of the girls occupied it, and she sat embroidering a handkerchief, and singing softly to herself at

one of the windows. She stopped in her song, and arose, looking quite as much surprised as her mother had done.

"Don't disturb yourself, Miss Sophie," said the young lady, graciously, holding out her gloved hand. "I came in for a drink, and your good mother would fetch me up. I hope I see you well."

"Very well, Miss Sutherland," said Sophie, rather fluttered; "pray sit down."

"I thought the girls were here," said Mrs. Weldon, as her visitor sank gracefully into a seat.

"No, mamma, they're all out. Shall I go and look for them?"

"By no means," interrupted Miss Sutherland, hastily. "I shall be going in a few moments. How pretty that is, Sophie—is it for your wedding?"

Sophie blushed beautifully, as she handed the handkerchief to Miss Sutherland for inspection.

"I heard some rumor of your marriage the other day," continued the young lady. "Who is the happy man, Sophie?"

A man, smoking on the veranda, walked past the open window, as she spoke, and the peach bloom turned to brightest crimson on pretty Sophie's face.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Lucy Sutherland, really surprised. "Is it possible you are going to be married to Mr. Benoir?"

"Hush, Miss Sutherland," cried Sophie, hastily, "here is mother!"

Mrs. Weldon re-entered with a goblet of lemonade, and, excusing herself, left her visitor with her daughter.

"Mother does not like it, you see, Miss Sutherland," said Sophie, still blushing; "because Gaston, poor fellow, was only a Troubadour when he came here, and has, she says, no visible means of support. Mother suspects I don't know what. She does not like poor Gaston, and she will not give her consent."

"Oh, then, you are engaged to Mr. Benoir?"

"Yes, Miss Sutherland; but it is a secret yet, you know."

"You may trust me, Sophie. Why is it your mother suspects him of not being all right?"

"Well, Miss Sutherland, you see, when Gaston came here first, a few weeks ago, he was poor—that is, he was like the rest of the Troubadours, dependent on their concerts for support. I know that, because he told me so himself. But of late he seems to have come into a fortune. He has lots and lots of money, and spends it like water. He has given me and all the girls the loveliest presents, and he wears a splendid diamond ring!"

"A what?" Lucy cried, sharply.

"A beautiful diamond ring, Miss Sutherland, that

must have cost hundreds of dollars. And he won't give any account of all this sudden wealth. That's what's the trouble. He only laughs, and chucks me under the chin, and tells me that he has found the goose that lays the golden eggs. Now, Miss Sutherland, mother naturally doesn't like this, and she suspects him to be all sorts of horrors, and won't give her consent; and I am just as wretched as ever I can be."

Here Miss Weldon applied her handkerchief to her eyes; and Lucy Sutherland, with a strange eagerness, watched the graceful figure of the elegant loungeur on the veranda.

"And he refuses an explanation to your mother also?"

"Yes. He is too proud and high-spirited to stoop to explanation where his word is doubted. He says that it ought to be sufficient that he tells us he came by his wealth honorably and fairly; and mother ought to be glad to get a rich husband for her daughter, without hauling him over the coals as to how he obtained his wealth. And so, Miss Sutherland, our marriage is put off; and I really don't know when it will take place."

Miss Sutherland looked at outspoken Sophie with a thoughtful face.

"Do you know much of the previous history of

this lover of yours, Sophie? Pardon my seeming inquisitiveness; but I like you so much, my dear Sophie, that I speak only for your good."

"Thank you, Miss Sutherland," said poor Sophie, gratefully. "I am sure you are very kind. No, I don't know very much about Gaston, except that he was born and brought up in Louisiana, somewhere, of French parents, and came North, when quite a boy, to seek his fortune. He has been knocking round the world, he says, ever since, until he has grown tired of it, poor fellow! and now he wants to settle down, with me for his wife. I am sure I love him with all my heart, and would marry him and trust him, and be happy as the day is long, if mamma wasn't so disagreeable about it. That's all I know of him, Miss Sutherland; and I am sure it is satisfactory enough."

Miss Sutherland smiled, with something between pity and contempt for the simple speaker in her face. But the girl was so earnest and womanly, in her perfect trust and faith in the man she loved, that she almost hated her at the moment, too. Before she could speak, the door opened, and the subject of all this talk, tired of lounging and smoking in the hot sunshine, came in, and bowed with well-bred ease to his lady-love's visitor.

Miss Sutherland returned the gentleman's bow with uncommon cordiality for her; perhaps, independent of

the hidden motive that made her wish to propitiate him, independent of the interest she must have felt in him had he been ugly as Caliban, she was no more insensible to the power of his remarkable beauty than the weakest of her sex.

Mr. Benoir seated himself at one of the open windows, talking in an easy, off-hand strain, as a gentleman addressing his equals. He ran the fingers of an aristocratically small and shapely hand through his dark hair while he conversed, and the flash of a diamond ring dazzled Lucy Sutherland's eyes; a ring she knew well—that had been worn by fine ladies of the house of Sutherland before any one there present was born—that had been Arthur's birthday-gift to his false-hearted wife. What further proof was needed of her inconstancy than this?

"We don't see you often in St. Mary's, Miss Sutherland," said Mr. Benoir, in the course of his free-and-easy remarks.

"No," said Miss Sutherland, composedly, "so often as we see you at Mayewood."

"Ah, yes!" returned Mr. Benoir, carelessly running the hand on which the diamond glittered conspicuously through his hair. "I do frequent that charming home of yours a good deal. A magnificent place, Miss Sutherland, and an honor to its owner. Mr. Sutherland has my best thanks for his kindness in

admitting strangers within his gates. Personally, I have not the pleasure of knowing him. If I had, I should express my thanks in person."

"Mr. Sutherland will take them for granted," replied Miss Sutherland, coldly, rising as she spoke; her Sutherland pride rebelling against this familiarity. "Maplewood is open to all who choose to enter. Good-bye, Miss Sophie; good-morning, Mr. Benoir."

Just deigning to bend her head in acknowledgment of the late Troubadour's profound bow, the young lady left the hotel, and began her homeward route. Mr. Benoir watched her out of sight with an odd little smile on his lips.

"A sharp young woman that, Sophie," he said; "an uncommonly sharp young woman. What brought her here this morning?"

Miss Weldon explained.

"Ah, for a drink! Is she a great friend of yours, Sophie?"

"Oh, dear, no!" replied Sophie. "She is a great deal too proud. She has not been in our house for years, I think, until that day you met her here first."

"And what brought her here that day?"

"To see Fanny—she had a sore throat."

"Hem-m-m!" said Mr. Benoir, in a musing tone. "That was the day after Mrs. Arthur Sutherland's fainting-fit?"

"Yes."

The odd little smile was on Mr. Benoir's face again.

"A sharp girl," he repeated; "a very sharp girl! Don't you think, Sophie, she saw my diamond ring?"

"I dare say she did," said Miss Weldon; "it was easy enough seen, goodness knows!"

Mr. Benoir got up, whistling, and went out again on the veranda. Miss Sutherland was already out of sight, slowly as she walked, musing profoundly. She was on the scent now—nothing should stop her until she had hunted her prey down.

"To-morrow night they meet," she thought, as she walked leisurely toward the home she was trying to make desolate. "To-morrow night they meet. Very well, Mr. Benoir, I shall be present at that interview, too."

It was nearly mid-day when she reached the house. As she entered the parlor, tired and a little hot, she found her cousin Arthur lying on a sofa with a book. There was an unusual gravity in his face. Lucy saw, as he looked up at her entrance, anxiety about his wife.

"Have you been to the village, Lucy?" he asked.

"Yes," said his cousin, dropping into a seat, "and I am nearly tired to death. How is Eulalie?"

"Not very well, I am afraid. She is lying down in her room. Lucy, what is the matter with Eulalie lately?"

He had to ask that question. He had thought and perplexed himself over the matter so long in secret that the words forced themselves from his lips, almost in spite of himself. He got up in a feverish sort of way, and took to pacing up and down the room. Miss Sutherland's blue eyes gleamed pale flame as she watched him, sitting unmoved, with folded hands.

"She says herself there is nothing the matter. Can you not take her word for it?"

"She says that because she does not wish to make me uneasy, but something is the matter, I am convinced. Ever since that night of the concert, on which she fainted so suddenly, I have noticed a most unaccountable change."

"So have I," said Lucy, "ever since that night. What do you suppose was the cause of her fainting?"

"The heat, of course—what else?"

Lucy gave him a strange look that brought her cousin to an abrupt halt before her.

"Lucy, what do you mean? Was it not the heat?"

"Very likely. I have said nothing to the contrary."

"No, you only looked it! Lucy, if you know what ails my poor girl, tell me, for Heaven's sake!"

"I do not know," said Lucy, slowly, "and what I suspect is my own secret."

"What you suspect!" Arthur repeated, turning very pale. "Lucy, Lucy, what do you mean?"

"Let me ask you a question, Arthur. I heard your wife tell you this morning she had lost her ring—the diamond you gave her. Has she found it yet?"

"No."

Lucy dropped her blue eyes, and patted restlessly on the carpet. Arthur stood before her, pale and anxious.

"No," he repeated, "she has not found it. Why?"

Miss Sutherland's reply was another question.

"Arthur, do you remember the man we were speaking of at breakfast?"

"The man? No—what man?"

"His name is Gaston Benoir—the remarkably handsome young foreigner—he is from Cuba, I believe—who prowls about Maplewood continually. You remember we were speaking of him at breakfast—that is, you and I were, for Eulalie got up and stood by the window."

"Yes, yes."

"Well," continued Lucy, with torturing deliberation, "I was in St. Mary's this morning, and, feeling warm and thirsty after my walk, I stopped into Mrs. Weldon's for a drink."

"Well."

"Mr. Benoir is a boarder there—has been ever

since he came here first (the night of the concert at which Eulalie fainted), and he chanced to enter the room I was in talking to one of Mrs. Weldon's daughters."

"Well," reiterated Mr. Sutherland, never taking his eyes off her face.

"Miss Weldon, without asking permission, took the offensive liberty of introducing him to me. He is, as I have said, exceedingly handsome, gentlemanly in manners, and altogether superior to his station. He was dressed in the height of the fashion, and wore on the little finger of his left hand a diamond ring. Arthur, it was the ring your wife has lost!"

There was a dead pause. The shifting blue eyes of Lucy Sutherland still fixed anywhere except on her cousin's face, as she went hurriedly on:

"Perhaps Eulalie, when last out in the grounds walking, dropped it, and this man found it there. Ask her, Arthur, if she wore it the last time she was out; for I am certain it is her ring Mr. Benoir had on his finger."

She was up, taking off her bonnet and mantle, as a pretext for not looking at him; but she knew for all how stern and pale he was standing.

"Where did you say this man was from?" was his first question.

"From Cuba, but a native of Louisiana, Miss Weldon told me."

Again there was a blank pause.

"You are sure it was Eulalie's ring?" Arthur said, at last.

"As sure as I can be. There could hardly be two so much alike. What surprises me is the man's effrontery in wearing it so openly, if he found it, as he must have done."

"He made no attempt to hide it from you?"

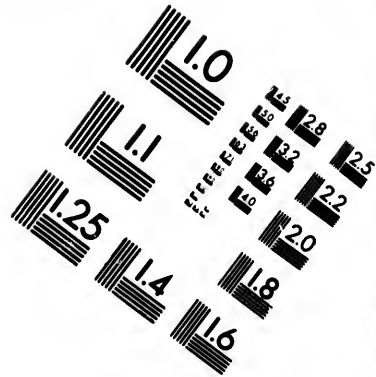
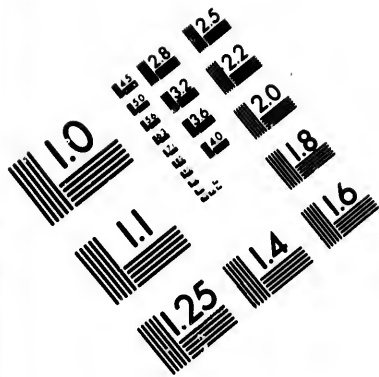
"On the contrary, he seemed rather anxious I should see it."

Again there was a blank stillness. Again Mr. Sutherland was the first to speak.

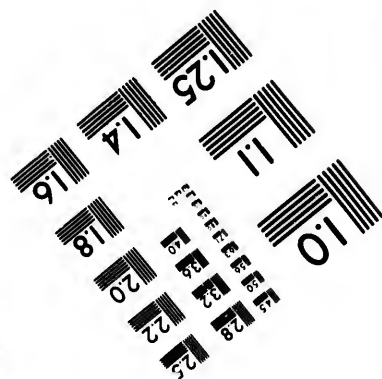
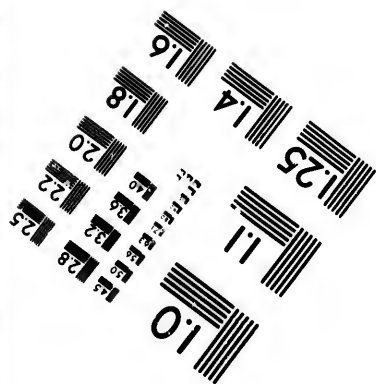
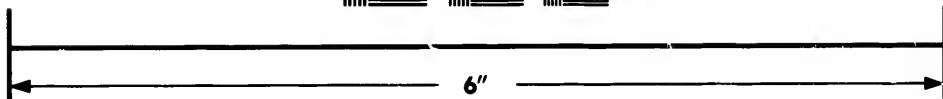
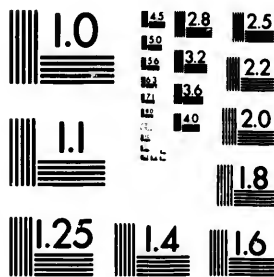
"Did Miss Weldon tell you anything more about this man?"

"Oh, yes! She was full of the subject, and could talk of nothing else. His handsome face has bewitched her, it seems; and the scheme of the universe holds no one for her but this dark Louisianian. He is, she tells me, a perfect mystery to every one. He came to the village with the rest of those minstrels, as poor as a church-mouse; but when they were departing, he declined going with them. He remained here; and a golden shower seems, in some mysterious manner, to fall upon him. All of a sudden, and unaccountably to every one, his pockets were full of money, his shabby-





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genteel garments replaced by the finest and best ; and he spends gold like water, Miss Weldon says, and makes herself and her sisters the most expensive presents. The diamond ring astonishes her most of all ; but I fancy I can account for that. Mr. Benoir is an unreadable riddle."

"A riddle I shall endeavor to read, nevertheless!" exclaimed Arthur, with sudden resolution. "I shall have a look at that ring he wears, and find out before the sun sets if it is the birthday-gift I gave my wife."

He left the room hastily. Lucy, standing by the window, saw him, five minutes after, riding down the winding avenue where the shading maple waved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROUGHT TO A RECKONING.



R. SUTHERLAND rode in a very undecided manner toward the village of St. Mary's. He had cantered down the avenue rapidly in the first impulse of the moment ; but, a little way beyond the gates, he checked his speed irresolutely. He was disturbed as he had never been disturbed before in his life ; and yet, by what ? By a number of odd coincidences that, after all, might mean nothing. His wife had lost her ring, and Lucy saw it, or one like it, on the finger of this very handsome young Southerner. The man might be a gambler. A lucky throw of the dice, a fortunate game of cards, might account for his sudden prosperity and his wearing diamond rings. There might be other rings like that his wife had lost—like enough, at least, to deceive Lucy. He had caused it to be set in a fanciful device of his own that he could not fail to know ; but the more he thought of it, the more he felt convinced that there had been a mistake. And even should there not be,

Eulalie might have lost it somewhere on this very road, and Mr. Benoir, finding it there, might wear it openly, in ignorance of its owner. This latter surmise, however, was hardly probable. Diamond rings are not lost and found like glass beads every day, and no sign made. The ring must be his own, and Lucy had made a mistake.

But Mr. Sutherland's course of reasoning did not satisfy him, somehow. Lucy's words kept ringing in his ears—"Late of Cuba, and born in Louisiana." His wife was late of Cuba, and born in Louisiana. How strangely Lucy had looked at him! How marked the tone of her voice had been! What had caused his wife to faint on the night of the concert? "Not the heat," Lucy said; and on that night she had first met this mysterious foreigner, "late of Cuba," whose beauty set every one talking. Arthur roused himself with a start and a shock, horrified at himself for the course his thoughts were drifting.

"What a jealous brute I am getting to be!" he thought, "when trifles light as air run away with my judgment in this fashion! My darling girl is over-nervous, over-sensitive, and acts strangely, or appears to do so, without knowing it. What if this man does happen to be a compatriot of hers? What if he does wear a ring something like that she has lost? What if he is fond of spending his time loitering purposelessly

about Maplewood? How is she to be connected with that? I am an idiot, and my poor little baby-wife is the dearest, and truest, and best of womankind!"

Mr. Sutherland rode into St. Mary's and straight up to the Weldon House. He was no such unusual visitor there as Miss Lucy, and good Mrs. Weldon greeted his entrance as a matter of course. He had had the run of the house from his boyhood, and rarely visited the village without dropping in. His present call was of the shortest; for the gentleman he was in search of was not in. He learned by a series of indirect questions that Mr. Benoir had taken Miss Sophie, much against her (Mrs. Weldon's) will, out driving, and would probably not return until late in the afternoon. And having got on the subject, Mrs. Weldon poured into Mr. Sutherland's ears the story of Mr. Benoir's wooing, and her distress thereat.

"I must have a look at this modern Fortunatus, Mrs. Weldon," he said, carelessly, "for pretty Sophie's sake; and then I will be better able to give you an opinion in the matter. If I drop in about seven this evening am I likely to see him?"

"You'll be sure to see him, Mr. Sutherland. Seven is our tea-hour, and Mr. Benoir is as regular as clock-work generally at his meals. It's very good of you, I'm sure," Mrs. Weldon said, gratefully, "to put your-

self to any trouble on our account, but I do feel dreadfully worried about my Sophie."

"Pray don't mention it," said Arthur, feeling very hypocritical. "I shall look in without fail, Mrs. Weldon, on my way home this evening."

Mr. Sutherland rode to the house of a friend, who insisted, as Arthur knew he would, on his remaining to dinner. It was not a very easy task to get away almost immediately after that ceremony; but pleading a pressing engagement, he made his escape, and set off at a quick carter back to St. Mary's.

The August sunset was ablaze in the skies, and the atmosphere was like amber mist, as he dismounted before the hotel. Standing in this amber mist, as a glorified saint in a painted window, Mr. Benoir smoked his after-tea cigar, and watched the few passers-by up and down the quiet country street. Darkly splendid, with the well-bread nonchalance of a prince of the blood royal, the ex-Troubadour stood and looked at Mr. Sutherland, as he alighted and stood before him. Mr. Sutherland met his glance, recognized him in a moment, and coolly addressed him at once.

"Mr. Benoir, I believe?"

"At Monsieur's service," replied Mr. Benoir, removing his cigar, and bowing politely.

Mr. Sutherland presented his card. Mr. Benoir bowed again.

"My gardener tells me, Mr. Benoir, you requested permission some time ago to visit Maplewood. Permit me to say my place is open to you whenever it shall please you to go there."

"Did he dismount, I wonder, to tell me this," thought Mr. Benoir; but aloud he said: "A thousand thanks, Mr. Sutherland. You who are so fortunate as to dwell in Paradise can afford poor fellows out in the cold, like myself, a few hours' bliss in your Eden. I have traveled a good deal over this big world, and I have rarely seen a more cheering spot than this New England home of yours."

He raised his half-smoked cigar as he spoke, and knocked off the ashes with the little finger of his left hand. On that finger a diamond ring blazed—a ring there was no mistaking—the gift he had last given his wife.

Arthur Sutherland felt himself suddenly turning cold and white. A horrible feeling—a creeping, shuddering dread, vague and unshapely as the flickering shadows the trees cast on the ground—benumbed every sense for a moment. His wife's ring worn by this man! He could not get beyond that. All the sophistries of losing and finding vanished into thin air—the fact alone remained and stunned him.

"Monsieur does not look well," said Mr. Benoir, "I hope no sudden illness—"

He did not finish the sentence. Arthur Sutherland had looked up, and their eyes met. The two men stood staring at each other for fully a minute, and all social hypocrisies dropped, as we drop a mask. The insolent smile on the face of one—the pale, stern inquiry in the face of the other—spoke as plainly as words.

The left hand of Mr. Benoir toyed carelessly with his watch-chain, and the last red rays of the sunset flamed back from the gem on his finger. He made no attempt to hide it, and its flashing radiance seemed to blind the gazer. Arthur's eyes fell upon it once more, as if even yet he could not believe the evidence of his senses.

“Monsieur regards my ring,” said Mr. Benoir, complacently; “I trust he admires it. It is the recent gift of a very dear friend, and worth a duke's ransom, I believe!”

Mr. Sutherland, feeling how ghastly pale he must be, turned away from that triumphant face, whose exultation was unconcealed, remounted his horse, and rode swiftly away.

“Adieu, Monsieur!” a mocking voice called after him, but he neither heard nor answered. He never stopped to think how strange his conduct must seem—they understood each other, and both knew it.

The rosy twilight had faded, and the glorious

August moon flooded field and forest with her pale radiance. The tall trees cast ghostly shadows over the white, dusty, deserted road, the night air was sweet with the forest-odors, and the frogs held concerts in the slimy pools all along the wayside. The still beauty of the night recalled the memory of that other night, long, long ago, when he and Philip Sutherland had driven along here in the moonlight to see Eulalie Rohan for the first time. Would it have been better if they had never known that night—never known the dark beauty which had bewitched them both? He had never asked himself that question before, and his heart rebelled against it now. No, no; better to have known and loved her, better to have trusted and taken her to his heart, and been happier, it seem'd to him, than man ever was before, than to have gone on, calmly content, with some other woman, about whom no secrecy or mystery ever hung—Isabel Vansell, for instance.

It was very rarely he thought of his old love now. He was so supremely blessed in his beautiful wife and child, that he had no room in his heart even for the memory of the girl he had once loved. But she arose before him to-night in the misty moonlight, like a pale, reproachful ghost; and the old remorse he had been wont to feel came back like a pang.

As Maplewood drew near, Mr. Sutherland paused

in the furious gallop he had kept up unconsciously ever since leaving the village. He had thought of the recent interview in a stunned, lost kind of way, one phrase ringing and ringing in his ears, even while he seemed to be thinking of other things, as if it were a dismal accompaniment. "The recent gift of a very dear friend." "Of a very dear friend!" Who did this insolent stranger mean by that, when speaking of his wife's ring? "Late of Cuba!"—had Eulalie, or Eulalie's grandfather, ever known him in Cuba? "Born in Louisiana!" Could his wife have known him there? He tortured himself with questions he could not answer, as we all do, and alighted, and entered the house as miserably irresolute as his worst enemy could wish.

Lucy looked out of the dining-room as he passed, with an inquiring face.

"We thought you were lost, Arthur! Have you dined?"

"Yes, thank you! I hope you have not waited? I dined with Squire Hazlett."

"We have waited," said Miss Sutherland; "but that is of no consequence. If you are going up-stairs, Arthur, please ask Eulalie if she is ready for dinner?"

"Where is Eulalie?"

"In her room, I think. She has not been down this afternoon."

Mr. Sutherland ran up-stairs, and tapped at Eulalie's door.

"Come in," the sweet, familiar voice called; and Arthur entered.

The pretty room, so tastefully furnished, was lit only by the moonlight. The curtains of silk and lace were drawn back, and the silvery radiance poured in, and lay in great squares of brilliance on the carpet. On a lounge under one of the windows, with the white lace curtains falling over her like a misty cloud, lay his wife, in her elegant dinner-dress. She started up with a little cry, at sight of him.

"Oh, Arthur! Is it you? I thought it was Lucy! How long you have been away!"

He sat down beside her in silence. The light faded out of the lovely face, and the pale terror came back as she saw how grave he was; came back all in a moment, mingled with eager, wild inquiry.

Arthur saw the change, and his heart smote him—she looked so like a child who dreads punishment, and mutely appeals for pity.

"My poor, pale darling," he said, drawing her to him, "my frightened little girl! Why do you wear that terrified face, of late? Surely you are not afraid of me?"

"No, Arthur," very faintly.

"Then, my dearest, why do you refuse to tell me

what has changed you so within the last few weeks? What is it, Eulalie? for you are changed."

She dropped her face on his shoulder, all her long, loose ringlets falling over him like a silken cloud.

"Nothing, Arthur."

"Do people change for nothing, Eulalie? Is it that you love me less?"

"Love you less! Oh, Arthur! Arthur!"

He stooped and kissed her.

"I am answered, my darling! Is it that you are ill?"

"No," she said, faintly; "I am perfectly well."

"Then you will not tell me?"

Dead silence. Her face lay hidden on his shoulder, her hands pressed hard together in her lap. He lifted one of the little hands and looked at it.

"You have not found your ring yet, my dear?"

"No," she said, almost inaudibly.

"Do you know where you lost it?"

Dead silence again.

"Answer me, Eulalie. You know I prize this ring very much as an heirloom in our family."

Still silent. Arthur's brow contracted.

"Will you not answer me, Eulalie?"

"Arthur! Arthur!" she cried out, in a sort of des-

peration; "don't ask me! don't! I cannot tell you! I have lost it, and I can tell you no more!"

"Then I can, Eulalie. I have found it!"

She started as if he had stabbed her.

"I saw it to-day on the hand of a man I never saw before. My love, how came Gaston Benoir by your ring?"

She gave a low cry of despair. All was over then, and the worst had come.

"My own dear wife," he said, folding her closer in his arms, and pale to the lips, with a dread of—he hardly knew what, "I love and trust you with my whole heart; but you must tell me, Eulalie, how this man came by your ring."

She lifted her head and looked at him as some poor lamb might look at the slaughterer with the knife at its throat.

"Did he find it, Eulalie?"

"No."

"Did you give it to him?" he asked, that nameless horror white in his face.

"Yes, Arthur."

A blank pause of consternation. Her head dropped again.

"Oh, Arthur! I could not help it! indeed I could not! I am afraid of that man, and I dared not refuse!"

"Afraid of him, Eulalie! What power has he over you?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Eulalie, this is very strange!"

She said nothing. She only clung to him mutely, in the old childish way.

"Eulalie!" he said, passionately, "you are driving me mad! I must have an explanation. What power has this man over you?"

To his unspeakable terror, she rose up, and fell down on her knees before him in the moonlight.

"Arthur!" she said, holding up her clasped hands, "for God's sake, spare me. Oh, I think I am the most wretched creature that ever was born; but I cannot, I cannot tell you the secret of this man's power. If you cast me off, if I die alone, and miserable, and broken-hearted, I will have no cause to complain; but I can never tell you. If you cannot trust me any longer, Arthur, or love me, knowing what you know, let us part now. Let me go and leave you to-night!"

"Leave me, my precious darling!" Arthur Sutherland cried, raising her from the ground and straining her with passionate love to his heart. "It is simply madness to think of such a thing. No, my love, nothing but death shall ever part us, in spite of all the secrets in the world."

She clung to his neck, in a joy too intense for words.

"You can tell me this, at least, my love. Is this the secret that kept us apart before our marriage?"

"Yes, Arthur."

"Your grandfather knew it?"

"Poor, poor grandpapa—yes."

"Then I am content. Tell me more, Eulalie. Did you know this man in Cuba?"

"No."

"In Louisiana, then?"

"No, no; I never saw him in my life, until—"

"Until when, my dearest?"

"Until the night of the concert."

Arthur Sutherland drew a long breath of unspeakable relief.

"And yet you recognized him that night. How was that, Eulalie?"

"I recognized his name in the playbill."

"And fainted?"

"Yes, Arthur."

There was silence. Mr. Sutherland, sorely puzzled, but quite relieved of that horror that had fallen upon him like a nightmare, put away the silky curls from the beautiful face of his wife.

"My silly darling, to think that anything in this

world could ever part us—to think I could ever live without you! Never speak of such a thing again! No one in this world shall ever come between my wife and me!”

She looked up in his hopeful face with eyes unspeakably tender and mournful.

“My poor Arthur! My own dear husband! Heaven grant it! But, whatever comes, you will always believe that I loved you with all my heart, and you alone. You will believe this, Arthur?”

“Yes, my dearest! Do not look at me with such sorrowful eyes; all will be well, in spite of ten thousand secrets. We will talk no more of this now. Let us go down-stairs; Lucy is waiting dinner, and will be famished.”

Still she clung to him; still she looked up in his face, with those solemn, sorrowful eyes.

“And you can trust me, Arthur, in spite of all? You can love me and believe in me in spite of this secret?”

He stooped, and tenderly kissed the wistful, earnest face.

“As I believe in Heaven! If I doubted you, my own darling, I think I should go mad!”

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE SUMMER-HOUSE.



EUCLALIE sat in the dining-room when they entered, reading patiently, and ready to wait with that serene face of hers until midnight if they chose, for her dinner. From that vigilant watch-tower of hers, which she had mounted so long ago, she seemed to read what had passed; but Arthur's face baffled her—it was so calm, so reassured, so infinitely tender and loving and trustful when it turned to his wife. It turned to that beloved wife very often this evening, and his voice had a new tenderness, an unusual gentleness, a deeper respect, than his pale cousin had ever heard there before.

Eulalie was perfectly colorless—her face was like snow; but it was ever so of late; and the dark, beautiful eyes had a pleading, mournful light, unspeakably touching in that sweet young face—such a sad, sad look of hopeless sorrow, of despairing resignation, as one only sees in the lovely, sorrowful face of some

picture of the Mater Dolorosa. A picture of that "Mother Most Sorrowful" hung above Eulalie's bed; and perhaps she had caught that pitiful look from praying before it so much. She was such a little, childish-looking creature withal, with her youthful face, and her pale beauty, and her tiny stature, that any heart but the heart of a jealous woman might have been moved to pity and forgiveness.

But the cold, pale girl who sat at the other side of the table, and ate slowly and thoughtfully, neither pitied nor forgave.

She could surmise very little of the events of the day, except that the circumstance of the ring had been explained away, and that Arthur's first fleeting doubts of the wife he loved had been set at rest.

"He is such a fool about that black-haired doll," thought Miss Sutherland, "that he would believe the moon made of green cheese if she told him so. I wonder if he saw Gaston Benoir? I wonder if he saw the ring? Will he speak to me on the subject to-night?"

"Eulalie," Arthur said, "I want you to sing for me this evening, my darling. I used to think I had caged a singing-bird, but we have had no music at all of late."

He led her to the piano, and she fluttered the sheets of music restlessly.

"What shall I sing for you, Arthur?"

"Anything you please. Some of the old Spanish ballads I used to like so much."

The little hands wandered aimlessly over the keys, and struck at last into a low, melancholy symphony, along which her sweet voice ran faintly, and sadly, and sweetly, as the sighing of the summer night wind. The old, sad songs of fallen Spain, her grandfather had loved best of all, followed one after the other, until the mournful music made the listener's heart ache. There was something sadder than tears in the face, looking out from that cloud of feathery black curls, something more touching than womanly weeping in the sad patience of the childish little singer. She sang so softly that her music seemed the echo of the sea wind, rising and falling in fitful gusts.

"Your music is very melancholy, my little wife," Arthur said, as her hands dropped listlessly off the keys. "But it brings back the pleasant old times to hear those songs again."

"Old times," Eulalie repeated, very sadly. "I am afraid it would have been better, my dearest, if those old times had never been."

She sat very still and silent all the rest of the evening. Hortense, the Swiss *bonne*, brought in baby

Eulalie; and the young mother sat in a low nurse-chair, with the baby in her arms, hushing it softly to sleep. Arthur challenged his cousin to a game of chess; but ever and anon his eyes wandered from his kings and queens, and castles and bishops, to the pretty picture the baby-wife made, hushing that other baby to sleep.

“Check!” Lucy cried, sharply, and Arthur awoke from his dreaming to find he had lost the game.

“What a player you are growing to be, Miss Lucy!” he said, sweeping them all up in a heap. “A Sutherland dies before he yields! Once more. ‘Come on, Macduff!’”

This time Mr. Sutherland watched the game, and won it. Lucy had done her best, and bit her lip with mortification as he arose, laughing.

“I am a match for you yet in a free fight, my fair cousin. I told you a Sutherland never yields. Why, where is Eulalie?”

“Mrs. Sutherland left the room some time ago,” said Lucy. “I dare say you will find her in the nursery.”

Mr. Sutherland, however, did not follow his wife to the nursery. He drew back the curtains from the closed window, threw open the shutters, and sat down in the recess, looking out over the wide moonlit sea. Lucy lingered, hoping he would speak of the ring; but

he seemed even unaware of her presence, until her voice startled him.

“Good-night, Arthur.”

“Good-night, Lucy,” he said kindly, waking up from his reverie for an instant, and falling back again when she had left the room.

Truth to tell Arthur Sutherland was not more than half satisfied, though he had seemed wholly so to Lucy. He could not forget the the handsome, insolent face of Mr. Gaston Benoir; he could not forget the steady, derisive stare of his bold black eyes, or the marked meaning of his tone when he spoke of the ring. He could not forget the humiliating fact that his wife had given the man this ring—his gift. This unknown, wandering vagrant was in the confidence of his wife, from which he was excluded. She was in the power of this insolent Southerner—his beautiful, precious darling—and gave him no right to defend her from him; to stand between her and his insolence. The proud Sutherland blood boiled within him, and his strong hand clenched, and his eyes flashed at the thought. He believed in the beautiful creature he had won for his wife; he believed in her purity and truth as he believed in his own soul; but this galling secret kept from him was none the less humiliating for that. He believed implicitly that she had never set eyes on Gaston Benoir before the night of the concert. If there were

guilt in the secret, the guilt was none of hers--his little, gentle darling, half child, half woman. He remembered her grandfather's strange conduct--the secret of his life and his life's trouble--kept from her so long as he dared keep it. The secret of Gaston Benoir's power involved the honor of her dead grandfather, not hers; and she had promised that grandfather never to reveal it. There was nothing for him--loving her with that true-hearted, unselfish love--but to respect that promise, and endure his mortification.

He sat there thinking of this, and staring blankly out at the glorious moonlit ocean and the star-gemmed sky, so long that it was past midnight when he went up-stairs. His wife had fallen asleep when he entered their chamber, and he stood looking at her, with only tender pity in his eyes. She looked so young, so innocently beautiful in her slumber, with her wan face shaded, and made paler by her purple black hair all loose over the pillow, that he forgot everything but his deep love and trust in her.

"My poor little girl--my innocent, unhappy darling!" he murmured. "Thank God that she can sleep like this!"

Mr. Sutherland descended next morning to breakfast alone. Lucy, waiting as usual, looked up inquiringly.

"Eulalie will not come down this morning," he

said. "She complains of headache. After breakfast, you will send her up some tea and toast."

Throughout the meal, Lucy sat expectant, waiting for some allusion to be made to the lost ring, but Mr. Sutherland made none. He had an unsocial habit of reading during breakfast, and perused his letters and papers, and sipped his coffee, and said very little. When the meal was over, he sat down with a book, and was deep in its pages, when a sudden exclamation from his cousin made him look up. She was standing, gazing eagerly out of the front window commanding a view of the grounds.

"Well?" said Arthur, inquiringly.

"There is the man," exclaimed Lucy, "of whom we were speaking yesterday—that strange Southerner, Mr. Benoir."

Arthur's face flushed. He rose, looking in the direction his cousin pointed, and saw the handsome tenor crossing the lawn, with his eternal cigar in his mouth.

"Yes, yes," he said, trying to speak carelessly. "I saw the man yesterday, and told him to come as often as he pleased. I hardly expected so early a visit, though."

He sat down again to his book, but all its interest was gone. Mr. Benoir's bold black eyes and derisive smile mocked him from every printed page. The sight

of the man disturbed him as nothing else could have done, and he suddenly threw the book down and went up to his wife's room. She was kneeling in her white muslin morning-dress before the pictured Mater Dolorosa, her sweet face uplifted, her earnest eyes upraised. Arthur waited until she arose, looking out of the window at the sunshine lying bright in the green fields.

"Eulalie, my darling," he said, turning round hastily, "do you know who is here?"

"No, Arthur."

"The man you fear so much—the man who has your ring!"

She began to tremble suddenly; the blank, terrified stare dilating in her dark eyes.

"Eulalie, do you know what brings him here?"

Her lips formed "No;" but in the first shock of her husband's words she had no voice to speak.

"My love," Arthur said, coming over and encircling the slender waist with his arm, "why should you dread this man so much, when I am here to protect you? Come, Eulalie, show yourself a brave little woman. Give me leave to go and take your ring from this fellow, and kick him out of the grounds."

She gave a cry of terror, as she clasped his arm tight, and looked up in his face with her wild eyes.

"No, no, no! Not for ten thousand worlds! Oh,

Arthur, Arthur, I am utterly, and entirely, and beyond all earthly hope, in the power of this man. Arthur, Arthur! if you love me, avoid him, don't speak to him, don't offend him, don't turn him out of the grounds, or ask him for my ring!"

"Eulalie!"

"Oh, I cannot tell you, Arthur!—I dare not tell you! and yet you may know it some day. Oh, I wish—I wish I had never been born!"

She wrung her pale hands, and fell down on the sofa in a fit of hysterical weeping. In all things, in this passionate crying, she was more of a child than a woman; and she wept passionately, vehemently, as a child might weep, now.

"My love! my love!" Arthur said, dismayed, "do not grieve like this! Eulalie, dearest, be calm. I will do all you ask. I shall not interfere between you and this man."

It was long before the hysterical sobbing ceased, and left the fragile little creature quite exhausted. She drooped among the silken cushions, her poor head aching almost beyond endurance.

"I will leave you for a while, darling," Arthur said, kissing the pallid, tear-stained face. "Try and sleep. You have cried until you are quite worn out."

He drew the curtains to darken the room, and went down-stairs, and out. As he crossed the velvet lawn,

Mr. Benoir came sauntering out of the woodland path leading to the old summer-house, still smoking, and lifted his hat in polite recognition.

“Good morning, Mr. Sutherland,” said bland Mr. Benoir; “I hope I have not availed myself of your kind permission too early in the morning. Rising betimes is an old habit of mine, and the beauty of the day tempted me this far.”

A stiff bow was Mr. Sutherland's only reply, as he passed on. Mr. Benoir looked after him, with that peculiar smile of his back again.

“Humph!” he thought; “so that is your little game, Mr. Sutherland, is it? I expected to have been collared this morning, and this pretty ring of mine, or an explanation, demanded. But I see we are prudent. Our pretty little wife is opposed to violent measures, and we love her too much to offend her. Just as you please, Mr. Sutherland; it will all come to the same thing in the end. I wonder if that wildcat, Rebecca, is on the lookout?”

If Rebecca was on the lookout, she did not appear; for Miss Sutherland was on the lookout, also. Mr. Benoir loitered about for some time. He wanted to see the housemaid, to discover any particulars about Eulalie she might know; but Rebecca did not come. He waited until nearly noon, smoking no end of cigars.

and talking to his friend the gardener, and was forced at last to leave without seeing her.

Eulalie's headache was very obdurate, and confined her to her room all day. She lay in her darkened chamber, with her throbbing temples pressed between her hands, thinking distractedly how she was to keep her appointment that night. She dared not stay away, yet how should she go without her husband's knowledge. In his loving anxiety about her, he was in the room every hour, inquiring if she felt better, if he could do anything for her, and always hearing that sad, weary answer, "Oh, no!" Chance, however, or Mr. Benoir's lucky star, favored her. During the afternoon, a message arrived from Colonel Madison, a very old friend of the family, requesting him to ride over to his place at once, if convenient, and help him to settle a little matter of business.

"As you are so unwell, my love," Mr. Sutherland said, reading the colonel's note aloud to his wife, "I will write, and ask him to postpone it until to-morrow. If I go, it will probably be late before I return."

"Don't postpone it!" exclaimed his wife, eagerly, "don't disappoint the colonel because of my headache; I will be better left quite alone."

Arthur hesitated a little; but Eulalie pressed him to comply, with very unwonted energy.

"Do go, Arthur! You know how odd the old

colonel is, and how he cannot bear the slightest disappointment. Don't mind my headache, dear, it will wear itself away after a while."

Thus urged, Mr. Sutherland dressed, and rode away. Lucy came out into the lower hall, as he stood in the doorway, drawing on his gloves.

"I would rather postpone it," he said, "on account of Eulalie's indisposition; but Eulalie herself presses me to go. I will not return for dinner."

Lucy smiled. She understood why Eulalie pressed him to go away, very well.

"I am glad the coast is clear," she thought. "Now, my lady, nothing remains but to watch you."

Miss Sutherland took her work up-stairs, and took her post in a room opposite Eulalie's, across the hall. She left the door ajar, so that the slightest sound in the hall could not fail to be overheard; but the long afternoon wore on, and no sound came from the closed chamber of her cousin's wife. Twilight fell, gray and ghostly, and still no sign of life within that silent room. As it grew too dark to work, Miss Sutherland arose, crossed the hall, and tapped at the door she had watched. It was opened at once, and by Eulalie. She had evidently been up some time; for her loose morning *neglige* was exchanged for a dark dress of soft, unrustling texture, and a long black mantle with a hood was thrown over the back of a chair. She was start-

lingly pale, Lucy saw ; but that was nothing out of the common now.

“ I did not know you were up, Mrs. Sutherland,” said Lucy. “ I hope you feel better ?”

“ Yes,” Eulalie, said softly.

“ Will you have some tea and toast here, or will you come down and have dinner ?”

Thank you ! I will have the tea and toast, if you please.”

Miss Sutherland bowed, and withdrew. And the tea and toast were duly dispatched. She dined in solitary state herself, as she had been wont to do in the days when she was the isolated recluse of Maplewood ; and making a very hasty meal of it, returned to her post up-stairs.

The summer twilight, pale and blue as Lucy's own eyes, faded out into night. A dark and overcast night, threatening rain, a dull starless sky, an obscured moon, and a fitful complaining wind stirring in the trees. Lucy took no light—the hall-lamp afforded light sufficient for her to sit and wait by, and count the passing hours.

Eight struck. Lucy waited and waited, with folded hands, and the steady patience of a woman's hatred. Nine. The closed door of Eulalie's room softly opened, and Eulalie herself, with the cloak thrown over her arm, came out. In the light of the hall-lamp, Lucy could

see how wofully corpse-like she looked, as she glided down the deserted corridor, down the staircase, and along the lower hall. How was she to know of the implacable enemy following so stealthily, so surely on her trail? She had opened the front-door, and was out in the dark, sultry night. She paused to throw the mantle around her shoulders, and draw the hood over her head, and to take a startled look about on every side, and then she was gliding on again, and her shadow was following her, surely and silently, to her doom!

Moonless and starless though it was, there was light enough in the night to show the path without difficulty, and Arthur Sutherland's wife and cousin went steadily on. Once Eulalie had paused for a second on the grassy terrace to glance at the black, moaning sea, and then had struck into the woodland path leading to the summer-house. She paused at the door, and tapped softly. Lucy saw it open instantly, saw Eulalie enter, the door close, and then she was alone with her beating heart, under the black trees.

If she could only overhear! Treading lightly on the dewy grass that gave back no echo, she stole round to the end of the summer-house, to crouch down with her ear to the wall. She turned the corner of the little building, with one hand outstretched to feel her way, for in the shadow of the trees it was very dark. As she stooped, the outstretched hand fell on something

warm—a human face! At the same instant, her wrist was forcibly grasped, and the cry of terror that arose to her lips, hushed by an imperative voice.

“Hush, I tell you!” her captor said, in a fierce whisper. “Who are you?”

“Lucy Sutherland,” she faltered, in mortal dread.

There was a pause. Her eyes had grown more accustomed to the darkness of the place, and she saw her captor was a woman crouching on the ground. The woman arose and stood before her, and, dim as the light was, Lucy recognized her—Rebecca, the housemaid!

CHAPTER XX.

CONFIDENTIAL.



HE two women stood looking at each other in silence. The light was too obscure to show the face of either plainly, and each seemed waiting for the other to speak. Rebecca still grasped Miss Sutherland's wrist, towering up above her, in her tall stature, almost to the height of a giantess. Lucy was the first to recover—the first to speak.

"Let go my wrist, Rebecca," she said, quietly; "you are hurting me."

The girl loosened her grasp, and still stood silent.

"You have come here to—" Miss Sutherland paused.

"To listen!" said Rebecca, finishing the sentence; "as you have done, Miss Sutherland."

"How long have you been here?"

"Over half an hour."

"You know who are in the summer-house?"

"Gaston Benoir and Mrs. Sutherland."

They spoke in whispers, standing very close together, like two conspirators, with the ghastly trees rising dark about them. In the pause that followed Rebecca's last words, a low murmuring of voices within the summer-house was distinctly audible.

"Listen," said Rebecca; "we understand each other. If we want to overhear what is going on within, now is our time."

She crouched down again with her ear close to the wall, and Lucy followed her example. Some natural repugnance she felt, some natural shame, not so much at the eavesdropping, as at that eavesdropping being known; but curiosity was stronger than any other feeling. Noiselessly the young lady and the housemaid sank down in the dewy grass, and hushed their very breathing to listen. The chirping of some wakeful bird in its nest, the sighing of the restless trees in the night-wind, the dull, monotonous rush of the waves on the shore, sounded intolerably loud in the hush of the night. Nothing but an indistinct murmur of voices could be heard within—the words of the speakers were inaudible. Sometimes the voice of Eulalie rose passionate, imploring, vehement. Sometimes Mr. Benoir's loud, derisive laugh rang softly out, but every effort to overhear the conversation proved fruitless. Still the two spies crouched in the wet grass, holding

their breath, and straining every faculty into the one sense of hearing.

At last the interview seemed terminating; they could hear Mr. Benoir walking about, and catch a few words, as he drew close to their place of hiding.

"You cannot have the money then, you say, before the expiration of a week. Well, the sum is large; and if I must wait, why, I must."

The sweet, foreign-accented voice of the Creole lady murmured softly in reply. They could not catch her words. Presently, Mr. Benoir, walking up and down, became audible again.

"If this night week suits your convenience, my pretty Eulalie, then this night week let it be. I want the money particularly, I can tell you. I expect to be married shortly."

Rebecca, the housemaid, gave a start that nearly upset Lucy, but in an instant she was statuesque again.

"By-the-bye," said Mr. Benoir, becoming audible once more, "your husband admires my ring, I think, Eulalie. I took pains to let him see it, and I fancy he has spoken to you about the striking resemblance it bears to one you used to wear. Come, my dear, be confidential, and tell us what he said."

They could hear the distressed appealing voice that replied, but not her answer. They could hear Mr.

Benoir laugh, but not his next words, and then the door opened and they heard him plainly :

"This night week, then, at the same hour, you will find me here. Good night, most beautiful Eulalie, and happy dreams !"

The two spies crouched yet further down, hushing their very heart-beating, lest its loudness should betray them. They could hear the soft rustle of Eulalie's dress against the trunks of the trees, the louder sound of Mr. Benoir's footsteps as he followed, whistling. When the last faint sound died out, and nothing but the noises of the night remained, they rose up.

"Come," said Lucy Sutherland, "let us go. You and I must have a talk to-night before we sleep."

She glided noiselessly along the path, and the tall Rebecca followed her, smiling under cover of the darkness at having caught her so nicely. Suddenly, Lucy stopped—the sound of a horse galloping rapidly along the road struck on their ears.

"It is Mr. Sutherland," Lucy said, hurriedly. "I do not wish him to see us. Let us go in by the side-door."

Rebecca followed her into the house by one of the servants' entrances. No one met them, as they rapidly crossed the hall and ascended the stairs.

"Come to my room," said Lucy, out of breath. "I want to talk to you, Rebecca."

"Yes, Miss," said the undisturbed Rebecca; and they entered Miss Sutherland's chamber together, just as Mr. Sutherland was heard coming along the entrance-hall.

Lucy's pretty room was unlighted, but her night-lamp stood ready on the dressing-table. The window was still open that sultry August night, and the pale lighter darkness made the room luminous.

"Sit down, Rebecca," said Lucy, closing and locking the door. "Do you mind sitting in the dark, or shall I light the lamp?"

"Just as you please, Miss Sutherland," said the black-eyed housemaid, with infinite composure. "It's all one to me."

"Very well then—I prefer this light to talk by, Rebecca."

Rebecca had seated herself by the open window. Lucy took an arm-chair near her, and touched her folded hands as she pronounced her name.

"Yes, Miss Sutherland," composedly answered Rebecca.

"Will you tell me why you came to be at the summer-house to-night?"

"I have told you. I wanted to hear what Gaston Benoir had to say to Mrs. Sutherland."

"How came you to know they were there? You were at the summer-house before Mrs. Sutherland."

"Yes, I was waiting for her to come."

"How did you know she was coming?"

The housemaid smiled under favor of the dusk at all this cross-questioning.

"Miss Sutherland, you know as well as I do it is not the first time she has been there with him."

Miss Sutherland paused, aghast, at the knowledge of the housemaid.

"You know she has met him before! Rebecca, how did you discover it?"

"As I discovered them to-night—by watching and waiting."

"Has it been since you came here?" asked Lucy, breathlessly.

"No."

Lucy came near in her devouring curiosity, and caught the girl's hand, and held it hard.

"Rebecca, you listened—what was it you overheard?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing?"—incredulously.

"No, Miss Sutherland, I heard nothing. I only saw."

"What did you see?"

"Mrs. Sutherland enter the summer-house where Gaston Benoir was in waiting, remain there about fifteen minutes, and depart again."

"And how did you happen to be in hiding that night?"

Again Rebecca smiled.

"I followed Gaston Benoir from the village. I knew nothing of Mrs. Sutherland. I only wanted to see where he was going that time of night."

"You know Gaston Benoir, then?"

"Yes, Miss Sutherland."

"Rebecca, I am very curious about that man. Will you not tell me who and what he is? I will make it worth your while if you do."

"I have nothing to tell, Miss Sutherland," said the housemaid, quietly. "Gaston Benoir is Gaston Benoir, and that is almost all I know of his history."

In the darkness of the room, Rebecca could not see how the listener's face darkened with anger and disappointment. But the low, eager voice was unchanged when she spoke.

"Almost all! Will you not tell me all. It is for Mr. Sutherland's sake I ask—Mr. Sutherland, Rebecca, who knows nothing of those stolen meetings."

"I am quite aware of that. But Mr. Sutherland has no cause to be jealous."

"Rebecca!"

"No, Miss. Gaston Benoir and Mrs. Sutherland have very little love for one another—very little, indeed."

"How do you know that?"

"Gaston Benoir told me, for one thing; and I have eyes, and can see for myself."

"What?"

"That Mrs. Sutherland loves her husband, and would die a thousand deaths sooner than dishonor him."

"Does she not dishonor him by meeting this man at all?" said Lucy, in a fierce whisper.

"Perhaps she cannot help herself. Perhaps she is too much afraid of Gaston Benoir to refuse."

"Did he tell you that, too?"

"Yes."

"Rebecca, how long have you known this man?"

"About two years."

"Where did you know him?"

"In New Orleans."

"What was he then?"

"A sailor," said Rebecca; "just arrived from South America."

"A sailor! What more do you know of him? Is he a native of South America?"

"Oh, no; he was born in Louisiana."

"Well?" said Miss Sutherland, impatiently.

"Well," repeated the very calm Rebecca; "that is all I know."

"I don't believe you," the young lady's angry face said ; but she restrained herself, and spoke calmly.

"And Mr. Benoir is a very handsome young man, and a lover of yours, of course?"

The dark face of the housemaid flushed red in the gloom.

"Yes, Miss Sutherland."

"Well, you tell me about it, Rebecca. Perhaps I can tell you something in return that will interest you!"

Rebecca looked surprised.

"There is not much to tell. I knew him in New Orleans, and we were going to be married ; but he—"

She stopped, suddenly ; and Miss Sutherland, still holding her hand, still leaning forward to see her face in the darkness, finished the sentence.

"Deserted you ! And you followed him here ! There, there ; I see it all—I thought from the first you were no ordinary housemaid. I thought, under all that self-suppressed manner, some strong motive lay hidden. Rebecca, people like you, with such eyes in their heads as you have got, do not ordinarily forgive such slights very readily. Have you forgiven your recreant lover?"

"Yes, Miss Sutherland."

"You have ? And why ?"

"Because I love him !"

Some of the inward fire, so well suppressed, broke out in the girl's face and voice as she spoke; and Lucy, in the dim light, saw it.

"Ah! and what did he say when he saw you here? Does he love you still?"

"Yes."

"Why, then, did he leave you?"

Rebecca flushed again. Mr. Benoir's explanation sounded very lame and humiliating re-told.

"Because—because—Miss Sutherland," said Rebecca, desperately, "I decline answering that question!"

"As you please. But he told you he still loved you?"

"He did."

"And would marry you?"

"Yes," said the housemaid, impatiently, growing tired of this searching catechism.

"When?"

"When he has money enough to keep a wife as she should be kept."

"But he seems to have plenty of money now. He dresses as only a rich man can afford to dress, his pockets are always full, and he wears a diamond ring. Why does he not marry you now?"

Rebecca's answer was an impatient gesture. She had no faith in the man she loved, though she tried

with all the strength of her woman's heart to believe him. She had trusted him implicitly once, and had been deceived; and with that betrayed trust had died her faith in mankind forever. But she loved him still—how entirely, how devotedly, how insanely, none but herself knew—and her faith in him was only hoping against hope.

"He could marry you now if he chose. He has plenty of money, wherever it comes from. Why does he not do it?"

"Miss Sutherland!" cried Rebecca, with sudden fierceness; "let me alone! I am not a good woman at my best, but you seem to raise the very demon within me. Why he does not marry me is my affair, not yours. Let me go to my room."

She rose up, but Lucy's thin hand closed on her wrist like a spring.

"Not yet!" she said; "not yet. One good turn deserves another. You have told me what you know, now wait and listen to what I know!"

Rebecca sat down again, her hands folded in her lap, her black brows contracting ominously, her thin lips compressed, her eyes fixed on the young lady's face.

"You will not tell me why Gaston Benoir does not marry you. Shall I tell you?"

"If you can!"

"I can, very easily! It is simply because he is going to marry some one else!"

"Miss Sutherland!"

"I am telling you the truth. I know positively he would have been married before this, if the girl's mother would have given her consent."

The dark housemaid sat stunned. In the dim light, Lucy could see the fixed stare of blank consternation in her dilating eyes.

"He loves this girl, I am sure, and he does not love you. He is a liar and a villain, and he has deceived you, my poor Rebecca, as cruelly as ever woman was deceived by man."

Rebecca neither moved nor spoke. Her whole face and form seemed to settle into an awful rigidity, her unwinking eyes still staring blankly at the speaker. Lucy was almost frightened.

"Rebecca," she said, shaking her slightly; "do you hear me? are you turning to stone? Speak to me, Rebecca. Have you heard what I said?"

"Yes."

The monosyllable dropped from her lips like an icicle, but her glittering black eyes never left the speaker's face.

"Do you believe me?"

"Yes."

"Do you not want to know the girl's name—the name of your fortunate rival?"

"Yes."

Her frozen manner relaxed as she said it; and a sudden fury leaped into her tigerish black eyes.

"Yes," she repeated, under her breath, half hissing the words; "yes; what is her name?"

"Sophie Weldon! The prettiest girl in St. Mary's, Rebecca, and she adores him. You know whom I mean, pretty Sophie Weldon, whose mother keeps the hotel."

"Yes, yes, yes!" Rebecca cried, with devouring eagerness. "I know! I have seen her! A pretty wax doll, with pink cheeks and blue eyes and yellow curls! Oh, I might have known! I might have known!"

She shook off Miss Sutherland's grasp, and rose up, her tall stature looking gigantic in the gloom.

"Have you anything more to tell me, Miss Sutherland?"

"Not much," said Lucy, also rising. "You can easily prove the truth of my story by going to St. Mary's, and inquiring."

"Oh, I don't doubt it. It is very like Gaston Benoir. I am not surprised at him. I am only surprised at myself, that I could have been such a blind fool!"

“And, Rebecca,” said Lucy, uneasily, “all this is to remain a dead secret between ourselves. You understand?”

“I understand perfectly, Miss Sutherland, and am much obliged to you! Permit me to bid you good-night.”

“Good-night, Rebecca,” Lucy said; and the tall, dark figure flitted away, shadow-like, into the deeper darkness of the attic stairs.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. BENOIR'S DILEMMA.



THE day after the evening in the summer-house, Mr. Gaston Benoir sat in his own private apartment in the Weldon House, enjoying solitude and a choice cigar. Smoking came as natural and was almost as necessary as breathing to the ex-Troubadour, and now, in an easy-chair by the window, his legs elevated on another, Mr. Benoir, in after-dinner mood, smoked and mused.

It was late in the afternoon, cold and rainy, with a raw wind blowing fresh from the sea. The sky was of lead, the slanting rain beat ceaselessly on the glass, and the sea-gale rattled the shutters and shook the windows of the Weldon House.

But Mr. Benoir, gazing reflectively at the stormy day, felt very comfortable. His room was such a pleasant one, his cigar super-extra, his dinner digesting easily—what more is needed to make man happy? Down-stairs, a pretty girl was dying for him—a girl young and fresh and innocent, and whom he loved.

Yes, Mr. Benoir loved pretty Sophie as he had loved some score of others off and on; and which lovings had never come to anything. But this time the fickle Troubadour was serious.

"I'm getting old," thought Mr. Benoir, looking contemplatively out at two or three young ladies picking their steps through the muddy street. "When a man gets on the wrong side of thirty as many years as I have, he cannot call himself young any longer. I'm about tired of knocking around this big world, a football for fate to kick at, and I feel as though I should like to settle down for good. Now," Mr. Benoir pursued mentally, lighting another cigar, "the first great step toward settling down is to get married. I never had much of an opinion of matrimony until these last few weeks; but my pretty little Sophie is an angel, or next door to one. It's something to be loved, too, as she loves me. Not but what I've had a surfeit of it in my time. There's that confounded Rebecca, and be hanged to her!"

Mr. Benoir smoked with vindictive energy, scowling at the rain, as the image of Lucy Sutherland's tall housemaid rose before him.

"I thought I was done with her," went on Mr. Benoir, continuing his train of thought, "when I jilted her in New Orleans. She's one of your high-stepping sort, and I thought her too proud ever to give me an-

other thought. But *le grande diable* himself could not understand these women! Here she hunts me down; and when I have almost ceased to remember her, turns up at the very worst time for me, ripe and ready for no end of mischief. I am only surprised that I quieted her so easily that night, when she rose up before me like a black ghost. I shouldn't have expected it."

Mr. Benoir smoked for awhile, musing on this point; and having surmounted it, went on.

"Now, I might concoct a story for the prudish old dame down-stairs, that would satisfactorily account for my sudden wealth, and get her consent and blessing, and so on; but what's the use of that, with this tiger-cat in the way? No, there is too much of the devil in that girl to be braved. If that unfortunate little beauty, Eulalie, had a tithe of her spirit, I would have a hard fight for the victory. No, I cannot defy Rebecca. Sophie and I must make a moonlight flitting of it—Young Lochinvar—that style of thing, rather!"

While Mr. Benoir sat absorbed in these matrimonial reflections, blue-eyed Sophie, down-stairs in the parlor, sat alone, with a cloud on her fair face. Perhaps it was the gloom of the gloomy day; perhaps she found her own thoughts bad company; or perhaps it was that her handsome Gaston had left her alone since morning. She sat embroidering that gossamer bridal-handkerchief that Lucy Sutherland had admired, frowning at the

rosebuds and forget-me-nots all the while. Her sisters were at work in the kitchen-cabinet; but golden-haired Sophie, the beauty and pet, was also the lady of the family, and never soiled her taper fingers with anything harder than needlework.

So this rainy afternoon she sat, looking disconsolately out at the dark, forlorn day, in the intervals of her work, thinking of her hard fate in having such an obdurate mother, and wondering what Mr. Benoir might be about up in his chamber. She was sitting with her back to the door, gazing at the beating rain, and sloppy streets, when a familiar step in the hall set her heart beating, and she turned round as the door opened.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said Miss Weldon, slightlyly. "I thought it was Fanny."

"You would rather it was Fanny, wouldn't you, now?" said Mr. Benoir, coming forward and kissing the pretty, pouting face in very offhand fashion. "You want me to believe that, I suppose?"

"It's of no consequence what you believe! Have you been asleep all day, pray?"

"By no means. I am not in the habit of sleeping in daytime."

"What have you been about, then?"

"Thinking, my dear."

"Of what?"

"Of you."

"I don't believe it," said Miss Sophie, relenting, with a smile, nevertheless. "You might have been down here with me, if you liked."

"It is true though, Sophie. I want to talk to you, seriously. Put down that sewing, and listen to me."

Sophie dropped her work, and looked up at him, with wondering blue eyes. The uplifted face looked so fresh and blooming, and rosy and innocent, that Mr. Benoir was tempted to kiss it again, by way of preface. Accordingly, he did so.

"Is that what you call talking seriously," said Sophie, blushing, and hitching the seat further back. "Behave yourself!"

"Sophie," said Mr. Benoir, gravely, "you don't know how much I love you!"

"Don't I?" said Miss Weldon. "My memory must be very bad then, for you have told me so several times, if not oftener."

"Sophie," continued the Troubadour, waving down the interruption, "I am going to get married!"

"To—" Sophie paused, alarmed.

"To you, my pretty blue-eyes, if you will marry me; to some one else, if you won't. But I am going to be married before the new moon wanes."

"Dear me!" said Sophie, pouting again. "What's

your hurry? Is that what you have been meditating on all day?"

"Yes."

Sophie shrugged her pretty shoulders, disdainfully, but Mr. Benoir's face showed he was quite in earnest. He took both her hands in his, and leaned forward.

"My pretty Sophie, will you be my wife?"

"Oh, Gaston!"

"Will you be my wife, Sophie?"

"Gaston, you know mother will not consent."

"Let her refuse, then. I am not asking mother, but you. What do you say?"

"You know—you know I am willing enough," faltered Sophie, "but how can I when mother—"

"Oh, confound your mother! I beg your pardon, my dear Sophie, but really I lose patience when I think of that absurd old woman. What, under Heaven, does she want; surely a son-in-law young, rich, and handsome, ought to satisfy her, and I flatter myself I am all these!"

"You know very well what she wants," said Sophie, a little nettled at his disrespect. "She wants to know where your riches come from—and so do I!"

Mr. Benoir laughed good-naturedly, and chucked Sophie's dimpled chin.

"I dare say you do, my little daughter of mother Eve. Well, when we are a year and a day married, I

shall tell you. Oh, don't pull your hands away, and don't look so deeply displeased. Dear little hand," said Mr. Benoir, kissing the left one, "how well a wedding-ring would become it!"

Sophie was not proof against this, and hid a very roseate face on Mr. Benoir's coat-collar.

"Oh, Gaston! what is the use of talking? You know I can't get married!"

"Why not, my darling?"

"Because mother—"

"There!" cried Mr. Benoir, imperiously, "I won't have it! Let mother go to the—antipodes, if she likes. You can marry me, if you love me, in spite of fifty cantankerous old mothers."

"Gaston Benoir, stop calling my mother names, if you please. How?"

"By eloping!"

"Eloping!" repeated Miss Weldon, aghast.

"Yes, my love. Running away with me, you know, and being married by special license. Come! don't look so confounded; other girls do it every day, and twice as much, for love, and why not you?"

"But—oh, dear me, Gaston—"

"Yes, I know, I have taken all that into consideration; but still I maintain my point. I love you, as I have told you once or twice before, if you remember, and I want to be married, and this is the only way.

That unreasonable mother of yours is too absurd for anything, so I leave her out of the question. You had better say 'yes,' for I never learned to court."

"But Gaston, to run away is so shocking! What would everybody say? Oh, dear me!" cried Miss Weldon, breathlessly.

Mr. Benoir resolutely lifted the flushed face, that was dimpling all over with smiles, in spite of her best efforts to look unspeakably shocked.

"Sophie, do you love me?"

"Ye-e-es!"

"Well, then, don't be talking nonsense! Let everybody say what everybody pleases. Mrs. Gaston Benoir off on her bridal-tour can safely snap her fingers at them. Come, Sophie, consent!"

"Oh, dear me!" said Miss Weldon, distressed. "I don't know what to do, I'm sure!"

"Are you afraid to trust me, Sophie?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then consent, or let us part. I shall never ask you again!"

Sophie hid her face in her hands and wouldn't speak. Mr. Benoir arose sternly.

"I wish you a good afternoon, Miss Weldon. I see we are to part."

"No, no!" exclaimed Sophie, starting up, alarmed,

as he knew she would. "Don't go, Gaston! I consent; I will do anything, only don't go!"

"That is my darling, sensible little girl!" said Mr. Benoir, delighted, and of course rewarding Sophie with an embrace. "I thought you would come to it! Now, when shall it be?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Sophie, in distress again. "It seems so dreadful, you know!"

"Pooh! Stolen kisses are always sweetest. Let me see—not this week—I can't very well, but next will do. Can you be ready by the middle of next week?"

"I suppose so. But—oh, dear me, Gaston—"

"There!" said Mr. Benoir, impatiently, "you have made that remark several times before, I think. Now for details. We will go out driving some morning and forget to return. A convenient clergyman can be found to perform the ceremony; and then you are Mrs. Gaston Benoir as fast as a wedding-ring can make you, and accountable to no one but me for your actions. You can write a penitent letter to your mother that will melt the obdurate old lady at once. Mothers and fathers always come round, I notice, when it's of no use holding out any longer."

"Do you really think so, Gaston?" said Sophie, relenting.

"I know so, my dear. Then we will start on our

wedding-tour; it shall be where you please—Lapland, if it suits you best, and you shall see, my pretty one, what the world is made of beyond this dull little village.”

Sophie's blue eyes sparkled.

“I shall like that! But, Gaston—”

“Well, my dear?”

“How about my clothes. I shall have nothing to wear?”

“Never mind,” said Mr. Benoir, jingling a handful of eagles in his pocket, “here is the needful. You shall wear satins and velvet night and day, if it pleases you.”

“You are a darling,” said Sophie, laughing and blushing; “and after the wedding-tour—what then?”

“Then we shall come back, perhaps. I am tired of great cities, not to speak of being too well known there, and this quiet place soothes a fellow somehow. I think I shall come back, and buy an estate, and build a villa, or something of that sort, buried in trees and flower-gardens, and turn gentleman-farmer. How would you like that?”

“Oh, I should like it!” cried Sophie, enthusiastically; “but are you really, really rich enough to do all this, Gaston?”

“Really rich enough, Mrs. Benoir, and able to do

twice as much. I have the purse of Fortunatus in my vest-pocket."

"I should think so! Gaston, dear," coaxingly, "tell me where you found it."

Gaston, dear, sealed the pleading lips in very lover-like fashion.

"Twelve months after date I promise to tell Mrs. Benoir the secret of my wealth, for value received. Don't coax, it is of no use. That is all settled now— isn't it?"

"I suppose so! You have everything your own way."

"And I always mean to have!" thought Mr. Benoir, but he did not say so.

"What day next week are we to—to—oh, how dreadful it seems!" cried Sophie.

"I don't know exactly—Wednesday or Thursday, very likely. Meantime, you will say nothing of this, of course."

"Of course not! Gaston, I wish—I wish we were not obliged to run away!"

"So do I, my pretty *fiancée*, but necessity knows no law; so don't distress yourself. And now I think I will step down-stairs and get a glass of wine from mamma-in-law. I feel very thirsty after all this love-making!"

"Come back soon, Gaston," Sophie said, shyly.

"All right," said easy Mr. Benoir, sauntering out of the parlor, humming a tune.

Long after he left her, Sophie Weldon sat there in a blissful dream. It was all very proper, and very maidenly, of course, to be shocked and horrified, and so forth, at a proposal to elope; but for all that, little ecstatic thrills were vibrating through her heart at the thought. Not to speak of the romance (and who ever knew of a girl of eighteen who did not think of the romance?), not to speak of the delight of being married (and who ever knew of a girl of eighteen, or twenty-eight, either, who did not want to be married?), there was the glorious prospect of seeing for the first time the great outer world, of which she had read and heard so much. She would be a rich man's wife—and such a man, too! How proud she would be of him, so handsome, so elegant, so gentlemanly, and such a wonderful singer. She would live in a lovely villa, with servants to come at her beck; with a lady's maid; perhaps a carriage to ride in, and satin morning-wrappers, very likely. How the young ladies of St. Mary's would envy her—they did that now with right good will, but how much more so then! Who knew even what society she might not get into? She and that dark, beautiful Mrs. Arthur Sutherland, whom she admired beyond everything, might be bosom friends yet. A vision rose before Sophie—the long drawing-room at Maplewood;

she had seen it once, and its untold splendor had haunted her ever since. Mrs. Sutherland at the piano ; and she (Mrs. Benoir) resplendent in blue velvet and diamond necklace, listening, while Mr. Sutherland and Mr. Benoir smoked their cigars on the lawn, and Mr. Benoir looked by far the handsomer of the two.

Sophie's castle in the air went up faster than ever Aladdin's palace did. The common hotel-parlor, with its faded carpet and shabby chairs ; the muddy, sloppy, deserted street ; the ceaseless rain and raw wind, were all alike lost to view for the time, and Sophie was happy. What a splendid fellow her lover was!—so like one of those dear, delightful, mysterious, dark-looking brigands, she loved so much to read about. He was handsome enough, and good enough, Sophie knew, for a king, and—

“Dear, dear, dear Gaston ! how much I love you !” she thought, with the rosy light in her face again.

Something brought her meditations to an end there—a curious figure fluttering along in the chilly wind. A tall woman, so slender as to make her height remarkable, dressed in black, and wearing a black veil down over her face. Sophie looked at her curiously—the woman came steadily on through the wet and windy twilight.

“Why,” exclaimed Sophie, aloud, “she is coming here !”

Two minutes after, the parlor-door opened, and Fanny Weldon came in.

"Sophie, are you here? Oh, yes! Please step this way, ma'am. Sophie, here's a lady says she wants to see you"

"To see me?" said Sophie, rising in her surprise, as the tall woman in black came forward into the room.

"Yes, quite alone, if you please," said a voice behind the veil.

Fanny took the hint, and retreated. Sophie, still in a state of surprise, presented a chair.

"Won't you sit down?" said Sophie, and not knowing what else to say, paused, and sat down herself.

The woman in black took the seat, but still keeping her veil down, and staring at her through it, as Sophie felt.

"You are Miss Sophie Weldon?" said the visitor.

"Yes," said Sophie.

The mysterious lady threw back her veil, and Sophie saw a face she had never seen before, and which she never forgot. So handsome and so haggard, so dark and so fierce, with great hollow black eyes, and thin, compressed lips.

"You don't know me?" said the visitor, staring in a most uncomfortable manner out of those wild, black eyes.

"No," said Sophie, "I don't. I never saw you before, to the best of my knowledge."

"Nor heard of me? My name is Rebecca Isaacs."

"Nor heard of you," said Sophie, more and more surprised.

"Ah!" said the owner of the black eyes, "I thought perhaps you had, knowing Gaston Benoir, who knows me so well."

"Mr. Benoir?" said Sophie, startled strangely by the manner of her visitor; "he knows you—does he?"

"Knows me!" repeated her visitor with a laugh that sounded uncomfortably hard and mirthless; "oh, yes! Mr. Benoir knows me very well! You are to be married to him, I hear."

"Ma'am!" faltered Sophie, very much scared.

"Don't be alarmed, I beg, Miss Weldon! I won't hurt you, and there is no need of that frightened face. Yes, I heard that you were going to be married to Gaston Benoir, and I came here to see."

"And what business is it of yours?" arose to Sophie's lips; but the dark, haggard face, and big, glittering, black eyes, looked so startling in the twilight, that her courage failed her.

"Why do you wish to know?" she asked, quite tremblingly, instead.

"Because I came to forbid the marriage. Gaston Benoir can never make you his wife."

Sophie gave a gasping cry, and then sat spell-bound.

"He cannot marry you," reiterated the woman in black, "because he is bound to another—to me!"

"Are you his wife?" Sophie gasped, rather than said.

"No!" said the woman; "no wedding ring ever crossed my finger; but he is bound to me by every tie of honor and truth—by every solemn promise that man can give. He belongs to me, and to me alone. I should have been his wife, long, long ago, if he were anything but a false-hearted, lying scoundrel. He has no right to marry another, and he never shall!"

The suppressed vehemence of her tone and the white fury throbbing in her face were indescribable. Poor Sophie shrank away from her, and hid her face in her hands. Her visitor looked at her with no touch of pity in her flaming black eyes.

"If you are crying for him," she said, bitterly, "you had better dry your tears, he is not worth one. He has deceived me as basely and cruelly as ever woman was deceived. He has deceived you; for, no longer ago than last week, he promised solemnly to marry none but me. When were you to be his wife?"

"Next week," Sophie sobbed, in an outburst of girlish distress. "Oh, dear me! dear me! I wish I had never been born!"

"Bah!" cried the woman, with supreme scorn;

“what do you cold-blooded creatures here in the North know of love, and passion, and hate, and misery, such as we—such as I feel? You sit there crying now, as you would cry, I dare say, for a party, or a new bonnet you had lost, and forget your trouble a month after in a new lover, as you would in a new bonnet. If I could weep as you do, I might forgive Gaston Benoir. I might leave this place, and let him marry his latest fancy. But I cannot weep, and I cannot forgive! Where is he?”

“Down stairs,” said Sophie, whose handkerchief was quite drenched with tears; “he will be here in a little while. Wait until he comes; and if what you say be true, let him choose between us. I am sure I cannot say fairer than that.”

Sophie’s sobs here quite drowned her voice, and her visitor broke into a short, disagreeable laugh.

“Yes, yes, let it be as you say; let him choose between us. Ah! here he comes!”

A quick step was taking the stairs three at a time, and he came noisily into the room, whistling an operatune. It was so dark, coming out of the lighted hall into the dim parlor, that Mr. Benoir only saw the figure sitting in the chair, and not the other, crouching on a low stool, its face hidden in its hands. Perhaps, too, the wine he had drunk—and he had drunk a good deal

—had raised his spirits and dimmed his vision, for he caught the figure in the chair rapturously in his arms.

“My darling Sophie!” he cried; “all in the dark? Why, what’s this? Bonnet and shawl on, and quite wet! Now you never mean to say you have been out?”

Sophie gave a little gasp of consternation, and rose up. The woman in the chair arose at the same instant, and flung him off so violently that he reeled back.

“You have made a slight mistake, Mr. Benoir,” said a terribly familiar voice. “I don’t happen to be your darling Sophie, so you had better reserve your embraces.”

“The devil!” exclaimed Mr. Benoir, greeting her in his amazement as he had greeted her once before; “Rebecca!”

“Exactly,” said Rebecca. “I see you recognize me, although it is dark, and so does Miss Weldon. Perhaps we had better have a light, that you may make sure.”

Sophie was already lighting the lamp. As she placed it on the table, she saw her lover standing, pale and confounded, staring at her dark visitor, whose fierce black eyes never winked. Only for a moment. Mr. Benoir was not easily discomposed at any time, and the wine he had drunk warmed his courage.

“I say, Sophie,” he said, turning to his frightened

and tearful *fiancée*, "who is this? An escaped Bedlamite?"

Rebecca walked up to him with so tigerish a glare that involuntarily he recoiled.

"Gaston Benoir," she hissed rather than said, "you know me and I know you. I know you for a liar, a swindler, a gambler, and a scoundrel! What do you know me for?"

"A she-devil!" said Mr. Benoir, "if ever there was one. Suppose I do know you, what the deuce do you mean by coming here and frightening this young lady into fits?"

"Oh, Gaston!" cried Sophie, clinging to him, and melting into another outburst of tears, "she has been saying the most dreadful things. She says you have deceived her and deceived me."

"Deceived you!" said Mr. Benoir, with a short laugh. "I should like to know how she makes that out?"

"She says—she says," sobbed Sophie, "that you promised to marry her."

"Well," said Mr. Benoir, "suppose I did, and supposing I repent of this promise, what then?"

He looked full at Rebecca, his handsome face contemptuous, defiant. Rebecca stood like a black marble statue, her face all white and rigid, her black eyes flaming like burning stars.

"Yes," she repeated, slowly. "What then?"

"Why, then, she may go to Old Nick, where she belongs, for me," replied the ex-Tronbadour. "Sophie, my little darling, stop crying. You'll swell your face and redden your eyes and nose, and won't look pretty, you know. Miss Rebecca Isaacs, or Stone, or whatever you choose to call yourself, it is going to be a stormy night, and pitch-dark, and the sooner you are on the road home the better."

The wine Mr. Benoir had drunk had made him fool-hardy indeed, or, knowing this woman as he did, he never would have dared to talk like this. She stood before him ominously calm, never taking her jet-black eyes off his face—eyes that had, in the lamplight, a horribly wolfish, hungry glare.

"And this is all you have to say to me, Gaston—to me, Rebecca Isaacs?"

"All, Miss Isaacs!"

"And a few nights ago, you swore that I, and I only, should be your wife."

"Did I? Well, I wanted to keep you quiet, I suppose, and I knew that would do it. I didn't mean it, you know, and I don't."

"And you mean to marry her?"

Mr. Benoir encircled Sophie with his arm, and bent and kissed the tearful face hiding itself on his shoulder.

"My pretty Sophie? Yes, I mean to marry her. Don't you admire my taste, Rebecca? Don't you think I shall have a charming little wife?"

Rebecca Isaacs walked to the door. With her hand on the knob, she turned and looked at him. Such a look! In either eye sat a devil. Even Mr. Benoir was discomposed; but, before he could speak, she did.

"You have made your choice, Gaston," she said, in that suppressed voice of hers. "You have told the truth for once. Miss Weldon, I congratulate you. Don't you be afraid of my ever coming here to alarm you again. I have heard all I wanted to hear, and am much obliged to your future husband for his candor. Mr. Benoir, good night."

"Rebecca!" he called, startled strangely by the tone in which she spoke, by the awful light in her eyes, but Rebecca was gone. Out in the wind and rain, flitting along like a dark ghost through the blind, black night.

CHAPTER XXII.

DEEPENING MYSTERY.



MISS SUTHERLAND and Rebecca, the housemaid, had had another interview on the morning after that confidential talk in the former's room. This time it was solicited by Rebecca, and the two had come to a thorough understanding. The housemaid had spoken with remarkable plainness; and though Lucy's blue eyes had glittered a little, she had taken it all in very good part.

"We had better understand one another perfectly, Miss Sutherland," Rebecca said. "I know your motive in wishing to ferret out the secret between your cousin's wife and Gaston Benoir. You hate Mrs. Sutherland, and you would get her in your power if you could, and I don't think you will be over-particular as to the means. I don't want you to think that I am right—admission could not make my belief stronger, as denial could not make it weaker."

"You are bold!" said Lucy Sutherland, looking at her with that pale glitter in her light eyes.

“Yes, Miss Sutherland; a woman is generally bold when she is reckless and desperate. I am both, if what you said last night be true. Perhaps you don’t understand these things; but when a woman like me, hot-blooded and passionate, sets her whole heart on one stake and loses, she is not apt to be over-particular what she says or does. If you choose, after this, to let me remain here in my character of housemaid, we may indirectly further each other’s ends; if you don’t—why, no matter. I can go elsewhere. I came here, not for the situation of chambermaid, Miss Sutherland, but to attain an object, as you have already suspected. That object I have attained; and if what you told me be correct, I shall probably leave this place very soon.”

“Rebecca,” Miss Sutherland exclaimed, with irrepressible curiosity, “who are you—what are you? You are more of a mystery than even I took you to be!”

“I need be no mystery; and there is very little romance in my life. I am of Jewish descent; and, through Gaston Benoir’s business transactions with my father, I first knew him. I have neither father nor mother now. If my father had left me as wealthy at his death as it was supposed he would have done, I should have been that man’s wife before this. But I was no heiress, and Gaston Benoir deserted me!”

“Yes,” said Lucy, “for little Sophie Weldon, who is no heiress either.”

"I shall soon ascertain that," said Rebecca, not losing her ominous calm. "What I want to say to you, Miss Sutherland, is this. I can further your ends by remaining here, if you will permit me. Shall I remain?"

"My ends!" said Lucy, with a strange look. "What are my ends?"

"The destruction of your cousin's wife!"

"Rebecca!"

"Oh, Miss Sutherland, I quite understand. If you say remain, I remain. If you say go, I go. I am alone in the world, and a reckless woman. I don't much care what becomes of me; and I can accomplish what lies before me elsewhere as well as here."

"What lies before you! I don't understand you, Rebecca."

"It is not necessary you should," said Rebecca, with a dark look. "Shall I go or stay?"

"Stay," said Miss Sutherland, "and act as you please; but, remember, whatever happens, I am no accomplice of yours. I know nothing of your designs, and wish to know nothing. Your suspicions may be erroneous or correct; but they are only suspicious. I admit nothing. While you remain here, you are free to go and come as you please; but it were better to give the other servants no grounds for gossip. You understand?"

"I understand. I admire your prudence, and am much obliged to you."

Rebecca bent her head, and quitted the room. All that day her housemaid's duties were performed as usual. There was nothing to find fault with, nothing slighted or left undone. The kitchen-cabinet discovered, perhaps, that the dark, inscrutable face of the un-social housemaid was darker and gloomier even than usual; but they had a wholesome awe of those fierce black eyes of hers, and prudently criticised at a safe distance. Later in the afternoon, without asking permission or speaking to any one, she had dressed and gone out in the rain; and Lucy, quietly observant, had guessed her errand.

The night set in, wild, and wet, and windy. Lucy, for some cause, grew strangely nervous about the absent housemaid. Every blast of stormy wind that roared through the rocking trees and shook the old stone house vibrated along her nerves with a fear that was nameless. Such a stormy night, and such a long, desolate walk for that girl back from the village. Suppose she and Gaston Benoir had met—and to meet him Lucy felt certain had been her errand—suppose they quarreled, as quarrel they were sure to do. Suppose he followed her along that dark, forsaken road, and the mysterious housemaid disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as she had appeared. Months, perhaps,

after this, a woman's body would be found, with a grisly gash across the throat, and some tattered fragments of a black dress, to identify Rebecca Stone! Lucy Sutherland whitened at the thought, and waited with a nervous anxiety she had never felt before in her life for the coming of her servant.

It was nine o'clock, and the storm was raging wild and tempestuous before Rebecca came. Lucy met her on the stairs, drenched from head to foot with the soaking rain, splashed with mud, pale, haggard, and wretched-looking. All her beauty seemed to have gone in a few short hours. No one would have called the hollow-eyed vision, dripping with wet, handsome now.

"Rebecca! Rebecca!" Lucy said, breathlessly, "where have you been such a night?"

The girl looked at her with a weird light in her spectral eyes.

"You know," she said; "to St. Mary's."

"You are soaking wet," said Miss Sutherland, hastily, and with very uncommon solicitude. "Go to your room at once, and change your clothes."

Rebecca obeyed the first part of this injunction by brushing past and going to her room. But not to change her clothes. She seated herself by the window in her dripping garments, and there kept vigil the long night through. Gaston Benoir, in his hotel chamber,

sleeping the sleep of the just, might perhaps have had his dreams disturbed had he known of that ghostly night-watch, and the thoughts the deceived Jewess was thinking.

For the rest of the week, Rebecca was the same inscrutable mystery to all as before. She went through her daily tasks with faultless and painstaking precision—she was civilly attentive when spoken to, but she never addressed any one of her own accord, and never lingered a moment in the kitchen among her fellows, save when it was absolutely necessary. She sat at the window when her day's duties were done, gazing out with her glittering black eyes, staring at vacancy, and a look of fierce, steady purpose in the compressed mouth. In the keeping of these silent watches, the fierce, suppressed spirit within her wore her to a shadow; but to all Miss Sutherland's solicitous inquiries, she always answered "No, she was not ill; she was perfectly well." What the silent, passionate-hearted girl suffered during these days and nights, her haggard face and hollow eyes alone told.

Some one else in that old gray stone mansion was waning, too, like the waning moon. Eulalie moved about the house slowly and wearily, more like a spirit than a woman. Her wan, moonlight face startled you, out of those profuse jetty ringlets, and the large, dark eyes looked at you with a wistful mournfulness, very

sad to see. The sweet, low laugh, the soft singing in the blue summer twilight, no longer made music in the old rooms. The sunshine seemed to have faded out of her young life forever, and seeing her in moonlight or twilight, so small, so wan, so fragile, you would have looked to see her float away in the pale mist, like any other spirit.

Arthur Sutherland watched his wife fading away, day by day, before his eyes, with a trouble Heaven only knew. He could guess the cause—this hidden, miserable secret—the mysterious power that unknown man at St. Mary's held over her, and from which she would give him no right to shield her. He had not spoken of it to her since; but he never ceased to think of it—to bewilder himself over it all day long, and to have it disturb his dreams by night. There was a mournful tenderness in his love and care for her now, an unceasing watchfulness, that was very like her grandfather in the old days. He was so unhappy, and so solicitous to hide that unhappiness, and appear as he used to be, that his heart never knew peace of late; and it seemed to himself, when he was alone, that he took off a mask and stopped some weary piece of acting.

One evening, almost a week after that night of storm and wind, on which Rebecca, the housemaid, had disturbed Mr. Benoir's wooing a little, he sauntered out

into the sunset to smoke an after-dinner cigar. A brilliant sunset, the whole Western sky rosy with its glory, and billows of purple and gold sailing through fleecy white. He turned his face terrace-ward, and the sea spread out before him with the reflected hues of the sunset gorgeous on its placid face.

The summer breeze was deliciously cool, and came sweet with the scent of rose and jasmine and southern-wood. Sea and sky melted away far off into purple mist, in and out of which ships flitted like phantoms, with their white wings spread. The hush of eventide lay over all, and a pale young crescent-moon glimmered in the blue arch overhead. The beauty of the summer sunset was indescribable, and leaning over the iron railing of the terrace, as he had seen her so often before, stood Eulalie, as he was never in this world to see her again. Long, long after, that vision came back in other summer-sunsets—that little frail figure robed in white, with a shawl of crimson silk trailing off in the grass, and the feathery black ringlets falling low.

She looked up with a welcoming smile as he drew near; but she was so colorless, so thin, so worn, that it went to his heart. The great dark eyes had a look of utter weariness, as if the soul looking out of their mournful depths were tired of the struggle and longed to be free.

"My pale little wife," he said, tenderly, "what shall I do to keep you from fading away into a spirit, as you are doing?"

Her eyes filled with tears at the loving compassion of his tone, and she clasped her thin hands round his arm.

"Arthur, dear," she said, "how good you are to me; how true, how patient, how loving; and how ungrateful I am in return."

"Ungrateful, my love! Oh, no!"

"I have been thinking, Arthur, while I stood here, how happy—oh, how very happy—I have been in this place. My whole life seems to come back to me tonight, and I wonder why I should have been so blessed, while thousands of others more deserving drag out their lives in misery, and want, and wretchedness. I have been too happy, Arthur; and I have not been good, I have not deserved it, and so I have no reason to complain now."

"You not good, my darling," he said, mournfully; "my precious wife, you have been the good angel of all who ever knew you."

"No," said the little Creole, shaking her head, penitently; "no, I have not been so good as I should have been. I know you must think it very, very bad of me, Arthur, that I do not tell you this secret of my

life now. But I cannot, I dare not, and yet you trust and love me still."

"I will trust and love you until death, my darling."

"My poor dear," she said, looking at him with infinite compassion, "you may not have to trust and love me very long then, after all."

"Eulalie! Eulalie! what are you saying?" he cried, in affright. "What do you mean?"

"Arthur, dear, would it grieve you very much, very, very much, to lose me?"

"To lose you, Eulalie?"

"Yes, Arthur—if I should die!"

He caught her suddenly in his arms, his face as white as her dress.

"For God's sake, Eulalie, don't say such things! I couldn't bear it—I will not lose you! Let me take you away from here! Let me take you to Cuba—to Europe—anywhere out of this—anywhere from this man?"

Again she shook her head.

"It would do no good, Arthur. He would follow me to the ends of the earth to wreak his revenge!"

"His revenge! My love, how did you ever injure him?"

"I, Arthur! Oh, it is not that—it is not I who injured him! But it is all the same—the punishment falls on me! Arthur—dearest, best husband that ever

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was in this world—it is very hard; but I fear, I fear we must part soon. Oh, Arthur! once I thought as you do—that I could not lose you; and yet now—”

Her head dropped on his arm, and her voice died away. She was not crying; her despair was beyond that relief.

“I will know what all this mystery means!” Arthur Sutherland cried, with clenched teeth. “I will see this Gaston Benoir at once, and end this horrible mystery. I shall not ask you to tell me, Eulalie; if you have promised the dead, keep your promise; but he shall! I will endure this no longer!”

He started up while he spoke, but she clung to him, her beseeching eyes lifted to his face.

“For my sake, Arthur—if you ever loved me—wait! You shall know, you shall know very soon; but be patient a little while yet, dear! You are happier now than you will be, my poor Arthur, when you know the truth!”

“Eulalie,” said Arthur, “if you were an adept in the art of torturing, you could not succeed better. No certainty, let it be ever so dreadful, could be worse than this suspense!”

“Perhaps not,” said Eulalie, sadly; “but wait, Arthur, for my sake! You will not have to wait very

long. The sun has set, and it is growing cold; let us go back to the house."

Clinging to his arm, she went slowly back to the house with him. For the last time! But she knew it not; only conscious of being weary and cold, and shivering in the warm air. They walked to the house as they never were to walk together again in this world—silent and sad, but all unconscious that the dark clouds gathering in their sky were at the blackest, and the storm so awfully near at hand.

Mr. Sutherland spent a wakeful night, and descended when the breakfast-bell rang, pale, jaded, and unrefreshed. Mrs. Sutherland never got down before luncheon-time of late, so Lucy and he breakfasted alone. His letters lay beside his plate as usual, quite a little heap of them, and he opened and read, while he sipped his coffee and ate his toast. There was one from his mother, which he read aloud to Lucy—she and Augusta were still at Cape May, and passing the warm weather very pleasantly. Philip Sutherland was still their cavalier, and was as lazy and good for nothing, and as vehemently scolded by Augusta as ever.

The last letter of the heap rather surprised Mr. Sutherland. It was in an unknown hand, post-marked St. Mary's, and bore date the preceding day.

"What have we here?" he said, with a puzzled face,

"I have no correspondents in St. Mary's who write like this. Ah!"

He stopped suddenly and tore it open. He glanced at the top. It began formally, "Sir." He glanced at the signature—"A Friend." The letter was anonymous, and he had expected to see the name of Gaston Benoir.

Very much surprised, Mr. Sutherland began the letter at once, his face growing deadly pale as he read:

"The wife of Arthur Sutherland—the descendant of a long line of proud and honorable men—should be, like Cæsar's, beyond reproach. If Mr. Sutherland chooses to see an interesting sight, let him be in hiding to-night at nine o'clock, near the old summer-house in the grounds. He will see, if he chooses to use his eyes, his wife stealing in secrecy and darkness, like a guilty thing, to meet the handsomest man in St. Mary's—Gaston Benoir. It is not the first time that his charming Creole wife has stolen to meet this dark Adonis, though Mr. Sutherland may not know it. Mr. Benoir counts his dollars by the thousand since his first meeting with Mrs. Sutherland, and that Mr. Sutherland will investigate the matter is the sincere advice of

"A FRIEND."

Arthur Sutherland's face was as white as that of a

dead man, as he finished the anonymous epistle. An anonymous letter is the act of a coward and a villain, and no one knew it better than he; but for all they are despised, they rarely fail to have their effect. Was his wife and Gaston Benoir the theme of village-gossip already? Was he, when he rode through St. Mary's, pointed out and pitied as the betrayed husband, the confiding fool who was blind where every one else saw? Could Eulalie be capable of deceit? For one brief instant his faith in her was staggered—for one only; then all his love and trust in the bright, beautiful creature he had won from her tropic home to bless his life came doubly back. He crushed the letter in his hand, and rose from the table, the pallor of his face turning to indignant red.

“I will show the villainous letter to Eulalie,” he thought. “I will see the indignant truth flashing out of her glorious eyes.”

Never looking at or thinking of his cousin, who sat regarding him in calm astonishment, he hurried to his wife's apartment, with the crushed letter in his hand. But Eulalie was asleep, sweetly and peacefully as a little child, her head pillowed on her arm, her beautiful hair all tossed over the white pillows. She looked so good and innocent, so much of a child in her slumber, and yet with something of the sadness of her waking life haunting her sleep, too. His heart smote him for

even that momentary suspicion, and he stooped and softly kissed the pale face.

"My innocent darling! my poor distressed little child-wife! I will disbelieve my eyes and ears and all my senses, but I will never believe you guilty. Whatever this horrible secret between you and this man, the damning insinuation this foul letter conveys is false. If I had the writer here, I would throttle him!"

Mr. Sutherland did not return to his unfinished breakfast. He wandered aimlessly out into the grounds, and, almost without knowing it, toward the old summer-house. He had never been there since the night in which he had found Philip Sutherland battling with his trouble on the cold ground; and there was something ghastly to him in the place—as if poor Philip were dead, and his spirit haunted it still. The sylvan silence of the spot was only broken by the singing of the birds, the waving of the trees, and the musical murmur of wind and sea; and it looked by day—all wreathed in green and scented with roses—a fit spot, indeed, for a lovers' rendezvous. No shadow of the awful deed so soon to be done there hovered darkly anywhere, to mar its peaceful beauty.

The floor of the summer-house bore evidence of man's occupation; for stumps of half-smoked cigars littered it in all directions, and a soiled novel, of the

yellow-cover species, and half a dozen sporting-papers, lay around. But there was nothing in this. Mr. Benoir, of course, had been there; he knew that already; and Mr. Benoir was always smoking and reading. He turned out of the place, and loitered up and down the terrace, and through the leafy arcades and green woodland aisles of his ancestral home, trying to forget that cowardly letter, but all in vain. The words seemed branded in his heart, and tortured him almost as much as if they had been burned into his flesh with red-hot iron. His wife—his pure, beautiful Eulalie—the talk of St. Mary's—she, the benefactress of all there who were poor, or suffering, or distressed, whispered of as—oh! the thought was maddening. He leaned against the trunk of a tree, in such bitter, bitter shame and humiliation as only proud and sensitive men can feel, and they alone, in such supreme moments.

“I love her,” he said, with passionate grief, “as well as ever man loved woman; but I would rather see her in her coffin than like this. Oh, my wife! my wife! that you should have fallen so low!”

Once or twice during these wretched, aimless wanderings he had started up to return to the chamber of his wife and show her the letter; but he always stopped short on the way.

“My poor girl!” he thought, with infinite compas-

sion, "she has enough to bear already without this. No, I will never tell her of this vile letter; and may Heaven confound its writer, whoever it may be!"

Later in the day, Mr. Sutherland mounted his horse and set off at mad gallop—anywhere from his own thoughts. He rode through St. Mary's with a defiant face, and saw Mr. Benoir, handsome as Lucifer before his fall, sitting on the hotel piazza, smoking and reading the morning paper. He looked up and raised his hat, and Mr. Sutherland's reply was a scowl. Mr. Benoir looked after him with infinite unconcern.

"Go it!" said Mr. Benoir, apostrophizing the receding figure. "Look as black as you like, my turn is very near at hand. I dare say I should have postponed it longer, for the fun of tormenting that little beauty of yours; but I want to wind up matters, and run away with Sophie. The sooner we are out of the claws of that wild-cat Rebecca, the better."

Mr. Sutherland returned to dinner, and found his wife not yet out of her room. She was lying on a sofa, dressed, when he entered the apartment, suffering from one of her bad headaches.

"Go down to dinner, Arthur," she said, "and don't keep Lucy waiting. I do not wish any. Trifine will fetch me a cup of tea."

"Then I shall stay with you, my love."

"No, no!" said, Eulalie hurriedly. "I had rather

you went down. You know I am always better alone when my head aches."

She said it without looking at him, her pale face hidden in the cushions. Arthur descended to dinner with a very grave face, and his appetite effectually taken away. He sat down to read when it was over—that is, he held a book up before his face, and never said a word. How long he sat staring at it he never knew—half a century or so, it seemed to him, when Lucy, who had been out of the room for some moments, entered, with a face full of concern.

"How very rash of Eulalie, Arthur," she said, "with her bad headache, too. She will get her death."

Her cousin looked up from his book, his heart seeming suddenly to stand still.

"I suppose she thinks it will do her headache good," went on Lucy, "but she has just gone out toward the terrace, I think. It is very foolish of her, and you had better go and fetch her back."

Arthur arose—his face very, very pale, and went out, without a word. The night was cloudy and the moon overcast, but the starlight was bright, and he walked straight to the terrace. No one was there, and he struck into the woodland path leading to the summer-house. All was dark and silent as the grave. He took his station under the dense shadow of the

trees, his arms folded—to wait. From his post he could see the summer-house door, and no one could leave it without passing him. How long he waited—what he endured—keeping that horrible watch, Heaven only knows; but the door opened at last. And—yes—there was no doubting it now—his wife came forth, shrouded in black, and Gaston Benoir stood behind her. The man's parting words were spoken low, but in the hush of the night, he heard him distinctly:

“Good-night, my pretty Eulalie; I am sorry, very sorry indeed, to distress you like this, but there is no help for it. I cannot stand the pride of that aristocratic husband of yours any longer, my dear, so I shall have the pleasure of lowering it to-morrow by telling him your romantic little history. Good-night, my little beauty, and a thousand thanks for the money.”

Eulalie flitted past him, her dress brushing him, but he was undiscovered. He saw Gaston Benoir re-enter the summer-house and close the door, and for one moment his impulse was to rush in and throttle him. But he held himself back, though his teeth were clenched, and cold drops stood on his face.

“To-morrow! to-morrow!” he thought. “To-morrow I shall know all!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

EULALIE'S FLIGHT.



THE old-fashioned clock in the entrance-hall struck ten, and eleven; and Arthur Sutherland did not re-enter. Lucy, going her rounds to close up for the night, was growing uneasy. She knew Eulalie was in her chamber, for she had caught a glimpse of her going spiritlessly up-stairs; but her husband—where was he? She was just thinking of sending one of the men-servants out to look for him when the front door opened, and he entered. Lucy fairly recoiled at her own diabolical success, for his face was ghastly, and he strode past her and into the drawing-room as if he did not see her—as a man might do, walking in his sleep. She dared not follow him; there was something in his face she had never seen in it before, and that awed her. There is a dignity about supreme troubles that awes involuntarily. Lucy felt it, and went softly up-stairs.

“It has come,” she said to herself. “My revenge, so long and patiently waited for. My letter has suc-

ceeded beyond my hopes. He cannot doubt the evidence of his own eyes. I wonder what the end will be?"

Lucy was a long time falling asleep that night; and when she did sleep, her dreams were uneasy and disturbed. Her cousin's white, stern face glimmered ghost-like through them all, mingled strongly with the fierce, black eyes of Rebecca. It was a relief when morning came, and she arose to see the sun of a new day streaking with bars of fiery red the eastern sky.

But, unrefreshing as Lucy's slumbers were, there was one down-stairs who paced restlessly up and down the long drawing-room the whole night through. He could not go to his room. He could not face his wife yet. His strong faith was shaken as, only a few hours before, he had thought nothing could shake it. The image of his wife, stealing, as the letter had said, in secrecy and darkness, like a guilty thing, to meet this unknown man, was ever before him, until he felt as if he were going mad. Nothing could excuse such an act; no secret could extenuate it. She had degraded herself—she had degraded him, as no Sutherland had ever been degraded before. And yet, strange inconsistency! feeling all this, he had never loved her better than now. Through the long hours of that miserable night he paced up and down, up and down, trying to calm himself with the thought that to-morrow would

reveal all. And then, when the secret was known, whatever it was, the suffering it could inflict would be nothing to what he was enduring now. He would take his poor little wife far away from St. Mary's, and those who dared talk of her, and be happy and at peace again, as in the early days of their union. No more secrets to keep them asunder, no miserable, torturing doubts and fears to wear away their lives. Alas! and alas! for human dreams!

Lucy Sutherland found her cousin asleep on one of the sofas when, long after the usual breakfast-hour, she went there in search of him. He looked so pale and careworn in his sleep that her woman's heart, made of flint for Eulalie, melted at the suffering of the man she loved.

"Poor fellow!" she thought. "Poor Arthur! how happy he might still be if that wretched Creole had never come with her sorcery to blight his life!"

It was nearly noon when Arthur awoke and sat up, with a bewildered face. A moment later, and he remembered how he must have fallen asleep there, in the cold, gray dawn of the morning, and he rose up with a dull sense of trouble vaguely at his heart. Then the remembrance of Gaston Benoir and his words came back, and he knew that the day had come that was to unfold the mystery of his wife's life. He was stretching his hand out to the bell when Lucy entered.

"Awake at last?" she said, smiling; "how did you happen to fall asleep here, Arthur?"

"I hardly know," said Mr. Sutherland. "Has there been any one here inquiring for me this morning?"

"No."

"No one!" said her cousin, a little disappointed. "I expected a—a person—a gentleman to call. In fact, Lucy," said Arthur rising, "I expect Mr. Benoir this morning; and if he comes, show him into the library."

Lucy dropped her eyes, with an inconceivably calm face, and bowed assent.

"Shall I send your breakfast into the library?" she asked.

"If you please. Has Eulalie risen yet?"

"I have not been in Mrs. Sutherland's room, this morning. Do you wish me to ascertain?"

"Oh, no!"

A momentary *desire* to ascertain for himself made him hesitate on his way to the library, but it was only momentary. Better not meet her until he should know all, until the worst that could come was over, and when he could take her in his arms and ~~find~~ fear no more.

Lucy dispatched coffee and rolls to the library, and Mr. Sutherland sat in his easy-chair, and resolutely wrenched his thoughts from the trouble of his life and

fixed them on commonplace things. He wrote letters, he looked over neglected accounts, he read the papers the morning mail had brought, listening all the while for a ring at the bell and a step in the hall that should announce the man for whom he waited. But hour after hour passed, the long sunshiny afternoon wore away, and no one came. With every hour, he was growing more and more impatient; and when five o'clock came and still no visitor, his impatience reached its climax.

"I will wait no longer," he said. "I will go in search of him. Another such day would drive me mad!"

He rang the bell and ordered his horse. As he was putting on his hat in the hall, he met Lucy, ever omnipresent.

"I will be back before dinner, if possible, Lucy," he said. "Has my wife come down yet?"

"Not yet."

Mr. Sutherland passed out.

His wife's non-appearance was not so unusual of late as to surprise him. So he mounted and rode away. Lucy looked after him thoughtfully.

"Gaston Benoir has not come to him," she said to herself; "so he is going to Gaston Benoir. Oh, if I only knew what this secret is!"

Mr. Sutherland rode direct to the village hotel.

Mrs. Weldon met him as he entered, and dropped her best courtesy.

"Is Mr. Benoir here?" asked Arthur, abruptly.

"Mr. Benoir! Oh, dear, no, sir; and I was just saying to my Sophie it was the oddest thing what has become of him. Mr. Benoir ain't been here since yesterday evening."

"No?" said Arthur, surprised. "Was he not here last night?"

"Never came here last night, sir, for the first time since he's been my boarder. That little fool, Sophie, is as dreadfully cut up about it as if every friend she ever had was dead. She says she knows something has happened to him, or he would never stay away. There she sits, all of a tremble, and as pale as a corpse, crying and moaning and taking on, until I could box her ears—I could."

"It is strange," said Mr. Sutherland, thoughtfully, "very strange. I expected to see him to-day on a little matter of business; and as he failed to come, I rode over here, sure of finding him. You have no idea where he has gone?"

"Not the least, sir! He ain't got many acquaintances in the village, and always kept regular hours, I must say."

Arthur turned away disappointed, and went out. Could it be that Gaston Benoir had fallen asleep in the

summer-house, as he had fallen asleep in the drawing-room. During the hours he had lingered in the grounds, he had not seen him come forth; and yet if it were so, he could not surely sleep there all day. He mounted his horse, and rode back to Maplewood, puzzling himself over this new perplexity, and wondering if the man had come in his absence. He sought out Lucy as soon as he arrived, and anxiously inquired.

"No," said Miss Sutherland. "No one has called."

Arthur stood looking at her, blankly.

"And I think," continued the young lady, "you should see why Mrs. Sutherland does not come down. Her door is locked on the inside, and she will neither answer nor admit any one. Trifine says she has eaten nothing to-day."

"Good heavens!" cried Arthur, aghast. "Eaten nothing to-day! Why did you not tell me this before I went out?"

"Because I did not know. Trifine came to me full of alarm, an hour ago, to say she had tried half a dozen times to gain admittance, without success. I then went to Eulalie's room myself, and rapped and called repeatedly, but all in vain. There was no answer, and the door was not opened."

Arthur waited to hear no more. He hurried up to his wife's room, and knocked. There was no reply.

He turned the handle—the door was locked. He called her by name—once, twice, louder and louder—and still all remained as silent as the tomb.

Lucy had come up-stairs after her cousin, and stood breathless and expectant behind him.

As he turned round, she involuntarily recoiled at the ghastly pallor of his face.

“Is there any key to fit this door?” he asked, hoarsely; “or must I break the lock?”

“Wait one moment,” Lucy said, “I think I can find you a key.”

She ran down-stairs, and was back almost directly. Her heart was beating so fast that she laid her hand on it hard to still its wild throbbing. Whether it was hope or fear that set it throbbing so tumultuously, she hardly dared ask herself. What would they find when that door was opened? The fairy figure of the Creole wife, perhaps, lying still and cold on the floor—all her troubles over forever.

The key fitted the lock. Arthur threw open the door and entered before her.

No! Her first feeling was actually one of relief—no stark, dead figure lay before them; the room was quite empty. The bed was undisturbed and unslept in. A few dresses, and articles of wearing-apparel lay scattered about, and on the toilet-table lay a letter. It was addressed to Arthur, in his wife's hand. Still

wearing that fixed deathly pallor, he tore it open and read :

“MY DEAR, DEAR HUSBAND:—I may call you so still, for the last time, since you will know all before you see this. There was but one way of escape left for me—flight ; and I have taken it. Have no fear for me ; do not seek me ; nothing can happen, however dreadful, half so terrible as the fate from which I fly. Oh, if you only knew what I have suffered, what I am suffering as I write this, you would know how much I need your pity and love, when, perhaps, forever I lost both. Oh, Arthur ! Arthur ! If I had only been firm when you came to Cuba, and refused to marry you, how much misery and shame and degradation you might have been spared ! But I loved you so well—oh, so well ! and I was so selfish in my love, and hoped so wildly that my enemy would never cross my path, that I yielded, and have blighted your life as well as my own. Arthur, dearest, it was not the lightning that struck me down that night years ago ; it was the first shock of knowing what you know now.

“My love, my love, farewell ! How blessed I have been as your wife, no woman can ever tell ; how dear you are to me, how grateful I am to you, Heaven alone knows. Believe all Gaston Benoir tells you ; it is true. You will not blame me for this flight ; better I

should fly than be torn from you as—. Oh, the thought is maddening. Farewell, my darling! Think of me as tenderly as you can, and that God may grant me a short life shall ever be the prayer of your lost

“EULALIE.”

Arthur Sutherland looked up from the letter like a man who had been stunned by a blow.

“Gone!” he said, looking at Lucy, in a bewildered sort of way; “gone!”

“Who? Eulalie?” Lucy asked, pale and breathless. “Oh, Arthur! where has she gone?”

Her words seemed to recall him to himself. Without replying, he read the letter over and over again—until all was clear to his, at first, stunned senses.

He turned to Lucy, with a face that seemed changed to marble.

“Lucy, my wife has gone.”

“Gone!” she vaguely repeated.

“Fled—ran away! For God’s sake, don’t ask me to stop and explain now, but try to help me if you can. When did you see her last?”

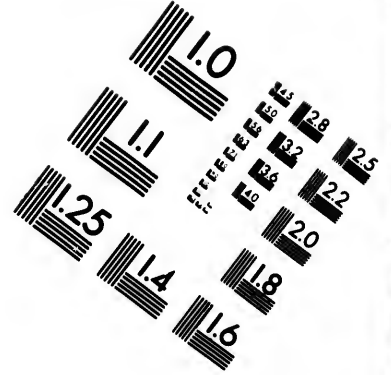
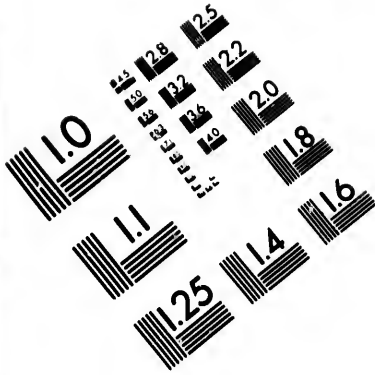
“Last night.”

“Has no one seen her since?”

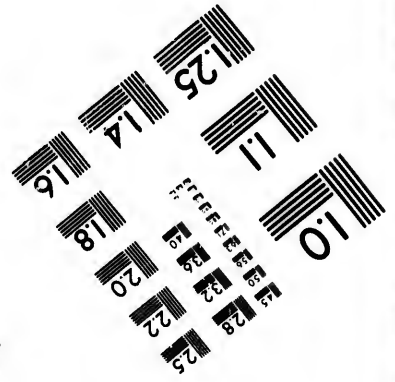
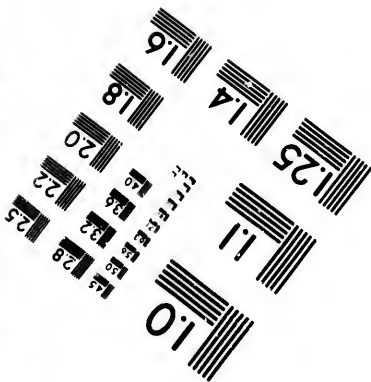
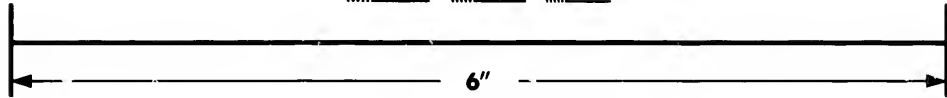
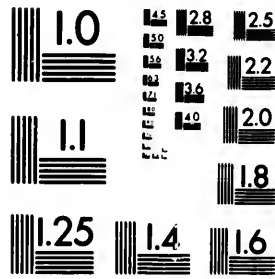
“No one.”

Mr. Sutherland strode from the room, and down-stairs, leaving his cousin hopelessly dazed. His only





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thought was to find her—earth or sea, or all the secrets under heaven, could never part him from her. He put on his hat and overcoat, and hurried round to the stables. Before he could reach them, a man came rushing out from among the trees, beyond the terrace, with a very white and startled face. It was one of the gardeners; and at sight of his frightened looks, Arthur involuntarily stopped.

“What is it, Richards?” he said.

“For the Lord’s sake, Mr. Sutherland!” cried the man, his very lips white with fear, “come here and see what has been done!”

Arthur turned and followed him—too benumbed by his late shock even to wonder what this new mystery meant. The man led the way straight to the summer-house—the door lay open, and the tranquil evening light filled it.

“Look there, Mr. Sutherland,” said the gardener, all pale and trembling, and not going in.

The summer-house was not vacant. A man sat in a chair before the table, across which his head and arms had fallen, in a painfully unnatural and rigid position. There was a pool of blood on the floor, in which his feet were dabbled, and a murderous-looking poniard, crimson to the hilt, lay near, as if it had been flung.

Arthur turned to the man with a face full of horror.

“What is this, Richards?” he said; “what does it mean?”

“Murder, Mr. Sutherland,” said the man, in an awful voice; “a murder has been done here! I daren’t go in!”

Mr. Sutherland entered. He knew at the first glance who the murdered man was, but he resolutely lifted up the bowed head. The amber evening light, sifting through the trees, fell full on the rigid face, more beautiful in death than it had been in life. There, in the trysting place where Eulalie had met him, Gaston Benoir lay stark and dead!

CHAPTER XXIV.

AFTER THE INQUEST.



STORMY evening, the close of a stormy day. Rain, rain, rain, from early morning—rain and wind now, and night closing down black and wild. The long, forlorn blasts, sweeping up from the sea, shook the doors, and rattled the windows of the old stone mansion. The sea itself roared with a dull, incessant, thunder-like sound, and the rocking pine woods, and the giant maples and hemlocks around the house, echoed back the deafening refrain. A wild night there, on the rock-bound coast of Maine—a terrible night for vessels drifting near those low lee shores—a terrible night for any human creature to be abroad.

Arthur Sutherland sat alone in the library on this tempestuous summer night. The rainy day was chilly and raw, and ever-thoughtful Lucy had caused a fire to be lit for his comfort. He sat before it now, staring into the red coals, with a gloom on his face darker than the gloom of the rainy night. He sat there in the

dull silence of the house, listening blankly to the ceaseless rain lashing the glass, and the uproar of the wind and sea. He sat there as he had sat for hours and hours, as he might sit all night, if undisturbed.

An awful hush lay over the old house. Ever silent, the silence that reigned there now was something new and ghastly; for in one of the disused rooms the body of the dead man lay. The servants gathered in groups, and talked in whispers, and passed the door of that room with awe-struck faces. The solemn majesty of death pervaded the house, and voices were hushed, and footfalls softened, as if all the uproar of the elements could have awakened that rigid sleeper.

The inquest had been held that day, and was over but a few hours previously. The matter had been investigated with the utmost care, but no light whatever could be thrown on the mysterious tragedy. The last person who had spoken to the dead man, the previous evening, was Sophie Weldon; but Sophie had fallen down in a dead faint on first hearing the news, and had been so frantic and hysterical ever since, that her appearance at the examination was quite out of the question.

Mrs. Weldon had seen him leave the house about dark, and take the road leading to Maplewood, and had been very much surprised at his non-return, but had never dreamed of any evil happening to him; and you

might have knocked her down with a feather when she heard the shocking news.

One of the servants of the house, Rosa, the pretty waitress, had seen Mr. Benoir between eight and nine o'clock on the night of the tragedy. She, Rosa, was standing under the willow-trees near the terrace, talking to—to Mr. S. Doolittle, the baker, when Mr. Benoir had walked past, and leaned over the iron railing, looking at the water. Mr. Benoir was smoking, and she knew him very well by the starlight. She was not surprised at seeing him there, for he was in the habit of coming; but she did wonder a little at his coming so late, and had left Mr. Doolittle, the baker, and ran into the house, lest he should see her.

Richards, the under-gardener, was questioned after Rosa. Richards said he had been trimming vines all day, and his work brought him at last, late in the evening, to the old summer-house. It was an out-of-the-way place, where none of them ever went, being kind of dark and lonesome-like, shut in among the trees; but he had gone that evening, intending to come out by the terrace. In passing, he had opened the door to throw in some tools, and had seen the deceased lying across the table, as Mr. Sutherland had found him. He recognized him at once, knowing the gentleman was in the habit of coming there to read and smoke—an odd fancy, by the way, he, Richards,

had always thought it. At first, he had supposed him to be asleep; but a second glance revealed the blood, the poniard, and the truth. He had dropped his tools and ran for it, and had espied Mr. Sutherland at the stables, and had brought him at once to the scene of the tragedy.

Mr. Sutherland, very, very white, everybody remarked, corroborated this. On his way to the stables, he had seen Richards running from the summer-house, pale and frightened; had followed him there at his request, and seen the murdered man. He had immediate notice sent to the proper officials, and had himself examined the wound. He agreed with the doctor, that it was then many hours old—the blood had ceased to flow, and was partly congealed on the floor. It was evident he had been struck from behind by a strong, sure hand; and the dagger had gone straight to his heart. Death must have been almost instantaneous; but he had been struck again and again to make sure. He (Mr. Sutherland) knew very little of the murdered man. He was aware he had been in the habit of coming to Maplewood for some time past; he had asked permission of the gardener, and it had been accorded. Mr. Sutherland had heard he was a native of Louisiana, and knew no more.

Nothing further could be elicited—nothing to show the murderous hand that had plunged the steel into his

heart. Mrs. Weldon told them all she knew of him ; but that threw no light on the murder. Mr. Benoir's belongings were searched ; but there was nothing to enlighten them either. There were letters enough about all manner of things, but none to serve their purpose. Mrs. Weldon gave it as her opinion that the poor fellow had been stabbed for his money and jewelry. He was known to be in the habit of late of carrying large sums about him ; also a valuable watch and a diamond ring. None of these things had been found on the body—money, ring, and watch were all gone. What other motive but the motive of gain could any one in St. Mary's have for murdering an inoffensive stranger ?

There was something in this ; and the perplexed jury, after a long debate, returned their verdict, that Gaston Benoir had been willfully murdered by some person or persons unknown. Then the coroner and his twelve satellites adjourned to the dining-room for refreshment, and shook hands with Mr. Sutherland, and inquired for the health of Mrs. Sutherland, who was known to be delicate, consoled with him on having his home so foully desecrated, and departed.

St. Mary's was in a state of unprecedented excitement. A murder there was something that had never occurred within the memory of man, and they could think or talk of nothing else now. The murdered man

became all at once the theme of every tongue, gentle and simple, far and wide. The mystery in which the whole was shrouded deepened the ghostly interest; and every scrap of the scanty information that had come out at the inquest was retold with appetizing relish. The unknown murderer and the chosen bride of the dead man shared the public celebrity—that poor widowed bride-elect, who had shut herself up in her room when she came out of her hysterics, to do battle with her grief alone.

Wonderful to relate, the news of Eulalie's flight had not yet escaped. It was a secret even in the house; although Hortense, the nurse, and Trifine, the lady's-maid, were beginning to wonder audibly what had become of their mistress. The household had grown so used of late to Mrs. Sutherland's passing whole days in the seclusion of her chamber, that they ceased to comment on her absence. She was so frail and fragile, so pale and wan, that they took it for granted the shock of hearing a murder had been done at her threshold had been too much for her feeble nerves, and that she was ill in her room. Trifine had asked her master if Madam did not require her, and had been told so curtly "No!" that she had retired in displeasure until further notice.

Mr. Sutherland, half stupefied by the shocks of his wife's flight and the discovery of the murder, following so close upon one another, had been utterly unable to

discover anything of that flight, or the direction in which she had gone. Hortense unsuspectingly answered his indirect inquiries, and told him how on that night, about ten o'clock, her mistress had entered the nursery, where she and baby slept. Baby and nurse had retired for the night—baby was sleeping, and nurse was half asleep. Mrs. Sutherland had bent over the crib, and kissed baby again and again, and once Hortense had fancied she was crying; but, before she could make sure, Madam was gone. That was all. It was evidently her farewell to her child, and she had stolen out of the house at night and fled—where?

Arthur had had an interview with his cousin in her room, which she had never left since the news of the murder. She had dropped into a seat, as if struck down by a blow, when she first heard it, and she had kept her room since in a sort of trance of horror. It surprised every one; they had known her so cool, so phlegmatic, so insensible to all shocks, that the manner in which this affair prostrated her was really astounding. Could Miss Lucy, the servants whispered, seeing this change in her, have fallen in love in secret with the handsome stranger?

Arthur, too benumbed himself to notice anything, had sought his cousin in her room, and found her sitting with a stony face, and a stare of rigid horror in her blue eyes.

Always pale, there was something livid in the face she turned to him now.

"Lucy," he said, hurriedly, "who in the house besides ourselves know of my wife's fi—absence?"

"No one but ourselves," Lucy replied, in a voice that somehow did not sound like hers.

"Then for Heaven's sake let it be kept a secret for a day or two, if possible. Offer any plea you choose—illness, the shock of this horrible tragedy—anything to keep the servants out of the room and lull suspicion for the present. Who can tell what construction slanderous tongues may not put upon her flight, coming as it does at the same time as the murder? Will you do this for me, Lucy?"

"If I can. But this concealment cannot last long."

"I do not wish it to. The inquest over, and all the world may know of it if it chooses. As soon as it ends, I shall start in pursuit. I shall search to the bounds of the earth, and find her, or never return!"

He did his best to control himself and speak calmly; but the agitation he felt showed itself in the quivering of his lips and the trembling of his voice, in spite of every effort.

"Have you no idea," said Lucy, looking at him steadily, "where she has gone?"

"None whatever. My poor little girl knew so few

—was intimate with none, and Heaven alone knows what will become of her. But keep her flight a secret, Lucy. It would drive me mad to know that my pure darling's name was on every tongue in St. Mary's, and have it coupled, perhaps, as it might be, with the dead man's."

Lucy Sutherland shivered, and that look of indescribable horror came into her blue eyes again.

"It was awful—it was awful!" she said, in a shuddering voice. "Stabbed in the back, and stabbed straight through the heart! Arthur!" she cried, suddenly, "will I have to appear at the inquest? Will I have to give evidence?"

"Certainly not!" said her cousin, surprised at her look of wild affright. "You cannot possibly know anything of the murder."

"No, no!" cried Lucy, distractedly, "how should I? I—I was only afraid I might have to tell that Eulalie knew him, and cause her to be summoned. Don't let them ask for me, Arthur."

"My dear Lucy," said Arthur, more and more surprised at his calm cousin's very unwonted energy, "you shall not appear. There is no cause for this alarm, believe me; there are witnesses enough without; and whatever you do, pray, pray never allude to my wife's name in connection with this man."

Lucy dropped her head on the table, shivering still with nervous terror.

"Whatever secret existed between my wife and this dead man," went on Mr. Sutherland, still striving ineffectually to steady his voice, "was one that involved the honor of others—the dead, perhaps—but not her own. I need not tell you, Lucy, who knew her so well, that no creature in this lower world was ever purer, truer, more loving and gentle, than my poor lost darling. Lucy, you believe this, do you not?"

Lucy murmured something, her cousin could not very clearly make out what, for she never lifted her face from the table.

"If you will stay in her room, instead of your own," said Mr. Sutherland, "the servants, who are ever inquisitive, will think you remain there with her, and not conjecture, as they will be sure to do otherwise, about her being left alone. If Trifine or Hortense want admittance, you can open the door and dismiss them."

"Yes," said Lucy, without looking up.

"After the inquest," continued her cousin, "I shall quit Maplewood—forever, perhaps; certainly until I have found my wife. Let them say what they please then—we will both be beyond the reach of their poisonous tongues. You, my good little steward, will remain here and take care of the old place as usual, and

be a mother to my child until its own mother returns. Will you not, Lucy?"

"I would do anything for you, Arthur."

"Thank you, Lucy. I don't know what we should ever have done without you—what I should do now. Keep the secret of my wife's flight, watch over my child when I am gone, and you will have my everlasting gratitude and love."

Lucy did not speak—she did not lift her head; and Arthur quitted the room. Half an hour after, she shut herself in Mrs. Sutherland's chamber, and never left it until the inquest was over. She kept herself locked in, seeing no one but her cousin, who came up now and then, looking so haggard and utterly wretched that even Lucy was shocked.

So it happened—thanks to these precautions—that Eulalie's flight was still undiscovered this stormy evening that closed the inquest. Arthur, half mad with impatience to depart, would have started on his wild-goose-chase within the hour, heedless of closing night and lashing tempest; but the shocks of the last two days, the anxiety of previous weeks, were proving more than he had power to bear. His head throbbed and ached with a dull, burning pain that nothing could soothe, and that rendered him utterly unable to depart that night.

"I shall rest to-night," he thought, pressing his

beating temples between his hands, "and start early to-morrow. My poor little wife, my precious darling—it sets me wild to think of her wandering alone, friendless—and yet, what can I do?"

He sat there alone in the library, now that all was over, looking into the ruddy fire and seeing horrible pictures in the glowing coals. Pictures of a little figure wandering heart-broken, footsore, and weary, frightened among crowds, alone in noisy city streets, unprotected in the big pitiless world; worse, perhaps, ill unto death, among cold, unfeeling strangers, deliriously calling on him, from whom she had fled, to help her. Arthur Sutherland groaned aloud in his torture, and covered his face to shut out the dreadful visions. Where, in all the great, wide world, should he seek, when to-morrow came?

He had been sitting in his misery, how long he did not know, when a knock at the door aroused him.

"Come in," he said, looking up, and Rosa entered.

"Please, Mr. Sutherland, here's Miss Sophie Weldon, from St. Mary's, and she wants to see you very much."

The sound of Sophie Weldon's name recalled Arthur to the knowledge that others in the world were as miserable as himself. He was hardly surprised to

hear that she was there, although that morning he had been told she was unable to leave her room.

“Fetch her here at once, poor child!” said Mr. Sutherland. And Rosa departed, and, five minutes afterward, ushered in Miss Weldon, shut the door, and withdrew.

“My poor Sophie—my dear girl!” Mr. Sutherland was beginning, advancing toward her; and there he stopped in blank dismay. For his visitor stood before him so deathly white, so awfully corpse-like, that it might have startled stronger nerves. She was drenched through and through, splashed with mud; her hair, her pretty golden curls, all tossed and disordered about her face. She stood before him in the doorway, so unlike herself, so broken, so haggard, so lost-looking, that his heart melted within him.

“My poor, poor Sophie,” he said, taking her hands, and leading her up to the fire. “Heaven knows how sorry I am for you! My poor girl! Why did they let you come out such a night?”

“They don’t know I have come,” she said, shivering and crouching in a strange miserable way over the fire; “but I heard he was to be buried to-morrow, and I feel as if I must see him or die! Oh, Mr. Sutherland, I was to have been his wife!”

She broke out into such a dreadful fit of weeping as she said it, that Arthur quite forgot his own trouble

in view of her passionate despair. There were tears in his eyes for the first time; but he could do nothing, only sit there holding her hand, and repeating tenderly: "My poor Sophie! My poor, dear child!"

The outburst of womanly weeping, violent and hysterical though it was, did the girl good, for she lifted her tear-stained face and swollen blue eyes presently to his.

"I could not let you bury him without one look; and I have walked all the way from St. Mary's to-night to see him!"

"Walked!" repeated Mr. Sutherland, horrified.

"Yes," said Sophie, looking down at her soaking garments. "I stole out; they would not let me come. Oh, Mr. Sutherland, you don't know how I loved him!"

She broke down again in another paroxysm of stormy tears.

"My poor, poor girl!" said Mr. Sutherland. "I am sorrier for you than I can say. Yes, it is very hard to lose those we love; and he met with a terrible end indeed."

"Oh, how could she do it! how could she do it!" sobbed Sophie, passionately; "how could she kill him? how could—oh, Gaston, Gaston!"

The hysterical sobs grew more hysterical. Mr. Sutherland sat looking at her, petrified.

"How could she kill him!" he repeated. "In Heaven's name, Sophie, of whom are you speaking?"

"That woman!" Sophie gasped, between the choking sobs. "That tall, dark woman, dressed in mourning; and with those dreadful black eyes. Oh, how could she do it—how could she kill him?"

"Sophie," said Mr. Sutherland, very gravely, "you must explain this. A tall woman dressed in mourning kill your lover! Who was she?"

"I don't know! I don't know! She told me her name, and I forgot it; but it was Rebecca—something. Gaston would never tell me anything about her, and she killed him for revenge. Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do?"

It was a long time before Mr. Sutherland could get any coherent explanation from the distracted Sophie; but at last, when she had wept until she could weep no more, he managed to make out the story intelligibly.

"But there is nothing in all this, my dear Sophie," he said, anxiously, "to prove that this woman killed Gaston Benoir."

"She did—she did!" shrilly cried Sophie; "she was fierce and jealous, and there was no one else to do it. Oh, Mr. Sutherland, if you had seen her eyes that evening—like two balls of fire—you would know as well as I that she murdered him!"

"And you don't know her name?"

"No; except that it was Rebecca."

The memory of the tall, dark housemaid, who looked like an Indian princess, and had fierce black eyes, flashed through his mind at mention of the name.

"Was it Rebecca Stone?"

"No," said Sophie, "it was not Stone. I forget it. Oh, Mr. Sutherland, take me to Gaston, please; won't you?"

"Certainly, my dear Sophie," said Mr. Sutherland, rising; "come this way."

He led her to the disused room where lay all that remained of her handsome lover. The room was weirdly lit up by a lamp, and the shadows lurked dark and spectral in the dim corners. The uproar of wind and rain sounded far louder here than in the sheltered and curtained library; and the blast went shrieking by, like the cry of an evil spirit. Something solemn and white lay on a long table, at sight of which Sophie began to tremble and shrink.

"Courage, Sophie," Arthur whispered; "don't be afraid!"

He drew down the sheet and held up the lamp. In the still majesty of death the dark, beautiful face was perfect. It might have been carved in marble, in its infinite repose and calm. The inconceivable solemnity of that still face, unmarred by one look of pain, struck

with the coldness of death to the heart of the girl who had loved him. The room reeled suddenly under her feet, she gave one gasping cry, and fell back as cold and lifeless as the dead man, in the arms of Mr. Sutherland.

CHAPTER XXV.

DARK DAYS.



WHILE that day of rain and wind darkened down into rainier and windier night, Lucy Sutherland sat at the chamber-window of her cousin's wife, looking blankly out at the storm. That fixed expression of intense horror dilated her eyes, and blanched her face to an awful bluish pallor still. Some horrible knowledge that was not the bare fact of a murder having been done so near, or the murdered man's body lying below, or the flight of Eulalie, must assuredly have come to disturb her immovable calm like this. She sat looking, not at the stormy twilight, the drenched earth, and sky of ink, but far off over the top of the pine woods into the black vacancy beyond. She had not eaten or drunk that day—the horror within her deadened every sense of ordinary need.

Trifine and Hortense had both been at the door, and been dismissed—their services were not required.

Now, in the dismal twilight, there was a low knock at the door.

Lucy arose, and opened it, thinking to see the nurse, or maid, or perhaps her cousin, but it was none of them. Rebecca, the housemaid, stood before her like a tall, dark ghost. If it had been indeed a ghost—the ghost of the murdered man in the room below—Miss Sutherland could not have recoiled more palpably, nor with a look of greater horror. Rebecca came in, shut the door, and stood with her back to it, while Lucy retreated as far from her as the room would permit, never taking her wildly-dilated eyes off her face.

“Have I frightened you, Miss Sutherland?” Rebecca said, advancing; but Lucy held out both hands, with a sort of cry, to keep her off.

“Don’t come near me—don’t!” she cried; “you murderess!”

“Miss Sutherland!”

“Keep off!” Lucy shrilly repeated, “you horrible woman; if you come one step nearer, I will alarm the house!”

Rebecca stood still, her dark complexion slowly fading to a dull, sickly yellow; her eyes in the spectral twilight fixed on Miss Sutherland with an awfully wolfish glare.

“You devil,” Lucy cried, trembling from head to foot in fear and horror, “in woman’s form! I know

what you have done! You murderess!" she hissed the words through her closed teeth. "I am afraid to live under the same roof with you. If you do not leave this house to-night, I will denounce you to-morrow morning as the assassin of Gaston Benoir!"

"Prove it!" said Rebecca, with a sneering smile. "I am not afraid of you, Miss Sutherland, and you know it! Have you forgotten that little compact we made a few days ago? No, I see you have not. You call me hard names, and I don't retaliate; but don't you go too far—mind, I warn you! I am not afraid of you. You will not denounce me—but pay me what you owe, and I will leave this house to-night."

Lucy took out her purse, and pushed two or three bills to the extreme edge of the table. Rebecca took them—looked to see that they were all right, and put them in her pocket."

"Thank you, Miss Sutherland," she said, moving toward the door; "and good-bye! I am not afraid of you, mind, and I shall not forget the hard names you have called me. It is not a very pleasant night to be abroad in, but I dare say I can bear it. Good-bye, Miss Sutherland, I wish your cousin joy of his second wife!"

The death's-head stare with which Lucy had been regarding her relaxed, and Rebecca was gone. As she vanished in the gloom of the staircase, it seemed to

Lucy that an evil spirit had quitted the room and disappeared into its native element. She locked the door, and resumed her seat again by the window, her face hidden in her hands, miserable and remorseful. Her nature, warped by jealousy, was not yet wholly bad, since her conscience stung her so keenly now. She felt as though she were a murderess herself; and she would have given all she had ever so wickedly longed for, to restore her cousin's wife to her home and Gaston Benoir back to life.

The dreary twilight blackened entirely out, and night closed down in windy gloom. She kept no count of the wretched hours, and she never stirred until there came a knock at the door. She arose, groped her way to it in the darkness, and opened it. The hall without was brightly lighted, and Rosa stood there, flurried and anxious.

"Oh, Miss Lucy, if you please, Mr. Sutherland says will you come down to the library. Miss Weldon, she's in a fainting-fit, and we can't none of us fetch her to."

"Miss Weldon!" exclaimed Lucy.

"Yes, Miss, from St. Mary's. She came up here, I heard master tell cook, to see her dead lover before he was buried, and fainted stone-cold at the first sight. We can't fetch her to, and would you come and try, Miss, master says?"

Lucy's reply was to brush past the girl, and run down-stairs. Hortense and Trifine were bending over poor Sophie, who lay very corpse-like indeed on a lounge. Mr. Sutherland stood looking on, with a distressed face.

"Try what you can do for her, Lucy," he said; "all our efforts to restore her are unavailing."

Cologne, sal volatile, and cold water were resorted to, and presently Sophie's blue eyes opened on this mortal life once more. But she was all wild and incoherent, and clung to Miss Sutherland in such palpable affright, that it was long before they could soothe her to calmness.

"Come with me, Sophie," said Lucy, gently. "Come up-stairs to my room. You are too tired and wet, and must rest."

Sophie allowed herself to be led away; and with the assistance of Rosa, Miss Sutherland got off her wet garments, and saw her at last safely in bed. Poor Sophie, quite exhausted, dropped asleep almost immediately, and Rosa was leaving the room, when Miss Sutherland detained her.

"Rosa, have you seen Rebecca this evening?"

"Yes, Miss," said Rosa, "and she's gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes, Miss; and for good I take it! All her things are packed up, and she asked William to fetch them to

the station to-morrow. She told William she had got discharged."

"So she has," said Lucy, quietly. "That will do."

Rosa departed; and Lucy, lowering the light so as not to disturb the sleeping girl, went down-stairs again to the library. She found her cousin walking gloomily up and down.

"I wanted you, Lucy," he said. "I shall depart to-morrow before you are up. You will be good enough to see that a few indispensable things are packed, as I shall take as little baggage with me as possible. I shall write to my mother, and then retire."

Lucy looked at him anxiously; he was so pale, and haggard, and hollow-eyed, that she could hardly realize that a few days had wrought the change.

"Are you sure you will be able to travel to-morrow, Arthur? I never saw you looking so ill."

He pressed his hand to his forehead, throbbing, and beating, and burning hot.

"I must go!" he said. "There is no help for it. I have been detained here far too long already. The Reverend Calvin Masterson is to see about the burial, and take all trouble off your hands. I shall go to-morrow if I can stand."

Lucy would have asked where, but her cousin's face warned her it would be in vain.

"Lest you should feel lonely at first after this terri-

ble event," Mr. Sutherland went on, still walking up and down, "I shall ask my mother to return here for a time. I shall enter into no explanation as to the cause of my wife's leaving home—I do not know the cause myself! I am going to find her; and if she is on the earth, I shall find her before I come back!"

Lucy arose.

"Have you any directions to give before you go?" she calmly inquired.

"None; I leave all to you—my good, prudent, little cousin. God bless you, Lucy! Pray for my success when I am gone."

He wrung her hand, and let her go; and Lucy Sutherland went slowly up-stairs, feeling as though that blessing were a burning curse.

But Mr. Sutherland did not depart on his long journey to-morrow; for when to-morrow came, he was raving and tossing deliriously in a burning fever.

He had sat up and endeavored to write to his mother, the words swimming in a hot mist before his eyes; and he had to go to bed with that burning beating in his temples worse.

And so, next morning, when the time for starting came, he was raving incoherently of his lost wife and the murdered man, and the journey was indefinitely postponed.

Lucy Sutherland, as thin as a shadow herself, took

her place by the bedside, and became the tenderest and most devoted of nurses. She hardly ever left him night or day, and no man was ever nursed by mother or wife with more loving care than Arthur by this quiet cousin.

Early in the first day of Mr. Sutherland's illness, the Reverend Calvin Masterson, accompanied by the undertaker, and two or three of the village officials, came to Maplewood; and the mortal remains of Gaston Benoir were hidden beneath the coffin-lid. A crowd of idlers straggled after the hearse as it lumbered slowly along to St. Mary's Cemetery.

There was but one mourner, poor Sophie Weldon, who was driven in one of the Maplewood carriages, to see her lover laid in the ground. Only one mourner, but Sophie's tears never ceased to flow all the time of that dreary drive. The weather was as gloomy as the lonely funeral cortege; a dull, blankly-hopeless day of fog, and mist, and drizzle, and cold around.

"Ashes to ashes—dust to dust," read the Reverend Calvin Masterson, shivering in the raw wind, and then the sods went rattling down on the coffin-lid; and in ten minutes it was all over, and every body was going home but Sophie, who knelt down by the new-made grave, and laid her poor, tear-stained face on the wet grass. It was all over—and the man who had been the terror and blight of Gustavus Rohan's life, and that of

his granddaughter, was harmless enough now in his last, long home.

But the gloom of the murder hung over the old stone mansion still—its awful shadow brooded darkly yet around the place. The spirit of the dead man seemed to haunt the ghostly rooms, so grand, so lonely, so deserted. Not a servant in the house would have entered the room where he had lain, for a fortune, after nightfall; and even in broad daylight, they hurried by with paling cheeks and frightened glances. Maplewood had gained all it wanted to make it perfect—it had become a haunted house.

The story of the murder was not the only astounding theme St. Mary's had to gossip about; for the flight of Eulalie was known to every man, woman, and child in the place. Lucy was coldly reticent; her own opinion was, she told Mr. Masterson and Colonel Madison, that Mrs. Sutherland's mind was disordered, and had been for some time past. But St. Mary's did not believe that any more than Mr. Masterson or Colonel Madison did, and began coupling in whispers her name with the name of the dead man. Somehow, it came out that Mr. Benoir's diamond ring had been given him by Mr. Sutherland's wife. It came out, too, that there had been stolen meetings by night in the grounds; that they had been in the old summer-house together on the evening of the tragedy; and that Mrs.

Sutherland had run away that very night. How it was all discovered, no one seemed to know ; but it was on every tongue, and dark suspicions were beginning to be whispered ominously about. Lucy, sitting in her cousin's darkened room, heard all ; but her pale, quiet face told no tales. Whether she exulted in her hidden heart, whether she was repentant or remorseful, none knew but Heaven and herself. She kept her ceaseless watch by her cousin's sick bed, by night and by day, never wearying, never flagging, listening with that pale, still face to his wild ravings, and bathing his flushed face and burning hands. His talk was all rambling and incoherent—now of Eulalie—now of Isabel—now of his schoolboy-days—and now of Lucy herself, his good, patient, kind, little cousin. It was weary, weary work sitting through the long days and longer nights listening to his idle babbling, but Lucy loved him, and never deserted her post.

A week later, and Mrs. Sutherland, Augusta, and Philip arrived, in a state of hopeless bewilderment and consternation. What did it all mean ? A murder committed—Eulalie run away—Arthur down with brain-fever ! Mrs. Sutherland poured out a torrent of questions before she had been five minutes in her son's sick-room.

Lucy's armor of reticence was not to be broken down. Grudgingly enough, coldly enough, she told

what she could not help telling, and no more. Yes, it was all quite true, the murder, the flight, and the illness; but how they were connected with each other, she could not tell. She certainly believed Eulalie knew Gaston Benoir intimately—the man wore her ring openly, and she had been seen to meet him by night, and by stealth, in the grounds. She had been with him the night of the murder and of her flight; and, taking all things into consideration, it was really very strange, but she positively knew nothing. Mrs. Arthur Sutherland kept her own secrets, and kept them well—her husband knew no more than they did. Eulalie had fainted the first time she saw Gaston Benoir—the mention of his name in the most casual way had always been sufficient to throw her into a state of the greatest agitation. Beyond these facts, she knew nothing.

Mrs. Sutherland listened, pale, indignant, haughty. Augusta, in open-eyed wonder. Philip Sutherland, moodily silent.

“The man, you say, was young and handsome?” Mrs. Sutherland asked, with a frown.

“Eminently handsome, and about thirty, I should judge!”

“There is no trusting these foreigners!” said Augusta, with a spiteful remembrance of the woman who had once been her rival; “I dare say this hand-

some Louisianian had been a lover of hers before any of us saw her !”

Arthur's mother took the post of head nurse at once, and Lucy was deposed. After that first day, the name of the absent wife was by tacit consent avoided by all. If she had been dead and lying in the churchyard, her memory could not have been more a thing of the past than it was. September glowed itself out in the sunny summer sky, and October, bright and brown, was there before Arthur Sutherland came slowly out of the weary, delirious dreamland in which he had been straying so long. Life and death had had a hard struggle for victory, but he was passing from the dark valley in the end. Very slowly, wan and wasted ; too languid even to speak at first, but surely getting better. When he could speak, his first question was of his wife. It was Lucy he asked, sitting at his pillow.

“No,” Miss Sutherland said ; “we have heard nothing whatever, as yet. Philip left here a month ago to search for her, but all his searching has been fruitless !”

To his mother or sister, Arthur never spoke of his lost wife. He felt instinctively that they believed her guilty, and he was too weak, and tired, and spiritless to enter into explanation or defense. But his mind rarely wandered from her. He lay in his darkened

chamber, and thought of her through the long days and longer nights; thought of her, poor little beauty! as he might have thought of her dead—sadly, lovingly, forgivingly.

His convalescence was wearisomely slow. October was at its close before he could cross the threshold, and breathe the fragrant sea air once more. Such a pale shadow of the handsome Arthur Sutherland of other days! such a wreck of his bright young manhood! such a weak, broken, saddened man! He wandered up and down the maple-groves, he loitered on the grassy terrace, looking with wistful, dreary eyes at the silvery horizon far away, and dreaming of the days when he had lingered here with his dark-eyed darling at his side. How long ago it seemed—years and years instead of months; and she had vanished out of his life, and left him a desolate and careworn man.

Philip Sutherland, faithful to the memory of the woman he had once loved, was still on the search, and still in vain. He wrote regularly to Maplewood, but his letters brought no news of the lost wife. If the earth had opened and swallowed her, she could not have more completely vanished from human ken.

One dreary November evening, Arthur sat alone in the library, watching the short day fade out of the leaden sky. The view from the window was desolation itself, the trees holding out gaunt, stripped arms, that

rattled like dry bones in the shrill blast. The dead leaves whirled away in crazy circles, and the gray sea swept moaning up on the gray sands under the low-lying gray sky. It was all desolate—as desolate as his own heart, and he turned away with a long, weary sigh, as the door opened and his stately mother came in.

“A letter for you, Arthur,” she said, holding one out.

“From Philip?” he eagerly asked.

“No; from a woman, I should judge from the writing, and post-marked New York.”

The letter was in a hand unfamiliar to Mr. Sutherland. His mother stood before the fire, looking thoughtfully into the red coals while he read. Presently, a cry, sharp and sudden, made her turn round; her son, with a wildly-startled face, was staring at it with dilated eyes.

“What is it, Arthur?” she asked, in alarm. “Any news of—”

She stopped with the name on her lips, as Arthur arose impetuously.

“Where is Lucy?” he demanded, crumpling the letter in his hand.

“In the dining-room. Arthur—”

But Arthur was gone. Striding straight to the dining-room, he found Lucy, sewing by the last rays

of the daylight. She lifted her calm eyes as he excitedly held out the letter.

“Read it, Lucy!” he said. “I know it is false in what it says of you; but read it, and tell me if we have indeed found the murderer of Gaston Benoir!”

Lucy’s fixedly-pale face could grow no more colorless than it habitually was; but the hand she held out for the letter trembled like a leaf. Arthur stood looking at her with eager eyes while she read.

“ARTHUR SUTHERLAND, ESQ.—SIR :—Having placed a safe distance between you and myself, and being about to start for a foreign land, I may safely make my last dying speech and confession. You would like to know who murdered Gaston Benoir, wouldn’t you? Well, you shall! I did it—yes, I—and I exult in the act! I stabbed him that night in the summer-house; and I robbed him of your wife’s ring, his watch, and five thousand dollars, which little fortune your pretty wife had just given him. I did it, Mr. Sutherland, and I would do it again. He deceived me from first to last! I swore revenge, and I kept my word! Do you think I was going to be cast off and flung aside with scorn for that little insipid nonentity, Sophie Weldon? Gaston Benoir should have known me better; but he was a villain and a liar, and he has paid the penalty! Do they suspect your wife—your pretty little frightened

black-eyed wife? I know one who does not—that sleek white cat your cousin, Miss Lucy Sutherland. She could have told you all from the first, who avenged herself on Gaston Benoir; but she didn't, did she? Do you suppose it was for love of me, or for hatred of your wife, that she kept my secret? You don't know that she did hate her, do you? Any more than you know she was ever madly in love with yourself? No, and I dare say you won't believe it now; but it is true nevertheless. Make her Mrs. Arthur Sutherland Number Two, and she will have the desire of her life at last.

“Now, Mr. Sutherland, as a friend, I advise you not to waste time and money searching for me. You won't find me! When you discover last year's snow—last summer's partridges—then you may look for

“REBECCA ISAACS, alias STONE,”

CHAPTER XXVI.

FOUND AND LOST.



LUCY looked up from the letter, her blue eyes flashing, her thin lips trembling. Once, twice, she essayed to speak, but rage and bitter mortification choked her voice. To the unspeakable consternation of her cousin, she crumpled up the letter and flung it across the room, and covering her face with both hands, burst out into a passionate fit of crying. Arthur stood confounded. He had expected to see her horrified, indignant, angry perhaps, but not like this. He had never seen Lucy—calm, placid Lucy—weep before; and now her sobs seemed to rend and tear her frail body with their strength. It was such another outburst as had happened once, years before, in her mother's house—a wild tempest of tears. Perhaps she had never wept since then; but the humiliation was so bitter, the mortification so keen, that she could not have stayed those tempestuous sobs to have saved her life.

“Lucy, Lucy!” Arthur cried, “for Heaven’s sake,

don't! You distress me more than I have words to say! Lucy, my dear cousin—"

She sprang to her feet like a tigress—dashing fiercely away the tears from her flashing eyes, showing him her real nature for the first time.

"How dare you speak to me!" she exclaimed. "How dare you, Arthur Sutherland! How dare you insult me by showing me that horrible, lying letter! How dare you do it!"

"My dear Lucy—"

"Don't speak to me! Don't call me your dear Lucy! Arthur Sutherland, I hate you! I hate you! and I will never sleep another night under your roof!"

He was standing between her and the door, and she thrust him aside with a frantic violence that made him reel, and rushed out of the room. Mrs. Sutherland, in a state of pale and haughty amaze, was in the door-way, but Lucy flung past her quite frantically.

"My dear Arthur," said his mother, entering, "what on earth does this all mean?"

Arthur looked at her, still with that utterly confounded face.

"Is that Lucy?" he cried, staring hopelessly after her. "Has she gone mad?"

"It looks exceedingly like it!" said Mrs. Suther-

land, frowning. "What have you been saying to her, Arthur?"

Arthur put the old housemaid's letter in his mother's hand. Mrs. Sutherland read it with wide-open eyes of wonder.

"Good Heavens, Arthur! what a horrible letter! Who is Rebecca Isaacs?"

Arthur related all that he knew of the stately housemaid with the fiery black eyes.

"I thought from the first she was no ordinary servant," he said, "but this confession makes her out a devil. As to what it says of poor Lucy, of course that is all spite. She was dismissed, I believe, and this is her revenge."

"Spite!" said Mrs. Sutherland, all her old dislike of her niece-in-law strong within her. "One part of the letter is as true as the other. It was the consciousness of guilt that made that little hypocrite fly out at you in this revolting manner. The vile, disgraceful creature—" But her son interrupted her with a look of pain.

"Hush, mother. Poor Lucy, don't think so ill of her. What had I better do with this letter?"

"Show it to the coroner, of course! and let detectives be set on the track of the murderess at once."

"But the letter involves Lucy—" Mr. Sutherland hesitated.

“What of that!” said his mother, sharply. “Is Lucy’s good name of more importance than that of your wife? Don’t you know she is suspected of the murder? Don’t be absurd! Drive to St. Mary’s immediately, and do as I tell you!”

Mr. Sutherland obeyed; going up to Lucy’s room first, however, and doing his utmost to obtain an entrance. Lucy was obdurate; her door was locked, and she would neither open it nor answer him; so there being no help for it, he drove off to St. Mary’s to follow his mother’s counsel.

The matter involved some hours; it was very late when he returned, but his mother was waiting up to tell him Lucy had gone.

“Gone!” Arthur repeated, aghast.

“Yes, bag and baggage, and Maplewood is well rid of her! There! don’t talk to me about her. I have no patience to think of her. Go to bed, you look done to death.”

Arthur’s pained face showed what he felt, but he said little. He had made up his mind to start next day on his long-deferred journey in search of his wife, and he obeyed his mother’s directions, and retired at once.

Mrs. Sutherland’s expostulations next day were in vain; her son would go, and went, and she and Augusta were left in desolate November to mope their

lives away in the dreary solitude of the forsaken old homestead.

What a wild-goose chase it was—wandering hither and thither in search of the poor little lost wife. Such a weary, fruitless, dispiriting search, with no more trace of her to be found than if she had never existed. November wore dimly out. December came, and Christmas was near. Mr. Sutherland was in Montreal—some faint hope that Eulalie might have gone to her old convent home had taken him there; but the hope, like all his other hopes, were delusive. He was sitting gloomily in his room, watching the passers-by on the street, when, to his astonishment, Philip Sutherland walked in.

“Phil,” he said, “you here?”

“I have come after you,” Philip said gravely. “Your mother is very ill—a severe cold and inflammation of the lungs. You must return to Maplewood at once!”

Nothing less than his mother’s danger could have induced Arthur to go home. But there was no hesitating in such a case, and before evening the train that bore them on their homeward way was flying along through the snowy valley of old Vermont.

To Arthur’s great relief, his mother’s illness had taken a favorable turn since Philip’s departure, and a week after their arrival she was out of danger.

"There is no longer need of my presence here," Arthur said to his cousin, when the crisis was over. "I shall leave again to-morrow."

The two young men sat in the library before the blazing fire. It was a snowy evening, and piercingly cold; Maplewood lay in a ghostly shroud of white—the wintry blast shook the old house to its foundations.

"So soon," said Philip. "I—I thought you would have stayed till after Christmas."

He seemed so weary as he said it, that Arthur looked at him in surprise.

"Why should I stay? There is no need of my presence here, and I shall never give up my search for my lost wife while life lasts."

"Well," said Philip, "it seems despicable, I dare say, to speak of one's self and one's hopes when other people are so miserable; but if you go away so soon, there is no help for it. Arthur, you're a good fellow, I know, and—and—in short," said Doctor Sutherland, desperately, "will you give me Augusta?"

Imagine Arthur Sutherland's surprise. Imagine Philip Sutherland's flood of explanations. He had held out long, but Augusta had brought him to it at last.

"She's such a good little thing," Philip said, "and willing to wait for me half a dozen years, if necessary."

She does not mind my being poor; and I trust you won't either, Arthur, old boy. I dare not speak to my stately aunt. I should be annihilated at the first word; but if you are agreeable, I won't despair."

"My dear Phil!" said Arthur, very much surprised, "I give you my word, I never dreamt of such a thing. If Augusta be willing, I certainly have no objection; but really this is about the last idea that would have come into my head. Why, Augusta is perpetually quarreling with you."

"Yes, I know," said Doctor Sutherland, ruefully, "she is a little cantankerous, is gusty at times; but somehow I have grown used to it, and I don't think I should enjoy life without it. So it's all right, Arthur, old boy."

Arthur held out his hand.

"You have my best wishes! I shall use my influence with higher powers too, and you may not have to wait so very long after all."

Philip shook his cousin's hand with an energy that told volumes, and then hurried off to relate the good news to expectant Augusta.

Left alone, Arthur drew closer to the fire, and fell into his old habit of staring at the coals. There was an oppression on his mind this night, heavier even than the oppression that never left it now. A dim foreshadowing of some trouble darker than any that

had come yet weighed like lead on his heart. He sat alone there by the fire, that vague oppression deepening and darkening with every passing hour, until he could endure it no longer.

He walked to the window and looked out. It had ceased snowing, and the stars were clearing sharp and bright through the blue sky. A cold, new moon loomed ghostly in the snow, and the skeleton trees rattled their bare arms in the piercing wintry wind.

"A cold, clear night," thought Mr. Sutherland; "I shall have a fine day for my journey to-morrow."

With these words in his mind, he was turning away from the window, when he suddenly stopped.

One of the men servants, crossing the belt of snowy ground between the trees, and directly in front of the window, struck against something lying half-buried in the snow, and fell. Picking himself up again, he stooped to examine the object. A second after, with a yell that might have been heard half a mile off, he sprang back, and fled like a madman.

Mr. Sutherland opened the window, stepped out, and confronted him as he turned the corner of the house, with a face as white as the snowy ground, and with dilated eyes of horror. The hand of his master on his collar brought him up, all standing.

"What's the matter, Richards?" asked Mr. Sutherland, quietly. "What was that you fell over?"

"A dead woman," cried Richards, with chattering teeth. "Good Lord, preserve us! That's the second I've found!"

"A dead woman!" said Arthur, recoiling; "what do you mean?"

"Frozen to death, sir," said Richards; "you can look for yourself."

Arthur dropped the man's collar, and strode through the glazed snow to where the dark object lay. A woman—her garments fluttering, where they were not frozen, in the wind—a woman lying on her face, as she must have fallen. Richards stood behind his master, shaking more with fear than cold.

"Help me carry her into the house," said Mr. Sutherland; "she may not be quite dead yet."

It was no easy task to lift her, though she was small, her dress and shawl—poor and thin both—were so frozen with the snow; but they did manage it at last. Very gently Arthur raised her and turned her face, so that the cold, pale moonbeams fell upon it. Oh! that sight! With a dreadful cry, that Richards never forgot, she fell a stiff and frozen corpse from his arms.

"Great God! Eulalie!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER EIGHT YEARS.



IN the parlor-window of a Broadway hotel a gentleman sat one May morning looking very thoughtfully out at the crowded thoroughfare. Up and down, up and down, in the bright sunshine, ceaselessly the tide of human life flowed, an ever-shifting panorama.

The gentleman was not old—not much over thirty; but there were threads of gray in his hair, and deep-plowed lines marking his face; a tall and distinguished man, with a certain air *militaire* about him, bronzed and bearded under a Southern sun. The sunburnt face was very grave, and his eyes had a misty, far-off look, as if he were gazing more into the dim past than the sunlit street outside his window. He was thinking so deeply that he did not hear his door open, nor a visitor enter, until a hand fell on his shoulder, and a familiar voice sounded on his ear:

“Arthur Sutherland, turn round and greet an old friend.”

The sunburnt gentleman started to his feet, and cordially grasped the extended hand.

"Phil, my dear old boy!"

That was all; but they shook hands with a vigor that often speaks more than words; and there was something like tears in Phil Sutherland's eyes.

"It is good to see your honest face after three years' absence," he said, laughing, to hide it. "I don't know but your military honors, colonel, may have made you forget country-cousins; but, seeing your name among the arrivals, I ran the risk."

"I should think so! How is my mother and Augusta, and the little people?"

"Never better! Eulalie has grown out of all knowledge; and your namesake, Master Arthur, does his best to keep pace with her."

"And how does doctoring thrive in St. Mary's, Phil?"

"Well, on the whole, it is not to be complained of. There are always measles, and whooping-cough, and croup, and scarlatina, and rheumatism, and other little things of that sort, to keep a man busy. I can't complain, really."

"You cold-blooded rascal! How does the old place look?"

"Capitally! and so does Augusta; weighs one hundred and fifty, if she does an ounce. I am up on busi-

ness for a day or two, and return to-morrow. You will accompany me, I hope, or you need never look to be forgiven, in this world or the next!"

"Perhaps I shall," said Arthur. "I have one or two friends to call on, and a little business to transact."

"By-the-bye," said Doctor Phil, carelessly, "I was speaking to one of your friends yesterday—a very old one, too! Mrs. Captain Anderly—Miss Isabel Vansell that was. Perhaps you have forgotten her?"

"No," said Arthur, not looking at him. "She is well?"

"Quite well, and as young and pretty as ever; and blushed, she did, I assure you, at the mention of your name!"

"Bah! Captain Anderly was a fine fellow. I knew him well, and was truly grieved to hear of his death. Is it medical business that has brought you to New York, Phil?"

Phil explained, and they fell into desultory talk. Presently the doctor rose to take his leave.

"It reminds me of ten years ago, Arthur," he said. "Do you recollect the day I came to see you here, after your return from Europe, and we talked of going back to Maplewood together?"

"Yes," Arthur said, very gravely; and Phil, recollecting himself, blushed, inwardly, at his own stupidity.

"Then you return with me to-morrow to Maplewood?" he said, taking his hat.

Arthur replied in the affirmative, and Phil departed.

Once more alone, Arthur's thoughts went back into the train Philip's entrance had disturbed.

"Ten years ago." No need of Phil's reminding him of that. Ten years ago he had sat looking out on sunlit Broadway, and dreaming of Isabel Vansell's azure eyes and golden hair. Ten years ago, and the woman who had been his fate was all unknown. Such an enchanted, blissful, stormy and tragical time as followed. Eight years ago, and his little Creole wife's unhappy story was ended, and she lay quietly to rest in St. Mary's Cemetery. He had been a wanderer over the world since, he had faced death and Southern bullets many a time, but that was all ended, too. And now he sat here, as he had sat ten years ago, looking out on the same men and women, perhaps, as if the dead decade had been only a dream. As on that day, Isabel Vansell's image was uppermost in his mind. The fair, serene face, the seraphic eyes, soothed him only to think of. She, too, had wedded—she, too, was widowed. Had the time come for the words left unsaid ten years ago to be said now?

Half an hour after, Arthur Sutherland was ringing the door-bell of Mrs. Anderly's house. Mrs. Anderly

was at home, and in the morning-room, and the servant ushered him in. Had the past come back to her, too? She was standing as he had left her—standing ten years ago, in the halo of sunshine, among her geraniums and canary-birds. Not a day older, not a whit less lovely—the milk-white skin smooth as satin, the rose-bloom unfaded, the tinsel hair as bright. His dove-eyed Madonna—his stainless ideal. Only not robed in Madonna white—widow's weeds trailed the rich carpet, and he was speaking to Mrs. Anderly, not Miss Vansell.

They were very quiet, both—whatever they felt, no outward sign testified, as they talked orthodox commonplace platitudes. Arthur Sutherland had faced the Southern bullets unflinchingly, but he found it hard to face his blue-eyed ideal, and say the words that filled his heart. All the old love came back, as if he had indeed left her yesterday; as if those ten dead years had never come between them. He said so at last.

“How familiar it all is, Isabel—ah! I beg your pardon, Mrs. Anderly.” The rose-bloom brightened on the pearly cheeks.

“Call me Isabel,” she said, softly; “I like it best. Do you mean this room?”

“This room—the flowers and the birds, and you, Isabel.”

Her hands, lying idly in her lap, began to flutter.

"Do you not find me changed?" she asked, not looking at him.

"Only in this," touching the black dress; "you wore white when last we parted."

Her head dropped, and the rosy light was at its brightest. The fluttering hands were clasped in his.

"May I say to-day what I meant to say then, Isabel—that I love you?"

The words were spoken, and the fluttering hands were not withdrawn. He was answered.

"Oh, Isabel," he said; "if I had spoken ten years ago, what would your answer have been?"

"What it is now," she softly replied; "yes!"

Then there was another interval of silence, but silence was better than talk just then. Presently, Arthur bent over the golden head nestling on his shoulder.

"And Captain Anderly, my dearest?"

"My husband was very good to me," she answered, simply; "and loved me very much. I was truly sorry when he died! But, Arthur—"

"Well, darling."

"They say"—with a little tremor of the voice—"you loved your wife so very, very much, that—that—"

"Well, Isabel, you are not jealous, I hope."

"Oh, no! but perhaps you will never love me as you did her!"

He stooped and kissed her.

"I shall love you with all my heart! but, Isabel, promise me one thing!"

"Anything, Arthur!"

"That you will never have any secrets from me! A hidden secret that should have been told me was the cause of all the misery of my married life. If I had only been told it, the tragical story you have heard might never have been! Some day, when you are my wife, you shall know all—there need be no concealment from you. Promise, Isabel!"

"I promise, dear Arthur!"

"And you will come back with me to Maplewood—when?"

"Oh, I don't know! Some time this summer, if you like."

"Not so long. Say in a month, Isabel!"

"But, Arthur—"

"Why, dearest," he pleaded; "why need we wait? Fate has separated us a long time, and life is too short to be spent in waiting. I want to take you to my old home, where I have been so supremely happy and supremely miserable. Let me take you to Maplewood—my love—my wife, before the May moon wanes."

And so it was settled, and there was a quiet

wedding in New York; and early in June, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sutherland went down to the old homestead, which he had left eight years ago, and never seen since.

Mrs. Sutherland, Senior, and Doctor and Mrs. Philip Sutherland, were there to greet them. There were the "little people" too. Doctor Phil's two flaxen-haired, blue-eyed boys, plump and rosy like mamma, and a shy, still, little dark fairy, with a moonlight sort of face, looking out of tangled black ringlets, and a pair of wonderful black eyes—Eulalie Sutherland—the living image of her beautiful dead mother. A pale, melancholy child—heiress of fabulous wealth, owner of wondrous beauty; but a pensive, subdued little creature, fragile as a lily. Isabel Sutherland drew the shrinking child toward her, and stooping to kiss her, something fell on her face and wet it.

That tear—that smile which followed, made them mother and daughter at once.

"Isabel," Arthur said, "I have something to tell you—have I not?"

His wife looked up from her embroidery with a smile. They were sitting together alone, in the misty June twilight, at the open drawing-room window, about a week after their arrival.

“The story of poor Eulalie’s secret, which I never knew myself until she lay dead. Isabel, I can tell you that secret in four words—she was a slave!”

“A—what?” repeated Isabel, vaguely.

“A slave; the daughter of a slave mother, and exposed to the same fate herself. This is how it was:—Gustavus Rohan, her grandfather, a wealthy Louisiana planter, had one son, Arthur, who fell madly in love, when very young, with a lovely quadroon girl, the property of a neighboring planter, between whom and Mr. Rohan there had existed a bitter feud for years. The quadroon girl was the pet of her mistress, and as educated and refined as the lady’s own daughter might have been—but what of that? she was a slave. The father of Arthur Rohan forbade his son’s visiting Eulalie Benoir, under pain of being disinherited, and the result was a secret marriage and an elopement. The planter who had lost his pretty slave, the father who had lost his son, made every effort to trace the fugitives, but in vain. Nothing was heard of either for upward of a year, when Mr. Rohan received a letter from Cuba. It was written by his son’s wife, and full of sorrowful tidings. The young husband was dead—she believed herself to be dying, and she wrote to beg him to forgive his dead son, and protect that son’s infant child. Mr. Rohan departed for Cuba at once, in time to see the poor mother die, and receive

from her arms the black-eyed baby that became the idol of his life. He would not return to his Louisianian home, lest his enemy there should discover that the child he loved already was the daughter of his run-away slave. So in Cuba he remained, and there Eulalie grew into the lovely creature whose picture you have seen, whose living image you behold in her child. There she grew up, to be idolized with such entire love, such absorbing devotion, as few in this world ever knew. That very intensity of love made the old man's misery. Day by day the fear grew upon him that he was destined to lose her too, this idol of his heart, and by a fate worse than death. She would be torn from him; she, the child of a slave, and a slave herself, was entirely at the mercy of his relentless enemy if discovered. There was but one chance of that discovery, and that was through Eulalie's own uncle, her mother's brother and only relative. He was several years younger than that unfortunate young mother, most crafty, cruel, spiteful, and malicious. He had all his master's hatred of the Rohans—aggravated tenfold by his sister's flight. He never believed in her marriage, of which there was no proof; and by some means or other—perhaps his sister had written to him also—he discovered that she had left a child, a daughter. That was enough. He was on her track from that moment. To discover that daughter, and revenge

himself on the Rohans by tearing her from her grandfather, and reducing her to the same level as himself, became the baleful object of his life. Mr. Rohan knew all this—Eulalie knew nothing of her dire story: she thought, as we all did, that her birthplace had been Louisiana, her mother a French Creole lady. Her grandfather never undeceived her until she was my betrothed wife, and the shock struck her down like a thunderbolt. She was taken to Cuba. I followed her—and, half a year after, still ignorant of the secret, I married her. What followed, you have already heard. Gaston Benoir found her out here, and began his work of vengeance. On the eve of telling me all, and afterward, I have no doubt, taking steps to tear her from me, he was struck down himself by a woman he had deceived; and with him died the fear of Eulalie's life. But not in time to save her—she had fled already, and all search for her was vain. Her tragical end you know; and in a letter to me, hidden in the breast of her dress, I read what I have told you. Where she had been in the interval of her flight, I have never discovered. Wherever she was, and it could not have been far distant, she must have wandered forth in an almost dying state—delirious, perhaps—and fallen down where we found her. What I suffered, Isabel, after that horrible night, is known only to heaven and myself.”

Two soft arms went round his neck, two loving lips touched his.

“Dear Arthur,” the sweet low voice of his wife said, “it is all over—let us forget it from this hour. You have a Eulalie on earth and a Eulalie in heaven; and remember, ‘After tears and weeping He poureth in joyfulness!’”

THE END.

