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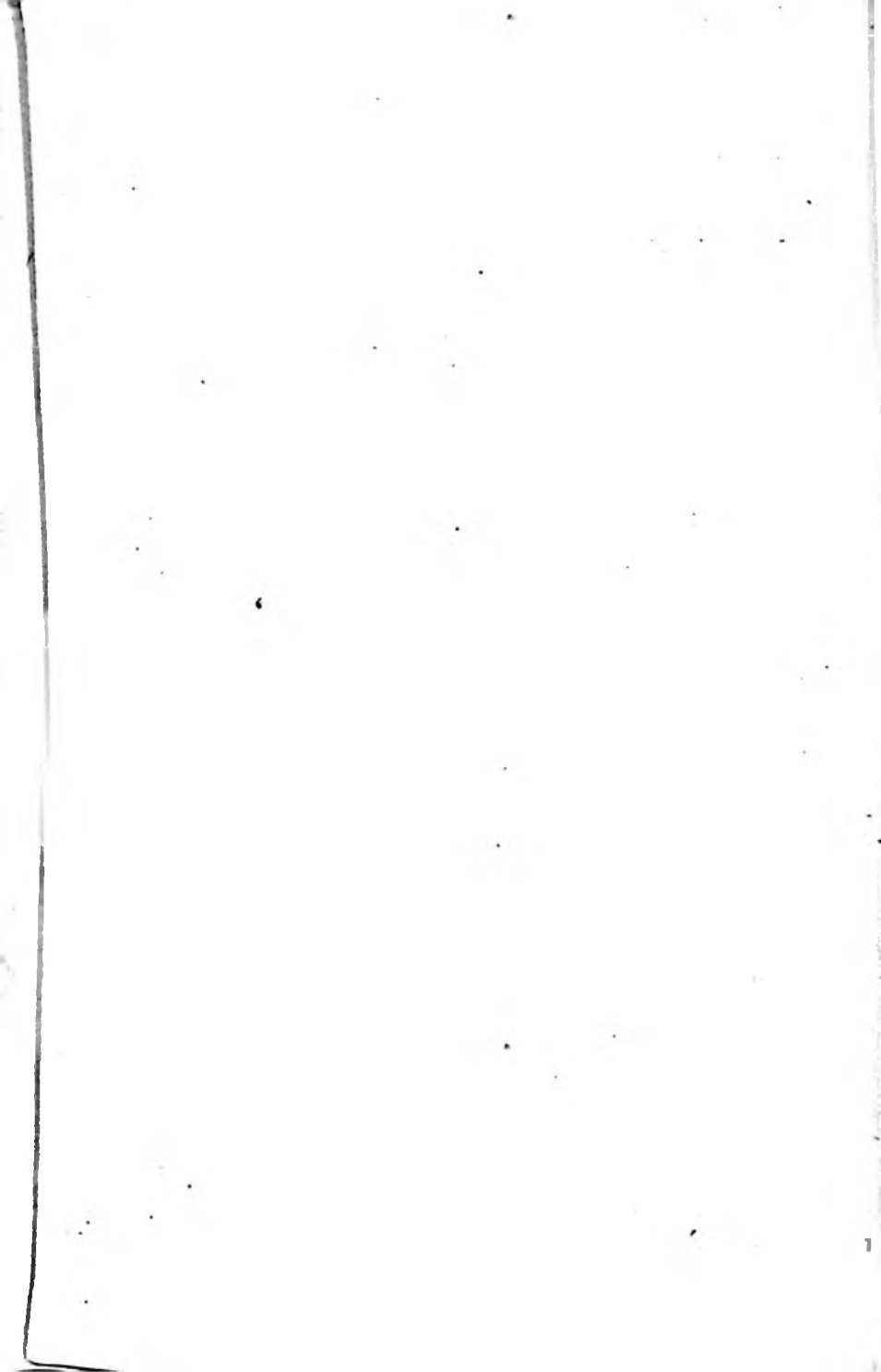


G. W. Lininger
Peru Jan 16th 1867

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Peru, Ill.

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THE
SIGNET OF KING SOLOMON;
OR, THE
FREEMASON'S DAUGHTER.

BY
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AND ETHICS OF FREEMASONRY," ETC.



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INTRODUCTION.



IN the following pages the writer has endeavored, through the medium of fiction, to illustrate the principles of the institution of Freemasonry, or rather to reveal its high and glorious ideal. THE KNIGHT OF THE TEMPLE is an embodiment of this ideal, which may be said, indeed, to inspire all noble and elevated souls; and exemplifies it in his aspirations, charitable ambitions, and benevolent deeds; and especially in his unwavering faith in the triumph of truth and goodness, which no obstacles could tire, and no discouragements could shake.

The author has also wished to illustrate another great truth, viz.: that sin will sooner or latter meet with its certain recompense, and can be atoned for only by *labor*, and its effects destroyed by works of charity and love.

Believing that the Ideal of Freemasonry will yet descend into the life of the world, with a harmonizing and ennobling influence, he has desired to impress upon the minds of the brotherhood the importance of working constantly and zealously to this effect. When

the world is brought under the rule of these divine sentiments, the new temple—the great Temple of Humanity, more magnificent than that of Solomon, constructed by our ancient brethren—will appear in its glory, and be completed by our labors with acclamations of joy. The kingdom of violence, and injustice, and inequality will be overturned, and that of love, and goodness, and virtue will descend to bless the earth forever. Let, therefore, the prayer of each and all be:

“ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM.”

PROLOGUE.

THE INTERVIEW.

“AWAY! address thy prayers to Heaven,
Before thy star of life is set ;
Learn if thou there canst be forgiven—
If mercy may absolve thee yet!
But here upon this earth beneath
There's not a spot where thou and I
Together for an hour could breathe:
Away! I would not see thee die.”

I.



N the extreme eastern portion of Massachusetts, where the bold and rock-shielded shore projects itself far out into the ocean, as if inviting a conflict with its strong billows, lies a town of considerable size, which, while in itself it offers no particular beauties to attract the attention of the

traveler, is still somewhat celebrated, on account of the remarkable picturesqueness of the surrounding scenery.

Back of the town, toward the north-west, a little more than half a mile distant, rises a lofty hill, covered on the west and north by heavy forest-trees, while the southern and eastern slope furnishes ample pasturage for the cattle of the villagers.

From this eminence the eye surveys, at a glance, a prospect of the most pleasing and delightful character. The sea, and its numerous fleets, sweeping onward to all parts of the world; the hills and fields, smiling in all the pride of their summer glory; the village, nestling below, embowered by blooming orchards; the boats of the fishermen, shooting out from various points along the shore, and skimming lightly over the sparkling waters of the bay, all unite to form a picture on which the eye never tires to gaze.

In the early part of June, in the year 18-, just as the setting sun, halting as it were a moment on the horizon, cast his last farewell beams on the summit of the hills, encircling it in a blaze of glory, a gentleman emerged from a path which wound along under the shadow of the wood, and, advancing to the highest point, seated himself on a rock beneath the shade of a beech-tree. He bore in his hand a bouquet of fragrant wild flowers, and wore in the button-hole of his coat a sprig of sweet-brier and a rose.

He was a person of medium size, with an expressive but not handsome countenance, which at this time exhibited evident traces of fearful inward agitation. He moved restlessly on his seat, as if a prey to bitter and painful thoughts, never raising his eyes, excepting now and then to look down the path which led to the village, as if expecting the approach of some one. Occasionally, as the tide of painful memories swept through his mind, groans and sighs would escape him, revealing a heart crushed and broken by some mighty sorrow or overwhelming calamity.

At length his regards rested on the flowers he held in his hand. After contemplating them a moment in silence, he exclaimed :

“Beautiful children of the sunshine! emblems of purity, love, and innocence! what now have I in common with you?” and he made a gesture as if he would cast them away.

“Yet no!” he added; “I will retain you. Ye are teachers of a heavenly wisdom; there is a healing benediction in your companionship.”

His thoughts assuming a poetic form, he continued :

“These flowers alone my sorrows know ;
They see my grief and misery ;
And when I tell them all my woe,
They seem to weep and mourn with me.”

“And, besides, are ye not also emblems of the fragility of human innocence, and of the evanescent nature of all worldly illusions? and, as such, it is fit

ye should be always with me. The fairest flowers of innocence are too often withered by the blasting breath of temptation and sin! The golden illusion of love and truth are as transitory and empty as those fleeting stars which gleam for a moment, through the night-gloom, and then plunge into eternal darkness. The Tempter marches through the world, in a thousand fascinating and seductive forms, and through pride, ambition, interest, and cursed voluptuousness, seduces us to our ruin! Evil, in forms of angelic beauty, presents the fatal fruit to our lips: we eat and fall, and the avenging Cherubim, with fiery scourges, drive us from the Eden of Innocence and Peace, and guard the gates against us forever!"

The last beam of day had faded; a gray haze already concealed the village from sight, and the thick and mysterious shadow of night descended on hill and forest. As he sat there in the darkness, wrapt in his painful thoughts, he looked like a statue of grief, repentance, and despair.

Occupied with his memories, he had not noticed the light step of some person who was rapidly approaching him.

A hand was laid upon his arm; he started, as if stung by a serpent.

"MAY MILLWOOD!"—"JOHN THORNBURY!"—were the simultaneous exclamations of both; and the pair stood face to face, silently gazing at each other in the gloom

The new-comer was a young lady, apparently about twenty-three years of age. She possessed considerable beauty, a complexion fair and transparent, and a form rather small, but voluptuously developed. The shape of her head and the contour of her features indicated plainly a superior intellect; while her lips and eyes, and entire appearance, as certainly stamped her a child of passion—false, selfish, and capricious; incapable of comprehending any great or noble sentiment, or of recognizing the first ideas of morality and virtue.

“So, MAY MILLWOOD, you have come as I commanded you,” said Captain THORNBURY, at length, in a voice remarkably calm, considering his recent agitation.

“I am here as you desired,” replied the girl, in a subdued tone; for she could not bear the piercing glance of his eye, which seemed to read all the dark secrets of her soul. “But why did you send for me?” she continued. “I thought you never wished to see me again.”

“Listen, wretched girl, and you shall know,” he replied quickly. “I have called you to this interview, that I might break the last tie that binds you to me; show you a picture of your wickedness, in all its frightful deformity, and announce your punishment. Hear me: Before I knew you, I was good and happy. My soul sympathized with all that was true, and generous, and noble. I revered heaven and loved my fellow-men; I was sincere, just, and

true. You came to me, the spirit of evil, in the form of an angel; surrounded me with your allurements, intoxicated my senses with your charms, and made yourself mistress of my entire soul and its deepest affections. I forgot GOD, heaven, and immortality—all for you, who absorbed my entire being. You were my only divinity; your smile was my only heaven. Leading me into the paths of sin, you made me your slave. And yet, at this very time, when you professed so much devotion and love to me, inebriating me with your fatal caresses, and when you were well aware of my idolatrous affection for you, you were fals^{er} than DELILAH of old; following your capricious passions, and seeking impure companionships, with criminal recklessness.”

While Captain THORNBURY was uttering these frightful accusations, the miserable girl appeared paralyzed. She did not think he knew the extent of her crimes, and, perhaps, she entertained the idea, when she received the command to meet him on that evening, that she could still deceive him, and keep him in her chains. Be that as it may, she was now thoroughly undeceived.

After a pause, Captain THORNBURY resumed :

“You have a ring upon your finger; you will please hand it to me.”

She hesitated, and looked into his face inquiringly.

“I have said it,” he added, sternly; “every token you possess of my ill-starred and fatal love must be destroyed.”

She slowly, and with evident reluctance, removed the ring, and passed it to him.

"And that bracelet," he continued, pointing to her wrist.

She unclasped it, and placed it in his hand with the ring.

"You will now give me that locket," he added.

"Oh! no, no!" she exclaimed, imploringly. "You cannot, you will not take that from me?"

"It must be so, MAY," he replied, firmly, but with an accent of sadness.

"Oh! do not take it; it contains the hair of my child. Do let me retain this," she repeated; "only let me keep this."

"The lock of hair, certainly, but not the locket," was his cold reply.

She drew it from her bosom, and handed it to him.

He opened it, and took therefrom two locks of hair; one of them he threw away, and the night-breeze bore it off, and scattered it among the grass. The other, a little silky curl, black as a raven's plume, he returned to her, saying:

"That is *your's*. MATTHEW ORALL should procure a locket for it."

At the mention of this name, MAY staggered as if she had been struck a heavy blow. She knew now that Captain THORNBURY was well acquainted with all her perfidy and crimes, and she stood trembling before him in her unmasked wickedness, not daring

to raise her head, nor meet the gaze of the man whom she had so cruelly deceived and wronged.

“And now, MAY MILLWOOD,” he resumed, “listen to the doom I pronounce upon you: Incapable of love, in any high and true sense of that term; unable to comprehend the meaning of the words *fidelity* and *duty*, you are unfit to be a wife. *You must tread the path of life alone—alone! alone!—and alone you must expiate your crimes!* Abandon this life of deception and shame; overcome the latent vices of your nature; cultivate the good, devote yourself to the useful service of your fellow-creatures, and you may yet atone for your crimes; and God may accept your repentance, and bless you with his forgiveness! The Past, you have lost forever. No power in the universe can restore it, or remove from above you its dreadful shadow. Grim and terrible it will frown upon you through the long, long eternity. But, by the right of penitence, you may possess the Future. Yes,” he continued, with enthusiasm, as if talking to himself; “yes, although the Past and its evil deeds are recorded against us for evermore, and justice, stern and inexorable, will execute the everduring retribution; yet the doors of the Future are open to the penitent, and above and before us gleams the ever brightening way where angels walk. Look at yonder star, just lifting its golden crest above the sea, as if emerging from the dark abysses below, to take its place among the splendors of the skies. Thus breaking the degrading bonds that have bound me, tri-

umphing over the passions which have seduced and the vices which have wounded me, that star shall be the type of my life; ever rising, ever advancing in that star-paved way where only virtue may walk."

A sudden flash of dazzling brightness from the eastern sky, at this moment, illuminated the entire landscape. He turned, and saw a brilliant meteor sweeping down obliquely toward the horizon, leaving a fleeting trail of splendor behind. In a few seconds the last glimmer had disappeared, and deeper darkness seemed to spread over the sky.

"MAY!" he suddenly exclaimed, turning toward the girl, "look well to yourself, or your life will be like that transient meteor—a star hurled from its sphere of glory, to be swallowed up in the eternal blackness. Go; but remember the path I have prescribed for you to walk in. Think not to deviate from it, either to the right or the left. If you seek to practice new deceptions, or perpetrate new crimes, a hand will be near to punish; in the brightness of noon, or the darkness of midnight, an eye will burn on all your paths of guilt, be they ever so secret, and justice will be sure to overtake you. Go, and repent."

Overwhelmed with emotions of hatred, fear, and shame, MAY turned away, without uttering a word, and hurried down the path to the village.

Captain THORNBURY gazed after her with tearful eyes; for he could not forget the tender friendship he had entertained for her when he believed her

good and pure. A thousand tender memories rushed over his heart, and for the moment unmanned him.

After a few moments, he took the ring, locket, and bracelet, laid them upon the rock at his feet, and with the heel of his boot ground them to splinters.

"Thus perishes," he exclaimed, "the last link of the fatal chain that bound me to an evil destiny. Now commences the work of expiation. Though I have lost the peace of Innocence, with Heaven's help, I may yet possess the happiness of Virtue." And he walked away through the darkness.

PROLOGUE.



THE SELF-ACCUSED.

"SHED tears of pity o'er a brother's fall,
Nor dwell with bitterness upon his fault ;
The grace and love of God hold thee—hold all ;
Were they withdrawn, thou, too, would'st surely halt."

II.



THE worthy Knights of the Temple had assembled in full force, at their regular convocation, in the month of June, 18.., in the city of...., to celebrate their mysteries, transact the business pertaining to their commandery, and to consider whatever might be presented of interest to them, or in any way connected with the welfare of that ancient fraternity.

The opening ceremonies had scarcely concluded, and the order of regular business opened, when one of the Knights arose, and, advancing to the Grand Commander, placed a paper in his hands, and then, turning to the Knights, addressed them thus :

“Sir Knights and Brothers of the Order of the Temple : you behold an erring and penitent brother, who, overwhelmed with shame, comes before you to confess his fault, and receive with resignation and humility whatever punishment your wisdom and justice may see fit to ordain. The paper now in the hands of the Ill. Grand Commander contains the particulars of his error. Feeling unworthy longer to be numbered among you, he desires to lay aside

all that pertains to his knightly state, except its memories, and have his name erased from the roll of membership."

At this unexpected announcement, the Knights were thunderstruck. Captain THORNBURY was one of their most distinguished members, unusually learned in the lore of that mystic institution, which, descending from the dawn of time, has in all ages labored to overcome the antagonisms of society, and unite the hostile nations in brotherly confidence and friendship. That *he*, of all others, should thus stand before them self-condemned was too much for belief.

After a painful silence of some minutes, the Grand Commander arose, and thus addressed the astonished commandery :

"True it is, our brother has been led into temptation, and persuaded into a grave error; but the voluntary confession he has made, and the exceeding tenderness of conscience which moved him to make that confession, when the secret was known only to himself and his God, and could be known to no others, but by his own co-operation, prove that his soul is in sympathy with virtue, and that his heart has passed uncorrupted through that fiery experience. Nevertheless, he has broken the rules of his Order, and it is fitting that you prescribe some punishment, and it remains for you to say what it shall be."

"Let the Grand Commander decide," was the unanimous voice of the commandery.

“Let it be so, then,” responded the chief; and, addressing himself to the self-accused Knight, who was kneeling at the altar, he proceeded: “Unfortunate brother, when you were invested with the dignity of a Knight, you made a solemn vow, under the Arch of Steel, to obey all the rules of our Order, and bow to its degrees. Will you accept, in humility and meekness, the sentence I am about to pronounce?”

“I will,” was the earnest response.

“Listen, then,” resumed the Grand Commander. “When Adam lost his integrity, through the persuasion of woman, the doom of labor was pronounced upon him, and has descended to all his race. And it is only thus that sin can be atoned for, and its effects destroyed. The righteous Judge undoubtedly ordained this doom, because he foresaw that the punishment itself would become a means of redemption. While marching and exploiting painfully in the path of expiation, humanity advances in the way of perfection. Labor, the great penalty announced for the sin of man, has transfigured the world, and disenthralled the race. Civilization, social institutions, art, science, literature, philosophy—all that is great and good, or beautiful and noble in life—behold, these are the fruits of labor, that expiatory labor which while it atones for the sin of the world, also redeems it. Such is the nature of the Divine punishment. Also, when one of our ancient brethren sinned against the rules of his fraternity,

his peers, in imitation of the heavenly order, imposed upon him the sentence of labor ; and upon the arid plains, and under the burning sky of Syria and Judea, must he labor, in expiation of his fault, protecting the defenseless and the weak, succoring the distressed, and periling life in the sublime work of rescuing the Sepulchre of the Crucified from the possession of the unholy children of Mohammed. Following, then, the Divine idea, and the example of our ancient brethren, this commandery decrees that, *for one year and a day, you devote yourself to the service of Humanity. Go forth, and perform the several labors which are demanded of a Knight of the Temple and Holy Sepulchre.* Watch over the defenseless and helpless ; console the sorrowful ; relieve the distressed ; lead the erring and sinful into the ways of repentance and virtue. Frustrate the evil machinations of the wicked, who seek to despoil the widow and the orphan. These are the labors to which you are sent. Perform them faithfully, and the sins shall be effaced from your knightly escutcheon ; peace shall return to your suffering heart, and the grace of charity shall wash away your sin. Sir Knights of the Temple, let us all take warning from the sorrows of our unfortunate friend, and never lose sight of the moral obligations imposed on us by our knightly vows. Forget not that we, too, have faults to expiate by works of charity and love. Following the illustrious examples of DE MOLAY and GUYEO, the two great martyrs of our Order, we

can meet life—its duties, trials and griefs—with fortitude; or death, in whatever form it comes, with firmness, confidence, and hope. And when at last we stand before the Grand Commander of the Universe, we shall hear the approving words: ‘Well done, good and faithful servants, friends of God and humanity, defenders of virtue and innocence, ascend to your reward.’”

The Grand Commander, then approaching the penitent Knight, laid his hand upon his head, saying:

“Have courage, brother. Go, in the name of God; march in the path of penitence. Remember Golgotha! A suffering world calls you to its service, and that service comprises the seven sacred labors of Masonry, which are: 1st, Feed the hungry; 2d, Give drink to the thirsty; 3d, Clothe the naked with a garment; 4th, Visit and ransom captives; 5th, Harbor the homeless—give the orphan and widow where to lay their heads; 6th, Relieve the sick; 7th, Bury the dead. And now, Sir Knights,” he added, “let this commandery be closed.

‘In nomeni Patris Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.’”

THE SURPRISE.

"She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be my being's ornament."

CHAPTER I.



IN the north part of the village, where our first scene transpired, on a considerable elevation of land, overlooking the sea, and nearly concealed from the view of one passing in the road by shrubbery and trees, stands a pretty cottage, one of those cosy

and delightful retreats which always draw the attention and elicit the remarks of travelers.

The door was protected by a porch of lattice-work, one side of which was shaded and completely covered by woodbine, and the other by a climbing rose-bush, which at this time was loaded with thousands of flowers. The exceeding neatness of the place, and the unostentatious elegance of its environments, plainly indicated the refined and cultivated tastes of the occupants.

This was the home of MARY MORE. The eldest of three children, she resided with her mother, who, being a lady of intelligence and culture, had herself taken charge of the education of her daughters; and, at the age of eighteen, few young ladies could boast of more accomplishments, both ornamental and useful, than MARY.

Her father, a worthy and much-respected sea captain, had died some years before, leaving his sorrow-stricken widow his blessing, the memory of his great love—to her the most inestimable of treasures—the cottage in which she dwelt, and a small income, scarcely sufficient to provide the bare necessities of life. The brave and loving woman did not, however, shrink from the heavy burden she must now bear alone; but, devoting herself exclusively to her children and the remembrance of her adored husband, and supported by an earnest and trustful faith in him who had promised to be “a father to the fatherless and the widow’s GOD,” she

battled victoriously with the perplexities and hard experiences of life.

Still young and beautiful, she steadily refused all offers of a second marriage, believing, with the mother of ST. AUGUSTINE, that the bond which bound her to her husband was eternal, and she desired to meet him again, a pure and faithful wife, and repose in his bosom in heaven.

Yet, with all her efforts to provide for her family, she would have been sadly perplexed at times, and suffered severe deprivations, had she not periodically received aid, which came to her with the greatest regularity, and in such a mysterious manner, that she never could get any clue to her invisible benefactors.

MARY, now a young lady of eighteen, had inherited all the amiable qualities of both her parents. Loving, truthful, pure-minded, and pious, she was a universal favorite. She could adapt herself to all society—the old, the young, the gay, or the sorrowful. The poor idolized her, for she was always ready to help in any time of need. With gentle patience she would watch with the sick, and had a sweet smile and kind word for all. And her beauty was as rare as the qualities of her heart were excellent. Her figure was of medium size, well developed and finely proportioned; her large black eyes gleamed with soul and intelligence; her hands were delicately small, white, and soft; and her feet were of the most aristocratic mould. But the most beautiful thing about

this divine creature was her entire unconsciousness of the possession of such matchless charms. Meek and artless, she had never thought of her personal attractions; nor, as is too often the case with beauties, calculated their value in the market of matrimony. Reared in seclusion, her tastes were simple; she knew nothing of the temptations and snares of the world, nor of the vices—the fatal and numerous progeny of passion and interest—which shame humanity, and make the angels weep over its fallen estate. Such was MARY MORE.

The shades of evening were falling quietly and softly around the little cottage, and Mrs. MORE and her daughters, seated at the windows of their neat drawing-room, were enjoying a view of the sea, which from this point affords a prospect sublimely impressive. A vase of flowers stood on the table, and filled the room with a delightful fragrance, which, with the lulling melody of the evening breeze, and soft murmuring of the sea, seemed to have led the inmates into a deep reverie. Even little AGNES, the youngest daughter, a beautiful little witch, always, singing and dancing, was now silent, and looked out, with her large and wondering eyes, upon the softly-murmuring ocean.

EMMA, the second daughter, a lovely girl of sixteen, leaning back in her chair, had closed her eyes, and seemed to be communing with herself. Mrs. MORE, still a beautiful woman in the prime of life, with her fine countenance and dark, earnest eyes,

was reclining upon the embrasure of the window, and seemed contemplating some object on the shore.

MARY sat silently regarding her mother. Her dark eyes shone with filial reverence, pride, and love.

It was a beautiful group to contemplate—this mother and her three daughters—so united, so tender, so loyng; apparently so weak and helpless, and yet so strong in their great affection, their mutual faith and trust.

MARY, who had not removed her eyes from her mother for some time, arose, went softly to her side, stooped down, and kissed her; then sinking down on her knees at her feet, and looking up inquiringly into her face, she said:

“Mother, dear mother, you are sad to-night; something troubles you. What have you been thinking of that could so distress you?”

As Mrs. MORE turned her face downward on her child, one could plainly see she had been weeping.

“Yes, my love,” she replied, “I am sad to-night. As I sat here, observing the lengthening shadows creeping down toward the sea, I felt a shadow gathering around my heart, which, in its throbbings, seemed to prophesy some coming woe.”

“Oh! no, mother; it is nothing; you are weary, and need rest. Come, I’ll sing for you, and cheer you up.”

“Not now, my child,” she replied; “I was also thinking that in a few days you will be far, far away among strangers, and we shall not see you for many

long, long months. I almost repent that I gave my consent to your engagement. You are too young to assume the charge of a school like that. Besides, you are an artless, inexperienced girl; and Heaven only knows what trials and griefs may meet you on your path."

"Dearest mother, do not give way to such gloomy fancies," replied MARY. "God will protect me; and only think what a help I shall be to you! You have reared me, labored hard to prepare me for usefulness, and now I must repay your love and self-sacrificing devotion, by laboring for you. How much I can do also for EMMA and little AGGIE, with my five hundred dollars a year!" And the brave, hopeful girl clapped her hands with delight, as she contemplated the good she would accomplish for her beloved mother and sisters.

The moon had now risen, shooting out of the ocean like a golden ball, and trailing her silvery tenuity along the sea, lighted up the little drawing-room with her mild splendors. The night-scene was grandly beautiful, defying all description. The water, land, houses, trees, all seemed to float in an ocean of liquid silver.

"Oh, how enchanting!" exclaimed MARY, going to the window, and looking out through the trees. "What a beautiful world!" she continued, "and how kind and good must be its maker, who has clothed it with so many splendors, thereby affording us so much enjoyment in its contemplation"

"Yes, it is a beautiful world!" responded the mother, who, having withdrawn for a moment, now returned with a light, which she placed upon the piano, "and let us be thankful to the good God who has mad it so."

Mrs. MORE kissed the two elder girls, and taking AGGIE by the hand, retired to her chamber.

"Come, MARY, said EMMA, "let us go, too; I am sleepy."

"Why, it is early, yet; it seems to me you are always sleepy, my sweet sister," replied MARY; "you can retire, if you will, but I want to practice some of my music first." And she seated herself at the piano.

"Ah! ah! sister mine," exclaimed EMMA, while her eyes twinkled with a merry light, "you can't deceive me. I see how it is; you don't know but *somebody* may call."

"Why, how *can* you, EMMA!" responded MARY, deprecatingly; but a blush on her cheek, and a little roguish smile, which, in spite of herself, appeared in the corner of her pretty mouth, proved plainly enough that the young sister's conjecture was not without foundation.

"Well, no matter, MARY," resumed EMMA; "you may sit up till morning, if you desire; so kiss me good night, and I'll be off."

MARY played several pieces; but although her execution was good, it was evident that at this time her heart was not in the piano; and, after a short

time, she closed the instrument, and, seating herself at the window, looked out into the glorious night.

She had not long been at the window, when a slight rustling was heard among the shrubbery.

She started up, with a smile of pleasure playing on her beautiful face; for, to confess the truth, she *was* expecting her affianced lover, EDWIN MORLEY.

She ran out of the cottage into the graveled walk to meet him; and holding out both hands to welcome him, as he came up through the shade, exclaimed:

"Dear, dear ED—" She did not finish the sentence. She was paralyzed with consternation; for, on looking up, instead of meeting the frank and open countenance of EDWIN MORLEY, the sinister eyes of MATTHEW ORALL were devouring her with their unholy fires.

She had been taken so entirely by surprise that it was some time before she could recover herself enough to speak, although she instinctively removed farther from him.

"Mr. ORALL," at length she had strength to say, "what business brings you here at this late hour?"

"O! your question is easily answered, my pretty bird," he replied, with a bow. "The beauty of the night brought me out of doors, and the particular beauty who reigns here among the flowers as queen has drawn me to this spot."

"You will preserve your compliments for some one else, Mr. ORALL; I bid you good night;" and she turned to go into the house.

He seized her by the arm, exclaiming, "You don't escape me so easily, my sweet flower; you must hear me. I have long been a worshiper of your beauty, and now I love you deeply, truly, madly. I offer you my hand and my heart."

"Mr. ORALL, let me go. A gentleman would not treat a defenseless girl thus. I entreat you to release me; my heart is irrevocably given to another; and were it not so, I never could love you."

ORALL trembled with rage and passion. "By the furies!" he howled, "you shall be my wife, or suffer my vengeance."

He caught the fainting girl in his arms, and was bearing her off, when a powerful blow sent him headlong among the shrubbery; at the same time the poor girl was laid gently on the grass. The same strong arm seized ORALL by the shoulder, and thrust him out of the gate.

"MATTHEW ORALL," said a low, stern voice, which made the villain tremble, "I know you well. Trouble this child again, and you shall repent it to the day of your death."

Returning, the stranger took the young girl in his arms, carried her into the house, and laid her on a couch. As she already showed signs of returning consciousness, he refrained from alarming the family. Taking a glass of water, which chanced opportunely to be on a table near by, he sprinkled it over her face and temples. The simple application was successful; she soon revived, and, starting up, looked

wonderingly around the room, and then fixed an inquiring glance upon the stranger, who stood before her with folded arms, observing her with tender interest.

He was a gentleman, apparently about thirty years of age, dressed in a complete suit of black, and the broad band of black crape upon his hat, as well as the expression of sorrow which appeared on his intelligent face, indicated that his heart was filled with the memory of some recent affliction. His bright, blue eyes beamed with a benignant luster, and all the features of his countenance revealed a character of marked individuality—firm, benevolent, and just. His long dark hair, which hung in clustering curls around his neck, and heavy moustache, gave him an aspect somewhat foreign. His general appearance, together with the large jet-black cross, bearing the legend, "IN HOC SIGNO VINCES," which he wore suspended from his watch-guard, would call to mind one of those ancient Knights who were bound by their solemn vows to defend the oppressed, and aid the children of misfortune.

At last, breaking the silence, he said :

"My child, you have escaped a great danger."

"Oh! sir!" exclaimed MARY, now fully restored, "how can I ever repay you for the great service you have rendered me?"

"Thank GOD, young lady, that I was near to aid you," he replied solemnly. "As for myself, it is my duty to protect the defenseless, and watch over im-

cence. Poor child," he continued, "you are about going out to struggle with a hard and selfish world. You must prepare yourself for painful experiences, bitter griefs and wasting sorrows. Clouds are even now gathering around your innocent head, and dark spirits are inventing schemes to bring you to harm. But Heaven will protect you. Be firm, strong, and faithful, and," (extending toward her a cross, which he had taken in his hand,) "*by this sign you will conquer.*"

Struck by his prophetic words, MARY had bowed her head upon her breast, and when she again raised it, the mysterious stranger had disappeared. The more she meditated his words, the deeper grew her wonder.

"Who is this man?" she said to herself. "He seems to know me, and my plans for the future. He spoke of gathering clouds and dangers. What *can* he mean?"

Failing to find any satisfactory reply to her questionings, she arose, closed and fastened the windows and door, and retired to her chamber, repeating to herself the last words of her defender: "Be firm, strong, and faithful." "Yes," she added, "I will follow his advice, and, by the power of the cross, I will conquer."

Although she could not comprehend how enemies and danger should surround her, whose life had been so harmless and inoffensive, she yet felt a vague uneasiness or fear of, she knew not what—

certain presentiment of some approaching sorrow. But the words of the stranger, while they alarmed, also reassured her; for if he spoke of secret foes and dangers, did he not also speak of victory, and a divine protection?

Taking, therefore, the stranger's motto as her own, she resolved to meet the events of life with boldness and fortitude, relying on her own resources, the honesty of her purposes, and the purity of her motives. She sought her pillow, and, with a prayer on her lips for her mother and sisters, the stranger, and EDWIN MORLEY, she passed away into the land of dreams.

MAY MILLWOOD.

“OH! wretch without a tear—without a thought,
Save joy above the ruin thou hast wrought ;
The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shalt feel far more than thou inflictest now;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain.”

CHAPTER II.



THE same night on which the scenes just described took place, MAY MILLWOOD was seated at a table in her solitary chamber, apparently wrapt in gloomy meditations. The beaming glory of the evening, which fell in silvery showers on all things without, cast no gentle ray of peace or light into the dark chambers of her perverse spirit. Her elbows resting on the table, and her head bowed upon her hands, which convulsively pressed her brow, she sat there a long time in silence. Judging from the haggard expression of her features, her self-communings could not have been of the most agreeable character.

It was a sad spectacle to behold—this girl, so young, so capable, so artless, and innocent in appearance, and yet so experienced in the ways of evil. She had early chosen the path of sin, and rapidly traversed its fatal course, it seemed that now conscience itself had abdicated its throne in her breast, and every womanly virtue had been banished from her heart. And yet who can say that this young girl, now so fallen, had she been reared under dif-

ferent influences, watched over by loving eyes, shielded by the strong arm of parental affection, and breathing the sweet, pure atmosphere of peace and love, might not have been one of the most brilliant ornaments of her sex, and a blessing to the world?

Her father was a dark and stern man—gloomy, discontented, and morose. He never laughed, but with a sardonic sneer at the fancied vices of his neighbors and the world, and he affected to believe that every thing in society was wrong, and every man a knave but himself. A reformer, he had all the inconsistencies of those who assume that character; forgetting that reformation must begin at home, and exhibiting an insane hatred to all institutions through which alone reform becomes possible. He denounced the Church, the Bible, institutions of religion, and especially the Order of Freemasonry, because all these rebuked his narrow-minded and fanatical theories of society. Defying the opinions of society and the common sense of mankind, he recognized no law or rule of conduct other than interest, or his own individual will or judgment. His dark features were never lighted up with a genial smile, and his heart seemed to be incapable of those sweet affections and emotions of tenderness which, gushing forth in their unrestrained fullness to wife and children, make home an image of the harmony and bliss of heaven.

Her mother was weak and ignorant, careless of her personal appearance, having no spirit of order

nor notions of neatness; and, consequently, her house was always in confusion; while she and her children presented a picture of the most disagreeable untidiness. Restless and discontented, gloomy and fretful, like her husband, with whom she was ever quarreling, she was poorly calculated to discharge a mother's duties toward the tender children which God had given to her care. The spirit of discord seemed to be the presiding genius of the house. The loving smile, the kind word, the deep and intense affection which fall with such a divine influence on the expanding hearts of children, like sunshine and dew upon the opening flowers, were there unknown. An everlasting shadow gloomed over that wretched abode.

Such was the home of MAY MILLWOOD; and in the presence of such examples, and constantly breathing such a pestiferous atmosphere, a very perfect specimen of female virtue could hardly be expected. As she grew to girlhood, finding no love nor sympathy at home, she spent much of her time in the streets, and her chosen associates were not always persons of pure tastes and elevated sentiments. In truth, either through accident, or the latent viciousness of her own heart, she was usually found in the society of persons of quite opposite character. The unchaste conversations and indelicate songs of her companions soon crowded her young mind with voluptuous images, and aroused fearfully all the baser passions of her nature.

Becoming acquainted with MATTHEW ORALL, a man of depraved sentiments and habits, she soon fell under his influence, and he completed her education in vice by corrupting her reason, and perverting her conscience, as others had corrupted her passions and perverted her womanly instincts.

Thus, at twenty-three years of age, possessing talents of a high order, a respectable education, and superior personal attractions, and assuming also the garb of piety, constant in her attendance at church and in the Sabbath school, she was capable of deceiving a saint. She was not without intellectual tastes; an extensive reader, she was well-informed, and could converse with intelligence and spirit on any subject.

Meeting Captain THORNBURY in society, she soon conceived for him a passion as deep and earnest as her fickle nature was capable of. Plying all her seductive arts, she succeeded in winning his regard; and while this attachment continued, she seemed to show some signs of improvement, and symptoms of a growing ambition to rise to a nobler and better life. But, in a fatal moment, falling again into the society of ORALL, she forgot THORNBURY and her engagements to him, and left him an inheritance of misery and remorse.

But it was not long before a new passion took possession of the soul of MAY MILLWOOD. She had recently met EDWIN MORLEY, and his manly beauty could not fail deeply to impress her senses. Although

she knew of his engagement with MARY MORE, she put all her arts and accomplishments into requisition to attract his attention. He was amused by her wit, and perhaps a little dazzled by her voluptuous beauty; but the superior loveliness, the modest virtues, and deep and true affection of MARY MORE effectually shielded his heart. She saw this; and, filled with jealousy and rage toward that lovely girl, she redoubled her attacks upon the heart of MORLEY, resolving, in some way or other, to win him for a husband.

At length she aroused herself from her long reverie, and cast her eyes over some papers containing scraps of poetry, which were scattered carelessly about the table. She selected one, and laid it before her. It was a poem, entitled "ALONE." After perusing it silently for some minutes, she exclaimed:

"Can it be that these lines, written four years ago, were inspired by a presentiment of my possible fate? *His* terrible words—how strangely they respond to the desolate sentiment of this piece! 'Alone! alone! you must tread the path of life alone!—alone the path of expiation!' But you shall not triumph, JOHN THORNBURY! I defy you. I will not accept the doom you have assumed to pronounce upon me. Through whatever infamies, through whatever crimes, necessary to my purpose, will I pursue my way and compass my end. EDWIN MORLEY shall be mine."

At this moment her eyes rested on a piece of white

paper, neatly folded, and fastened with a white silken thread. She hastily seized it, and opening it, gazed long upon its contents, with intense interest. It contained simply a little glossy curl, black as jet, and almost as fine as gossamer. She pressed it to her lips, with deep emotion, and covered it with kisses, exclaiming:

“Oh, my child! my darling, lost little MAY! Shall I ever see you again?”

Memories of the past came thronging upon her mind; her better nature was momentarily aroused, and she wept bitterly. There, in the midnight gloom, a little baby-face, sweet as paradise, with its smile-wreathed lips and soft, loving eyes, seemed to look upon her pleadingly, like an angel sent to arrest her in her downward course. The innocence of infancy, through that tiny countenance of incomparable beauty, appealed with mute but moving eloquence to the heart of the fallen girl—once a child, and innocent herself.

Listen, oh MAY!—child of sin—to these earnest pleadings. Let the innocence which smiles on that baby-face, now so brightly seen in your memory, be a perpetual conscience to lead you back to the paths of purity and virtue. Who knows but Heaven has sent you this vision for your salvation?

A thought like this evidently possessed her at the time; for, pressing her hands upon her heart, she cried, with deep emotion:

“Oh, THORNBURY! THORNBURY! you are right.

How deeply have I wronged you, and your great and earnest love! The doom you have spoken against me is just. The path you indicated for me henceforth to pursue is the *only* one that virtue and honor leave open for me now. Yes, I will tread the path of life alone."

Again kissing the little ringlet, she refolded it in the paper, and placed in her bosom.

She arose from her seat, and was about to withdraw, when she was startled, to find that she was not alone. Upon a sofa, in the back part of the room, observing her with a sneering smile, sat MATTHEW ORALL.

After being foiled in his villainous attempt to abduct MISS MORE, ORALL paced the beach for a time, like an enraged tiger, plotting schemes of vengeance. It was low twelve—the hour of violence and crime—before he thought of regaining his lodgings. Passing along the street, on his return, he noticed, as he approached the dwelling of MAY MILLWOOD, a light in the room usually occupied by her. A sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he turned and walked rapidly toward the house. Noiselessly opening the front door, he stole softly in, and, without being observed, seated himself where he was discovered by MAY.

After gazing at each other for some time, ORALL, at length, broke the silence, by exclaiming, with a scornful laugh, "So, my little bird, you are a penitent, a Magdalene, and really believe in virtue?"

"MATTHEW ORALL," replied the girl, with some firmness—for the lovely baby-face yet flitted before the eyes of her soul—"leave me. Your pernicious lessons have led me to my ruin. Nearly all the



crimes and perfidies with which my life is stained are the result of your teachings. Through you I deceived and betrayed Captain THORNBURY, one of the noblest and truest of men, and whom I really loved. At least," she added, as she saw ORALL smile incredulously, "I loved him more than *I* can ever love any other."

"No reproaches, MAY," said ORALL, impatiently, "we are partners in guilt, and have no right to censure each other.

"By the way," he added, "I called at the MORES this evening."

"Indeed," responded the girl, "what led you there?"

"Her beauty, and my love."

"Your *love!*" exclaimed MAY, with a mocking laugh.

"Yes, my *love*; and I offered her my hand and my heart."

"Your *heart!*" she replied with a scornful curl of the upper lip.

"Yes, MAY, my heart," he continued, "or what I have to represent that precious article; for you know I never professed to be largely endowed with such a commodity."

"Well!" said MAY, inquiringly.

"She rejected me with scorn," replied ORALL, grinding his teeth with rage, while his eyes gleamed with a fiendish hate. "She loves EDWIN MORLEY," he continued, "and he loves *her*. They are engaged."

MAY started. Her countenance underwent a sudden transformation. The sorrowful, almost contrite expression, faded away, and one of fierce hatred took its place.

"MATTHEW ORALL," resumed MAY, after a pause, "you love Miss MORE."

"No," he replied fiercely; "I *did* love her, but now I detest—I hate her. I now seek revenge."

"Well, ORALL," she replied quickly, "you shall have it; and I will aid you."

Pause! pause! oh, child of evil destiny, before it is too late! Look again on that sweet little face, those soft dark eyes, that angel smile, sent to lead you into a new path—to guide you to virtue and heaven. Look! oh look! that vision of sweet innocence is already floating, floating away in the darkness; if you lose it now, you lose it forever!

"ORALL," resumed MAY, "I love also—I love EDWIN MORLEY."

"Indeed!" exclaimed ORALL, "you astonish me."

"Yes," she continued, "I love MORLEY; or, in other words, I like him well enough to become his wife, and his wife I will be."

"But," said ORALL, "you loved THORNBURY; you loved me—and now—"

"No matter"—she interrupted him quickly—"let us leave the past; so far as you and I were concerned, we only deceived each other. I now seek a husband, while you thirst for vengeance. Assist me in my purpose, and I promise that you shall succeed in yours."

"Agreed," responded ORALL; "only let my purpose of vengeance result prosperously, and I will aid you in getting a thousand husbands. But how is this to be done?"

"Listen," replied MAY. "MARY MORE is going, in

a few days, to New York, where she is engaged as a teacher, and will be absent a year. MORLEY is weak, and I shall have opportunities enough to gain his esteem and love. You can also acquire his confidence, and artfully poison his mind against MARY. If she lose him, her disappointment will be a sufficient punishment for having rejected you. If, however, that will not satisfy *you*, circumstances can easily be contrived to compromise her reputation, and thus secure you a full revenge. She is helpless, has no powerful relatives, and is wholly in your power."

"Your plan is excellent," exclaimed ORALL; "Satan himself could not have devised a better. Fear not but I will do my part in its execution;" and he arose and departed, stroking his beard with grim satisfaction.

Left alone, MAY mused for a moment on her dark schemes, and then prepared to seek her pillow.

But no refreshing sleep can be yours, oh! lost, wretched girl! No sweet visions will ever brighten your dreams again. Lost! lost! lost! gone, the last aspiration to goodness! Gone, the last impulse to a virtuous life! The angelic baby-face which smiled upon you with such heaven-drawing power has faded away in the night-gloom, and will never return. The little gleam of light which shone for a moment on your dark soul is extinguished, and curtains of midnight darkness are falling around your heart, to be lifted never more—never more! The heavenly hand

that had reached down from above, as if to rescue you from the dark abyss, has been withdrawn. The smile which fell upon your beclouded heart, like a glimpse of Paradise, opening its dark chambers to a diviner influence, has passed away, and will not come again.

SIGNET OF SOLOMON.

“And who so cold as look on thee,
Thou lovely wanderer, and be less?
Nor be, what man should ever be,
The friend of Beauty in distress.”

CHAPTER III.



ADNESS and sorrow were in the house of Mrs. MORE. The day had come when MARY was to set out on her journey to New York, to enter on her untried labors as a teacher in a seminary of that city. This separation filled the mother's heart with

unspeakable grief. She had misgivings, such as a fond parent must necessarily feel, about allowing her daughter, so young and artless, so beautiful and trustful, to go so far from home, among strangers, and with no protection but her innocence. More than once she had suggested to MARY whether it would not be best, even now, to throw up the engagement, and remain with her friends. But the ambitious and loving girl, although her heart nearly burst when she thought of parting from those she loved so well, could not relinquish the long-cherished idea of lightening the burden which bore so heavily upon her dear mother, by her own labors. While affection strongly urged her to remain at home, a sense of duty—it seemed to her—commanded her to go.

Mrs. MORE, who had spent some time in giving MARY advice and counsel in regard to her new position, retired from the room to make the last preparations for the journey.

MARY, dressed in a brown traveling habit, fresh and rosy as the morning, looked more lovely than ever. She was engaged in packing away in one of her trunks some choice books, which she valued as gifts from her friends; while her sister EMMA was busy in arranging some little mementos of maternal and sisterly affection for MARY to take with her to her new home. The two girls, who had never been separated before, were too sad to converse much, and silently pursued their occupations.

The younger sister, AGGIE, now stole softly into the room; for her little heart, too, was sorrowful at the thought of this parting. Approaching her elder sister, she laid a bunch of flowers in her lap, saying: "See, dear MARY, what a beautiful bouquet I have gathered for you. I want you to take it with you, and then you will not forget your poor AGGIE;" and the affectionate child raised her sweet face for a kiss. Mary raised the little girl in her arms, embraced her tenderly, and then placed her in a chair by her side, saying: "No, my sweet one, I will not forget you."

The child again took the bouquet, and said: "Look here. This full-blown rose, in the center, I have called 'MOTHER;' that musk-rose is 'EMMA;' and that little moss-rose bud is 'AGGIE.' I have placed a thousand kisses on them; so every day you can gather a kiss from mother, EMMA, and me."

"And have you given *me* a place among them, also, my little AGGIE?" said the earnest, manly voice of EDWIN MORLEY, who, hearing the conversation, as he entered the hall, paused for a moment, but now stepped into the sitting-room.

"Yes, MARY," quickly replied the child, "we'll name a flower for EDWIN; but what shall it be? A bachelor's button?—No. A lily?—No. Oh! I see; it shall be that—sweet-william; but EDWIN must put the kisses on it;" and she archly raised the flower to his lips, which, of course, did not fail to receive the required number of precious salutations,

MARY smiled at the loving conceit of her young sister, and said :

"But you know, AGGIE, these flowers will not keep many days; what shall I do then?"

"Oh," responded the child, "you have an *herbarium*; you must press them in a book, and then paste them in that, and they will last a long, long while—perhaps till you return to us again. But, mind, you must put them all on the same page; so we shall all be together."

Having thus disposed of her love-offering, the little girl ran out again to play with the flowers and butterflies.

The lovers, although filled with grief that they must be separated so long, yet conversed hopefully of the future.

"How desolate we shall be when you are gone, dearest MARY!" said EDWIN, taking her hands in his and pressing them affectionately. "What a gloom will rest upon this place. These beautiful hills, and glorious wood-paths, and romantic shores will have no more charms for me, only so far as they remind me of you, and serve as constant mementos of your love. And it saddens me, also, to think how lonely you must be, far, far, away, among strangers."

"True, true, dear EDWIN," returned MARY, "and I dare not let my thoughts dwell upon the subject. But then, you know, a year will quickly glide by, and then, dearest, we shall all be united again."

"But, perhaps, when surrounded by the splendor and fashion of the metropolis, and especially by admirers of wealth and rank, which your beauty and accomplishments will not fail to attract, you will be ashamed of your rustic lover, and forget him for a more brilliant destiny than he can offer you," said the young man, sadly.

"Why, EDWIN, how can you speak thus!" replied MARY, her large dark eyes swimming in tears; and she arose, threw her arms around his neck, and pressed a kiss, in which all her soul seemed concentrated, upon his lips.

The young man took her in his arms, and drew her to his heart with the tenderest emotion.

"And you, EDWIN," she resumed, as she turned her beautiful eyes to his, "shall I find you unchanged, on my return?"

The young man gave her a look which seemed to say that the sun and stars, and even the pillars of the universe would fall, before he could forget or cease to love a being so incomparably fair.

Full of confidence, hope, and love, the young people were forming plans for the future, which rose before their young imaginations, bright and glorious, radiant with rainbows, and redolent of flowers, when Mrs. MORE returned to the room and said:

"MARY, dear, the coach will be here in an hour, to take you to the cars; had you not better get your bonnet and all your things ready? I will find that

paper which contains the directions you are to follow, when you arrive in New York."

She sat down by the table and unlocked an escritoire, which she placed before her, and began to turn over its contents. The paper to which she had just alluded was soon found; but on turning over some old letters, her attention was arrested by one addressed to herself, in the unmistakable handwriting of her dead husband, with the seal unbroken. The mere finding one of her husband's letters would of itself cause no surprise—for she had preserved many of these treasures—but the mystery, in this case, was, that an unsealed letter, which she had never seen nor read, should have remained there, through so many years, undiscovered. The sight of that new-found missive brought back again the old times in all their freshness. How her heart was stirred by the memories it awakened of those days, so bright and happy, when her life was crowned with the strong and devoted love of a husband. Her eyes filled with tears as she broke the seal. It seemed as if her beloved husband was about to speak to her from his home in paradise. She opened the letter and read aloud, as follows:

"MY EVER-BELOVED WIFE:

"Being about to set out on another voyage, and not knowing what accidents may befall you or me, I commend you to the care of that Brotherhood of which I have so long been a member. Should a time come when you will need sympathy, protection, or aid, do not hesitate to follow the directions herein given.

"The secretary in the east room contains a drawer marked with the letter G. You will find in it a small sealed packet, on one side of which are certain figures and emblems, with directions in regard to its use. Should the contingency above referred to occur, use it as advised. It contains the 'SIGNET OF KING SOLOMON.' Every Freemason who has stood under the 'Royal Arch' will comprehend its silent appeal, and no one who sees it will dare to turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress sent forth by the wife and children of a companion, be he living or dead.

"Heaven bless my dear wife and babes!

"JAMES MORE."



Mrs. MORE read this epistle with the deepest emotion. She remained in silent musing for a few minutes, and then started up, saying as some new

thought seemed to strike her: "Who knows but Providence has designed that this discovery should be made at this time for some wise and good purpose?"

Taking from her pocket a bunch of keys, she passed into the east room. Opening the drawer indicated, she soon found the mysterious packet, and



examined it attentively. On one side was a drawing, representing the *key-stone* of an arch, with a *circle* in the center, around which appeared the following mystic letters:

“H. T. W. S. S. T. K. S.”

On the reverse were these words:

“To him who can read the Cabalistic Letters: Remember your obligation.”

“My dear child,” said Mrs. MORE, as she returned to the sitting-room, “a heavy load of anxiety is lifted from my heart. I feel, indeed, that we are

surrounded with an invisible protection, and comprehend now the source of those mysterious supplies which in times of trial and need have never failed to appear. MARY," she added, solemnly, "your father, from his grave, to-day reaches forth his arm to guide and protect you. Take this packet, '*the Signet of King Solomon.*' I feel that it will prove for you a protecting talisman. If sorrows encompass you, it will bring you consolation. If dangers threaten you, it will secure you protection and aid."

While Mrs. MORE was speaking, the carriage, which was to bear the maiden away, drove up to the gate; and, after many embraces and tearful adieus, MARY took her place in the coach, which rolled rapidly away.

The grief-stricken circle gazed after her, through their streaming tears, till the carriage disappeared behind the high hills, and then returned to the house.

Heaven bless and protect you, MARY MORE!

* * * * *

Captain JAMES MORE, for some years before his death, had been an active and enthusiastic member of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Freemasons, and was known as one of its brightest ornaments. Fully comprehending and completely imbued with the lofty and benevolent spirit of the institution, his heart and hands were ever ready to respond to the

calls of the suffering and poor, with a munificence limited only by his means. No brother ever appealed to him, either "on the Square" or "under the Arch," without receiving substantial aid, and, what was oftentimes of far greater value, kind and encouraging words and useful advice. Thus he became dear to the Brotherhood; and when he was called from his labors, to rest in the more perfect Lodge above, his brethren mourned for him with a sincere and heart-felt sorrow.

Silently and invisibly, yet with unbending assiduity, they watched over his bereaved family, and, by judicious arrangements, provided so liberally for the wants of the widow that she was not only possessed of every comfort, but also able to give her daughters a thorough and practical education.

She often wondered how her limited income could go so far and procure so much, and was frequently not a little surprised, when she settled her quarterly bills with various tradesmen, to find the amount but little more than a quarter or third as large as she had supposed it to be.

But now she comprehended all. On reading her husband's letter—so long lost—the truth directly flashed upon her mind. Having thus had personal experience of the power and benevolence of that mysterious and universal Fraternity, she now felt that her daughter, wherever she might wander, would always be within its reach, and the object of its constant care; and she did not doubt that the

"Signet of King Solomon," which that beloved child bore with her, would answer some good purpose, in case of need.

These considerations served, in a good degree, to remove those painful misgivings and dark forebodings she had previously felt, and she resumed her household duties with a lighter spirit and more cheerful heart.

THE KNIGHT.

Know'st thou what's said when from thy door

The sons of sorrow see thee pass?

“Behold his brow, how full of grace!

He smiles upon the suppliant poor,

And fears nor fever nor infection,

But seeks the anguished sufferer's bed,

And charms to pence the throbbing head,

With deeds of true affection.”

CHAPTER IV.



ABOUT five o'clock on the same day—near the time of the departure of the train which connects with the New York steamers at Fall River—a gentleman, dressed entirely in black, was seen to enter the station of the Old Colony and Fall River railroad, in Boston. He entered by the west door, and advancing to the large apartment appropriated to the use of the male passengers, his searching gaze swept over the crowd, and finally rested on a tall and benevolent-looking gentleman who stood some distance from him, on the opposite side. This person was General OLDHAM, the station-master. If one could judge from appearances, he was not far from sixty years of age. He had been for many years a zealous Mason, and during the dark days of anti-Masonic persecution he remained firm as a rock, in his attachment to the Order, and its high and holy principles. His enthusiasm did not decline, but rather increased as he advanced in years, and no Brother, or member of a Brother's family, in distress, ever appealed to him in vain. His Masonic obligations were not lightly

assumed, and therefore he esteemed a strict compliance with them to be a religious duty.

After a few moments, the stranger, who had been silently regarding him, caught his eye, and immediately raised his right hand, with a peculiar motion. The General seemed to understand the signal; for, pressing through the throng of waiting passengers, he hastened toward the stranger, and the two shook hands with the cordiality of old friends, although they were personally unknown to each other. They conversed apart for a few minutes, when the tall gentleman made a motion to a person who at that moment was passing by with a small trunk in his hand, and who directly joined them.

"This is the conductor of the train, sir—Mr. CLAFLIN"—said the station-master to the stranger. "He will see that your request is complied with."

The three then advanced to a point in the room where they could look into the ladies' apartment. The stranger evidently soon found the object of his search; for, pointing toward a young lady of exquisite beauty, he said to Mr. CLAFLIN: "That is the lady, sir;" and at the same time handed him a letter, saying: "I will be much obliged to you, if you will give that, on your arrival in Fall River, to Captain BROWN, of the steamer Metropolis."

"It shall be done, sir," rejoined the conductor, who is noted as one of the most kind-hearted and obliging men living.

"I am very, very grateful to you, gentlemen,"

rejoined the stranger; and immediately passed out into the street.

That young lady was Miss MORE.

On leaving the railroad station, the stranger walked rapidly toward the Common, and, on reaching it, seated himself on one of the most retired benches he could find, where he remained for some time absorbed in thought.

By the description we have already given of this individual, the reader, no doubt, has already surmised that he is the same mysterious person who rescued Miss MORE from the villainous hand of MATTHEW ORALL.

At length, returning to himself, he took a memorandum book from his pocket, and, turning over its leaves, busied himself with its contents. It appeared to contain a record of each day's events and labors.

"And what works of charity have I performed to-day?" he exclaimed, at last; "what services of humanity have I rendered my suffering fellow-beings which the Recording Angel will deem worthy to be placed to my credit in his awful book?"

"Two orphan girls,' he continued—appearing to read from his register—'provided with comfortable homes.'

"A widow and her young children, in great distress, relieved.'

"Prisoners visited, and furnished with such aid and counsel as their circumstances demanded.'

“‘A poor child buried with Christian rites, whose parents were too destitute to provide for these last offices of affection.’

“Alas! alas! that in this land of plenty—a land really overflowing with every comfort and luxury—there should still be so many who—and through no fault of their own either—are, literally, *too poor to die!*

“But the good accomplished, and the sufferings relieved to-day, how insignificant they seem when compared with the terrible magnitude of the evils which yet press, with crushing weight, on a stricken world! The few sorrows I have been able to lighten, and all my poor works of charity, were they repeated every day, and multiplied a thousand times, would still be but as a few grains of sand lifted from the shore of the boundless sea—a few drops of water taken from the great ocean of human misery, which still rolls darkly on, apparently as full as ever!

“Oh! will the day ever come when justice and love, subduing the world to a brighter and more equitable rule, shall carry gladness and rest to every human dwelling?”

While uttering these words, the countenance of the stranger was expressive of the deepest pity and sadness.

“Yet we must not despair, but work with courage and hope,” he continued, as his eyes fell upon the cross which was attached to his watch-chain.

“‘*In hoc signo vinces.*’ ‘*Magna est veritas et preva-*

lebit. Yes, 'by this sign we will conquer.' 'Great is the Truth, and it will prevail.' Love shall yet possess the earth. The horizon of the Future already gleams with the light of the coming day. The mighty dirge of grief which, from the beginning, has ever pealed forth from the bleeding heart of humanity, shall cease at length, and the worlds, redeemed from the curse of selfishness, shall roll on in their majestic circles, enveloped in a sublime chorus of gratitude and love."

The last beams of the setting sun were now entwining themselves, like threads of gold, among the green leaves of the grand old trees, which form the glory and beauty of the Common.

The stranger, turning to get a better view of the sunset glory, was surprised to see a little boy not more than four years old, standing directly before him, and gazing into his face with an earnest, wishful look. He was a child of almost superhuman beauty. His finely formed head was covered with clustering curls of soft flaxen hair; his eyes of heavenly blue, although now partially dimmed by tears, shone with intelligence. Altogether, he would remind one of those pictures where the artist has endeavored to embody his ideal of the form and features of the child-Christ. He was dressed with scrupulous neatness, although his well-worn garments plainly indicated that he was a child of misfortune.

Seeing that the boy desired to speak to him, but

was restrained by timidity, the stranger laid his hand upon the child's head, saying, kindly :

"What can I do for you, my little fellow?"

"Oh, sir!" he replied, eagerly, "my poor mamma" —the child could proceed no further; tears and emotion choked his utterance.

His interest and sympathy now thoroughly aroused, the stranger lifted him up and placed him by his side on the bench, and sought, by encouraging and gentle words, to reassure him. His efforts were soon successful. The storm of grief having subsided, the poor boy raised his sweet face trustfully toward that of the stranger.

"Now, my pretty one," said the latter, "what do you wish to say? What of your mamma?"

"Oh!" replied the child, "poor mamma is sick; doctor won't come and give her medicine, because we haven't money, and mamma cried so because nobody would come to help her, and ——."

"Enough my poor, poor child," exclaimed the stranger, hastily; "let us go; your mamma shall have medicine; but where do you live?"

The boy hesitated, as if he did not fully understand the question.

"In what street do you live?" repeated the former.

"Don't know," replied the boy.

"Do not know?" rejoined the stranger; "how do you expect to find your way home again?"

"Oh! I know where it is, but not the name of the street," the child quickly responded.

“Let us hasten, then,” returned the stranger; and taking the beautiful boy by the hand, the two walked rapidly across the Common. They proceeded some distance up Pleasant street, and entered an obscure alley which turned down on the right.

“Mamma lives there,” said the child, pointing to a dilapidated house, which stood a few paces from them on the left. “Oh! my dear mamma,” continued the boy, “how glad she will be! she won’t cry any more;” and then, looking earnestly into the stranger’s face, he added: “are you God?”

“God? my poor child, what a question! why do you speak thus?” replied the stranger, who could not help smiling at the strange thought of the little boy.

“Why,” rejoined the child, “mamma said none but God would help her now, and didn’t know but—but ——.”

“Well, well, no matter, my brave fellow,” said the stranger; “let us see what we can do for your sick mamma.”

They entered the house, and, ascending to the third story, the boy led the way to a large but poorly furnished room, out of which opened another, which was evidently the chamber of the sick lady.

Into this room the child hastily ran, exclaiming:

“Don’t cry any more, mamma; your little WILLIE can now get you medicine, and ever so many nice things. I have found a gentleman who will help you.”

"What do you say, my sweet child?" said a soft but feeble voice.

"Madam," said the stranger, advancing to the door, "I met your child a few minutes since, and learned that you were sick and without friends. It is my duty to relieve the distressed and protect the weak. I shall be happy to render you any assistance you may need."

"God has indeed heard my prayer," replied the same sweet voice. "I am indeed weak and helpless."

As she lay there on the bed, like a broken flower, her face flushed with fever, the stranger thought he never saw before a more lovely face. She was yet young; not more than twenty-three, at most; and in spite of her illness and pain, exhibited a head, face, and features of extraordinary beauty.

The stranger contemplated her for a moment in silence. Being familiar with disease in every form, he quickly saw that her illness was the result of care and anxiety; and, although severe, was not dangerous. The fever had, indeed, already reached its crisis, and, with good nursing, she would be quite restored in two or three days.

Comprehending that in this case acts would be more efficacious than words, he merely told her henceforth to have no more anxiety, that he would see her properly cared for, and then withdrew, promising to return in a short time.

Leaving the house, he proceeded rapidly to

Washington street, and entering a drug store, ordered several articles, which he placed in his pockets, and then, exchanging a few words with the proprietor, left. He called at other places, leaving special orders at each, and immediately returned to the comfortless home of his new *protégés*.

Taking a small bottle from his pocket, he poured a portion of its contents into a glass, and, raising the head of the sick lady gently, placed the liquid to her lips, remarking, with a smile so frank and benevolent as to inspire, on the instant, the fullest confidence :

“I am not altogether a suitable nurse for a lady ; but am perhaps better than none. A woman, however, experienced in such labors, will soon be here. who, I trust, will be able to make you quite comfortable.”

The lady took the draught, and in a few moments fell into an easy slumber.

The stranger retired to the next room, seated himself at a window, and busied himself with conjectures concerning the history of the two interesting beings who had been so unexpectedly cast upon his protection. The lady had evidently been delicately reared, and her present condition must have been the result of misfortunes of no ordinary character. The little boy, whom he had taken upon his knee, could give him no satisfactory information. It was not from any motive of idle curiosity that the stranger desired to penetrate the history of his unknown charge ;

but as business of importance made it necessary for him to leave Boston in a few days for a distant city, he wished to know enough of the circumstances of the unfortunate lady to enable him to serve her according to her needs, by restoring her to her friends, or otherwise providing for her.

Steps were now heard in the hall on the third floor, and, the door opening, a lady entered, followed by a porter, carrying a large basket filled with a great variety of articles—provisions, medicines, clothing—in a word, everything that might be deemed necessary in the present circumstances.

“Mrs. NEWTON,” said the stranger, rising, and king the lady cordially by the hand, “I am glad at you decided to come yourself; for I can place these unfortunate persons in your charge in the fullest confidence that they will be well cared for.”

The lady addressed was a handsome woman, apparently about forty years of age. Her soft eyes and pleasant countenance were a true index of her heart, which could deeply feel for, and sympathize with, suffering in all its forms. She was a graduate of one of our female medical colleges, and thus combined the skillful physician with the experienced nurse.

The stranger, after making her acquainted with the condition of the invalid, and giving her directions to be followed during the night, departed with a promise that he would return early the next morning.

"Well, my little man," said Mrs. NEWTON to the boy, whose sweet face was upturned wonderingly toward hers, "what is your name?"

"WILLIE," replied the child; and he came and placed his tiny white hands trustfully on her lap. She took him in her arms and kissed him affectionately.

"Mamma, my poor mamma, will she be well soon?" he added.

"With God's help I trust she will," returned the lady. "But don't talk now, you may wake her. I'll give you some supper, and then WILLIE will go to bed, and in the morning he shall see his mamma quite well."

The supper disposed of, and the little boy put into his crib, Mrs. NEWTON took a shaded light and seated herself with her work by the side of the sick lady.

About ten o'clock the invalid awoke and looked inquiringly around the room, and then fixed her eyes on the nurse. The sight of that lovely face and those gently beaming eyes won the heart of the latter at once.

"Have no fear, madam," said Mrs. NEWTON; "you are now surrounded with friends who will protect you. Do you feel better?"

"Oh, yes, much, very much better; but tell me," she added, "who is that kind gentleman who came to me so opportunely in my despair, to save me and my poor child?"

"Indeed, my dear lady, I cannot tell," responded the nurse; "I know him, and yet I do not know him. I have often met him on occasions like this, but do not know his name. He seems to be very sad, as if some great grief were crushing his heart—he, so good and kind! He is constantly seeking out the unfortunate and wretched and sick, affording them timely and substantial relief."

"It is strange," said the sick lady, in a sweet, silvery voice; "I was in utter despair, when he came, like a kind Providence, to relieve me—a poor, friendless outcast, who can make him no return."

Mrs. NEWTON now arose, and, mixing a powder, gave it to the invalid, who soon after fell again into a refreshing slumber, from which she did not awake till the following morning.

Early in the forenoon the stranger again made his appearance.

"How is your patient this morning, Mrs. NEWTON?" he inquired, as he entered the room; "I hope she is quite comfortable?"

"Oh!" replied the nurse, "she has so far improved that I have already got her up. She will soon be well; but I think your kind words and assurances of future protection have done more for her than my medicines. And now if you can take my place for an hour," she added, "I will go out and attend to some affairs of my own, and take little WILLIE with me for a walk; the morning air will do him good."

After Mrs. NEWTON and the child had departed, the stranger rose and went into the chamber of the invalid.

She was dressed, and seated in an easy chair. All traces of fever had disappeared, and her superb countenance gave every indication of returning health.

"How do you find yourself now?" he inquired, in a tone of tender interest, as he drew a chair to her side, and sat down in it.

"I feel myself nearly recovered," she replied, her face beaming with emotions of gratitude, "through your kindness, and the mercy of Heaven; but how can I ever repay you, sir, for your disinterested care and kindness?"

"You owe me no thanks," he returned; "I have but discharged my duty;" and then he immediately added: "How can I still further aid you? Have you friends, to whom you wish to return? or what are your purposes? You may command my services."

"Alas!" she replied, "I have no friends; my parents are dead, and I am a lonely outcast—a weak and helpless wanderer on the highway of life. My only ambition is to procure some respectable employment by which I can support myself and poor child."

"But if you will tell me your history," replied the stranger, hesitatingly—for he did not wish to show an indelicate curiosity in regard to the mystery

which surrounded her—"I shall be better able to decide what will be best to do for your future interests."

"Your services, sir," responded the beautiful unknown, "rendered to one who had no claims whatever upon you, certainly give you a right to know the history of her whom you have laid under such strong obligations. But my history is no uncommon one; on the contrary, it is the usual every-day story of life—hopes blighted—love deceived, and a heart crushed. It may be told in few words. I was born," she continued, "in the city of New York. My mother dying when I was quite young, my father, whose affection was unbounded, procured me the best governesses and teachers which wealth and influence could command, and provided for my education at home. I had scarcely reached the age of eighteen when this beloved parent was suddenly taken away, and I was left alone in the world. Mistress of an ample fortune, I had no anxiety regarding the future; but I missed sadly the wise counsels and affectionate guidance of my dear father. It was a little after this period that I made the acquaintance of the person who afterward became my husband. He professed the strongest attachment to me—and I believe he was sincere at the time—and it was not long before he gained my deepest affection. He was wealthy, handsome, and belonged to one of the most respectable families of New York; and it was with the most implicit confi-

dence that I gave him my hand, my heart, and my fortune. The first part of our married life was without a cloud. My husband's love seemed to increase every day, and when little WILLIE was born it appeared to absorb his entire being. As for myself, I more than loved him—I worshiped him as a god. Thus the few years which rolled—oh, how quickly!—away only served to make more bright the golden chain of love which bound us together. Yet, at this time, there was a shadow on my heart—a kind of instinctive foreboding of coming evil. WILLIE was now three years old, and we desired to procure for him a suitable governess. Among the various applicants for the place there was a young lady from Boston, who brought the highest testimonials in regard to character and qualifications. We decided to accept her, and in due time she was installed as one of the family. From the first I felt a secret dislike to her; I could not tell why, nor in any way explain it. She was a fine looking girl, intelligent, and full of spirit; but was infected with many of those wild notions which the so-called strong-minded women delight to advocate. She was an individualist of the transcendental school, and recognized no law nor authority but her own judgment and capricious impulses. Altogether, she was the most unsuitable person we could have selected to take charge of our dear child. But my husband was pleased with her, and often took her with him to the theaters and opera, and also in his

drives, when it was inconvenient for me to accompany him. She, too, exhibited a growing fondness for him; and, although my heart was filled with apprehensions, my reason could find no solid ground for open complaint. I fancied, also, that the manner of my husband grew colder toward me every day, while she constantly assumed a haughtier air. Thus, week after week passed away, during which time I suffered all that indescribable agony of doubt which is far more terrible than certainty. But the dreadful certainty was soon to fall on me. One day, returning from a walk, earlier than I anticipated or was expected, on passing through the hall to my apartments, I heard low voices in one of the parlors. Entering the first room, the door of which was partially open, I found that the voices issued from the back parlor. One of the folding doors was closed so as to conceal entirely the persons who were conversing behind. Supposing them to be some of the servants, I was just entering the apartment, when, accidentally raising my eyes to a mirror which was placed on the opposite side, I saw a sight which paralyzed, for the time, all my senses. There, on the sofa, locked in each other's arms, and exchanging the most passionate embraces, accompanied with the most endearing words, sat my husband and the governess! The terrible agony caused by this discovery took away from me all power of motion. I stood like one in a trance, or oppressed by a hideous nightmare. I learned enough from

their conversation to convince me that a criminal intimacy had existed between them for weeks. At length I gathered sufficient strength to steal from the hated place, and withdraw to my own chamber. For a time I remained as in a dream. I could not comprehend the calamity which had befallen me. I could not believe that my married life, that opened so fair and beautiful—so bright with love, hope, and confidence—would come to so dreadful a termination. Oh! the thought was too horrible; and yet it was terribly true. A serpent had been gliding among the flowers of my domestic paradise, and poisoned them, every one. My brain reeled; my heart seemed to be breaking; I felt that I could no longer breathe under that hated roof. I thought not of taking any advice; I only thought of getting away from that pestilential atmosphere which was suffocating me. I hastily packed a few clothes into a carpet-bag, and placing in my pocket a considerable sum of money I had by me, I called my little boy, and silently left the house. We wandered about some time, without knowing whither. My wish was to get as far from New York as possible. At length I found myself in the Fourth avenue, near Twenty-eighth street. There was a train of cars on the track, bearing the letters 'New York and Boston,' apparently ready to start. Taking my child in my arms, I entered one of them, and soon left New York far behind. No one who has not experienced the same, can tell how utterly desolate the heart is when it is robbed, in

this manner, of its worshiped idol. Had my husband died, good, loving and true, I should still have had the memory of his truth, and love, and virtue to console me—could have looked forward with hope to a reunion in Heaven; but crushed and broken, without aim or ambition, I was incapable of exertion. My sweet, loving boy was all that attached me to life. For some time after my arrival in Boston, I boarded with a private family; but finding my means gradually lessening, I felt the necessity of greater economy, and finally took these rooms, hoping that I might, by sewing, succeed in providing the necessaries of life. But in this I was disappointed. At length my last cent was expended, and starvation stared us in the face. Poor little WILLIE cried for bread, which I could not give him. Seeing me weep, he tried to comfort me, in his childish manner. I made him comprehend, as well as I could, our helpless situation. That night I fell into a heavy slumber, and, on awakening the next morning, was in a high fever. My thoughts wandered, and I was not capable of collecting my ideas until some time in the afternoon, when, parched with thirst, I called WILLIE to get me some water. He brought it to me, saying: 'There, dear mamma, don't cry any more; WILLIE will go and find somebody to bring you medicine and help you.' 'No, no, my child,' I replied, 'you will get lost, and there is none now to help us but God.' It appears that all day, although suffering terribly from hunger himself, he had been

forming some childish plans by which he could make his poor mother comfortable. Perhaps it was God who inspired him with the idea; for he stole out of the house unobserved, and I did not see him again until he returned with you."

During the recital of this painful history, the stranger's countenance exhibited the deepest interest and commiseration.

"My dear madam," said he, after meditating some time, "may you not have been too hasty in leaving your home? Your husband, it is true, wronged, most cruelly wronged you. His senses might, for the time, have been fascinated by that depraved woman, while his heart may have remained loyal, and may even now be calling, in its agony, for its first love."

"Oh! I wish it were so," she replied, quickly; "but even this hope is denied me. I have received intelligence in regard to his life since, and he has become a confirmed libertine. The wretched girl who led him to forget his honor deceived and deserted him, and then he plunged into the lowest and most criminal debauchery."

"And yet we know not," he responded; "the human heart is an inscrutable mystery, and men of strong and craving natures often resort to the excitements of unlawful love, as others seek to drown unhappy recollections in the intoxicating bowl."

She looked at him with an eager, wistful gaze.

"Yes," he continued; "your husband may be saved, and his affection restored."

"Oh! if I could believe it," she exclaimed—"but how?"

"By your presence, gentleness, and beauty," he replied; "which, by awaking memories of the olden time, of the sweet days of innocent enjoyment and chaste love, might break the dark spell that, perhaps, has only momentarily chained and led away his senses. My dear madam," he added, after a pause, "I have somewhat changed my plans in regard to you. Will you confide in me, and allow me to guide you."

"Oh! yes, yes," she replied, eagerly; "I feel you know best what is right."

"Well," he added, "to-morrow evening I go to New York, and shall expect you to accompany me. In this world we cannot expect life to be all sunshine, nor its sky entirely cloudless. We all have sorrows and reverses to bear, and need mutual forbearance and charity."

He arose, and bidding her hope for the best, and reiterating his assurances of protection, he departed.

THE SNARE.

"A snare! a most infernal snare! E'en hell
Itself, with all its malice infinite,
Would burn with blushes hotter than its flames,
On being charged with deeds so foul."

CHAPTER V.



HE left MARY MORE at the railway station, waiting the departure of the train for New York. When the car-room door was opened, the station-master, approaching her respectfully, notified her that the cars were ready, and kindly escorted her to a seat. The passengers were soon in their places, the last bell rang out its warning peal, and the express train swept away with the speed of the wind over its iron track, bearing our beautiful heroine onward to new scenes, new labors, and, perhaps, to new trials.

On arriving at Fall River, the conductor (Mr. CLAFLEN) attended her to the steamboat, and saw her safely seated in the ladies' cabin. Then, wishing her a prosperous journey, and saluting her courteously, he retired. From the ladies' cabin he went to the captain's office, and delivered the letter intrusted to his care by the stranger.

In a few minutes the magnificent steamer was on her way. Onward she sped in her majestic course over the calm waters toward the great metropolis of the United States.

Shortly after, Captain BROWN came into the ladies' cabin. Standing at the door, holding an open letter in his hand, to which he frequently referred, he cast a searching look over the crowd of ladies there collected, as if he were looking for some particular person or friend. At last his eyes rested on Miss MORE, who had timidly withdrawn to the most obscure corner. Scrutinizing her closely, and again referring to the letter, he said to himself: "That must be the young lady. My friend is right; she is indeed a beautiful flower."

"Miss MORE?" he said, interrogatively, advancing to the place where she sat.

"That is my name, sir," she replied, surprised that she should be known to any person there.

"A friend of mine," he immediately continued, "has commended you to my care; and be assured, Miss, while on my boat, you shall want for no attention which will conduce to your comfort. Come," he added, "supper is now ready, and I will wait on you to the table."

Grateful for his kind words, she took his arm, and accompanied him to the supper-room.

Every traveler over this favorite route remembers, with pleasure, the brilliant spectacle which the cabins of these unrivaled steamers present, when fully lighted up at the tea-hour. The tables, covered with the richest and costliest tea-service, splendidly decorated with flowers, and loaded with every possible luxury to tempt the appetite, cannot be surpassed.

The beautiful girl, leaning on the arm of Captain BROWN, reared in the seclusion of a rural district, was completely dazzled. She thought she had never seen anything so magnificent.

After supper, learning that she had never been on a steamboat before, the captain took her through the superb vessel; every part of which she surveyed with the eager curiosity of a child. The engine, particularly, attracted her attention; and she listened with deep interest to the captain's explanations of its construction, and wondered how men, so weak and insignificant, apparently, could construct such a monstrous power, and control it with so much ease.

The captain's duties now requiring him outside, he reconducted her to the cabin. Telling her that he would procure a carriage in the morning, and send her to her destined abode in the city, and giving some directions to the chambermaid, he bade her good night, and retired.

It was a beautiful, calm night, and MARY, on retiring to bed, soon fell asleep, and her mind floated away into the land of dreams. Again she was at home, pressed to the heart of her dear mother, listening to the merry laugh of her sisters, and the earnest, loving voice of EDWIN MORLEY. Then she was in her garden, trimming and watering her flowers, which were undulating gracefully, and nodding to each other in the balmy atmosphere of the morning. All at once the scene changed; clouds,

black as night, covered the sky; awful thunders shook the granite shores; red lightnings furrowed the gathering darkness, and through the gloom she saw the dark countenances of MATTHEW ORALL and MAY MILLWOOD peering threateningly upon her. Hearing a rustling at her feet, she looked down, and saw a loathsome serpent, which, winding among the flowers, glided swiftly by her, and disappeared in a hedge.

She awoke with a scream. The chambermaid was standing over her, looking anxiously in her face.

"Are you ill, Miss?" she inquired, kindly.

"Oh! no; but I believe I have been dreaming. Thank Heaven!" she added, "it was only a dream."

"Well, dear child," said the chambermaid, "it is time to get up now; we are almost up to the city."

MARY was soon dressed; but, on looking around, seemed to miss something.

"Oh! your flowers," quickly exclaimed the kind-hearted chambermaid; "I placed them in a vase, with water, thinking you might wish to preserve them. Here they are."

"I am very much obliged to you. You are, indeed, very kind," rejoined MARY, and she took the flowers, and kissed those named by little AGGIE, with deep emotion.

Poor girl! little did she think that a serpent was already gliding among and poisoning the sweetest flowers which bloomed in the garden of her hopes and love.

The noble steamer soon rounded up to the dock, and the passengers began to disembark.

Not long before the arrival of the boat at New York, a splendid coach drove down to the landing, from which a well-formed and fashionably-dressed man alighted. He gave some order to the coachman, and then stationed himself where he could observe all the passengers as they passed from the steamer. Although his countenance indicated good nature and some generosity, there was yet something in his air not altogether satisfactory, on a close scrutiny. His complexion was too florid, and something of a dissipated look about his eyes, seemed to designate him as one of the fast men of New York. And yet there was such a manner of real gentility about him, so much of evident good-breeding, that one would hesitate some time before pronouncing him such. When the passengers began to land, he examined closely every lady as she passed out of the boat. At length his eyes were riveted on a most beautiful girl, who was just crossing the platform, leaning on the arm of Captain BROWN.

"That superb creature must be the one," he said to himself, and immediately hastened toward her.

Captain BROWN conducted her to a coach, and was just handing her in, when the gentleman approached, and laid his hand on her arm, saying :

"Miss MORE, I believe? You were going to — Seminary near Union square?"

"I am Miss MORE," she replied; "and that is the place of my destination."

"We expected you this morning, and it was thought best to meet you here, and save you the inconvenience of finding your way there alone. I have a carriage waiting for you. Will you take my arm?"

The captain looked at the gentleman doubtingly; but, as everything appeared right, he resigned his charge into his hands, and, with many wishes for her happiness and prosperity, bade her adieu, and returned to his boat.

The gentleman, placing Miss MORE in the carriage, took a seat at her side, and they were rapidly whirled long up Broadway toward the Fifth avenue.

After a few minutes' drive, the coach drew up before one of the most aristocratic mansions in that fashionable thoroughfare.

The gentleman, with great gallantry, assisted the young lady to alight; and, ordering a porter to take in her trunks, conducted her to the house.

The artless and unsophisticated beauty was completely dazzled by the splendor of that mansion. She fancied she was in the fabled palace of ALADDIN. Such heavy, massive furniture, gorgeous tapestry, soft Turkey carpets, and gigantic mirrors, she had never seen before. The parlors and halls were profusely ornamented with the costliest pictures—works of the first artists—all proofs of the good taste of the proprietor.

"Miss MORE will consider herself at home, here," said the gentleman, casting upon her a look of admiration, which caused her face and neck to crimson. "The summer term does not commence until next week; in the meanwhile, you will have time to get well rested, and see some of the objects of interest for which our city is celebrated. It will be a pleasing task to me to act as cicerone to one so lovely."

He left the room, and directly a maid appeared to show MARY her chamber. Leading the way, she conducted the young girl to a luxuriously-furnished apartment, ornamented with vases of fresh flowers, pictures, and statuettes, in the highest style of art. After seeing that everything was properly arranged for the comfort of the new occupant, the maid withdrew, casting a curious look on the sweet girl, who had taken a seat at the open window.

"She is very handsome, truly," said the maid, as she descended the great stairway to the hall. "It is really too bad of the colonel to think of destroying so fair a flower. Oh! these fashionable folks!—but it's none of my business."

Although pleased with her reception, MARY was by no means at ease. A vague fear, which she could not throw off, filled her heart; a serpent seemed to hiss upon her from every flower; a danger appeared to lurk under every picture. She took the bouquet, the love-offering of her sweet sister

AGGIE, and kissed, over and over again, the flowers which that affectionate child had named to represent the beloved ones she had left behind in her dear old home.

Becoming at length partially reassured, she commenced dressing herself; and had scarcely completed her toilet when a servant came to announce that breakfast was ready. She descended to the drawing-room, where the gentleman was waiting to receive her. He politely offered her his arm, and conducted her to the dining-hall.

"Mrs. ALBERTSON, said he to a tall, dark, but tolerably handsome lady, who was seated at the head of the table, "allow me to introduce to you our expected guest, Miss MORE."

The lady welcomed her with a patronizing air, and, begging her to feel perfectly at home, seated her at her left. The party consisted only of these three. The breakfast was delicious and elegant. The gentleman—witty, intelligent, and well-informed—made himself charming, and enlivened the repast with many anecdotes illustrative of persons and places in New York, and soon MARY began to feel that she was among friends indeed.

The breakfast over, MARY returned to her room to write letters to her friends.

The gentleman retired to his library, seated himself at a desk, took from his pocket a letter, and, spreading it open before him, read it attentively.

"Well," he said, speaking to himself, "ORALL has

not overrated her beauty; she is worth her weight in gold. If I could but win the love of this sweet angel, I should be happier than an emperor."

At this moment his eyes wandered upward, and rested for a time on a picture which hung opposite him on the wall. It was the portrait of a young lady of exquisite loveliness, who seemed to look down upon him, her eyes beaming with love, confidence, and affection.

A sigh of regret escaped him, as he exclaimed:

"Why, oh! why did I throw away so much joy, and cast myself into this burning tide? But it matters not; I am in the whirlpool, and there I must play, till it drags me down into its dark vortex."

Pausing for a few minutes, he took pen and paper and wrote as follows:

NEW YORK, June 25, 185-.

TO MR. MATTHEW ORALL:

DEAR SIR—Your description of the person was perfect. The bird was caged without difficulty; but it remains to be seen whether she will sing. I inclose your reward—two hundred dollars. If I can gain the love of this girl, I will marry her, and leave this life of debauchery, of which I am heartily ashamed.

Yours, etc.,

J. S.—

He inclosed two one hundred dollar notes in this letter, placed it in an envelope, and sealed it.

Not long after, he dressed himself, and went down town to attend to his business. He had scarcely entered his counting-room before he was joined by three gentlemen, all elegantly dressed, and exhibiting

that exquisite polish which distinguishes the aristocracy of New York. Although they moved in the highest circles, and were thrifty merchants, it was plain to be seen, from their conversation, that they were the most unprincipled roués in the world.

"I say, colonel," said one of them, "I am head and ears in love."

"Indeed!" replied our gentleman; "again! And who is the fair charmer this time?"

"That is exactly what I can't make out," replied the other. "But such eyes, hair, complexion, and mouth! By Jove! I would give a thousand dollars for one kiss from those rosy lips!"

"But where did you see her?" asked the gentleman.

"I was coming from Boston, last night, on the Metropolis," rejoined the former, "when I saw a young lady, beautiful enough to tempt a saint to perdition. I tried every way to get near her, to offer some civility, and thus get into a conversation with her; but she was so jealously guarded by the captain of the boat, and a dragon of a chambermaid, that I found it impossible, and so gave up the pursuit in disgust."

"It is well you did," said the gentleman; "that piece of dimity belongs to me; she was on her way to meet me. So you must give her up."

"The devil!" exclaimed the man in love; "but honor among thieves, you know; so here is my hand, a pledge that I will not molest you."

"But come, gentlemen," said the man who was addressed as colonel, "the girl is a splendid specimen of her sex, and I am proud of my conquest; and if you will meet me to-morrow evening I will introduce you."

"Agreed," exclaimed the three at once; "we'll be there, and pay our court to the new beauty."

Now, these four men were gentlemen of wealth and standing in New York, of undoubted integrity and honor in all business transactions; and yet they could coolly and deliberately conspire to destroy female innocence without hesitation, or one compunctious twinge of conscience.

At three o'clock, the gentleman, or the colonel, and his companions-in-evil called him, returned to his princely residence on the Fifth avenue to dine.

The dinner passed off pleasantly. MARY seemed to have become accustomed to the place, and apparently enjoyed the society of her new-found friends. The colonel made himself agreeable. He was deferential and polite; and when the dinner was over, invited the ladies to take a drive with him in the upper part of the city.

MARY withdrew to her room to prepare for the excursion, while the colonel, after a brief conversation with Mrs. ALBERTSON; went out to order the carriage.

When all was ready, MARY descended, and stood in the door, waiting for the house-keeper. She soon appeared, but without any preparation for the ride.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," she said; "but I remember an engagement this afternoon, and must beg Miss MORE to excuse me. It will make no matter; you will enjoy the drive quite as well as if I were with you."

MARY hesitated a moment; but seeing no impropriety in it, although Mrs. ALBERTSON did not accompany them, descended the marble steps, and the colonel handed her into the coach. Entering after her, he closed the door, and the carriage rolled away over the Bloomingdale road.

It was a charming evening. The air was fragrant with the perfume of millions of flowers, and MARY thought, as she approached the country, she had never seen anything half so fair. Deeply imbued with poetic sentiments, no one could appreciate the beautiful in nature or art better than she, and she greatly enjoyed the spectacle she now beheld.

The colonel, discovering the bent of her tastes, shaped his conversation to suit them. His observations were so just, his remarks so poetical, and his opinions generally so correct, that MARY's confidence was completely gained. She laughed and clapped her pretty hands in her innocent joy, and was so entirely unsuspecting that she did not perceive that the gentleman had quietly wound his arm around her waist, and was drawing her more and more closely to him.

The carriage now whirled along the banks of the

noble Hudson, affording a very fine view of the opposite shore and its wild, romantic scenery.

After a drive of an hour and a half in various directions, through wild glens, over hills, and through winding valleys, the coach stopped before an elegant little cottage, almost entirely concealed from view by a profusion of umbrageous trees.

"This is my country-house," said the colonel; "we will stop a short time to breathe the horses, and then we'll start on our return to the city."

They alighted, and MARY examined the environs of the cottage with admiration. The colonel guided her over the grounds, and pointed out and explained to her the respective properties of the rare and beautiful flowers and plants which bordered the numerous walks. Then, ascending a hill of considerable altitude, they seated themselves on a rustic bench to enjoy the magnificent prospect that opened before them.

The day was rapidly declining. The sun, undulating in a sky of pure amber, over the Palisades, wrapt these celebrated cliffs and the intervening river in a sheen of glory. The birds were chanting their evening songs in the adjacent woods, and the calm Hudson rolled with a soft, silvery cadence over its sandy shore. All nature seemed to overflow with melody and song, and gleam with beauty, and dissolve in love.

"Oh!" exclaimed the enthusiastic girl, "I could remain here forever; all is so calm, lovely, and in-

spiring; and it all reminds me so of his beauty and love, who has created the whole, as this glory is but a reflection of himself."

"True, true," rejoined her companion; "the worlds swim in glory, and all nature dissolves in love. Love is the life of the universe, of gods, angels, and men. We cannot live without love. What more desolate than a soul uncheered by its blessed light! But come, my dear girl, it is time to return now. The horses are refreshed, and are impatient to be upon the road again."

He held her small, white hand in his as he led her down the hill, and through the garden and park, to the carriage.

The horses dashed gaily down the road, and they were soon brought to the colonel's residence in the city, where tea was already waiting for them.

After tea, the colonel retired to his library, and, throwing himself on a luxurious lounge, appeared to be lost in meditation.

"That girl is a jewel!" at last he exclaimed; "and I must wear it. If her heart is unoccupied, it will be easy to win her. But, suppose she already loves! ORALL wrote, I think, that she was engaged to a down-east rustic. Well, it will not be hard to supplant him; if I can only keep her in my power a few days more it will be accomplished."

As he spoke thus, he casually glanced at the opposite wall. The picture—that face of radiant beauty—seemed to look down reproachfully upon him. He

turned away his head, as if to avoid the condemnatory glance.

"Yes," he resumed, "she shall be mine, and I will make my first essay this very night."

He arose, and rang a bell. A servant directly appeared at the door.

"Bring some lights," he ordered, "and ask Miss MORE if she will favor me with her presence a few moments in the library."

The lights were immediately brought, and not long after MARY entered the room, a very vision of loveliness. The colonel gazed upon her with undisguised admiration.

"I have sent for you, Miss MARY," he said, in a voice bland and soft, "because, knowing your fondness for study, I desired to make you familiar with this room, and wish you to use it as your own. You will find in these cases a great variety of select works in history, poetry and philosophy. I think you are fond of poetry;" and he took down a superb copy of BYRON, and seated himself on the sofa where she was reclining.

He opened the volume at the commencement of the beautiful poem entitled "*Parisina*," and read with good effect the following lines:

"Now is the time when from the boughs
The nightingale's soft note is heard;
Now is the time that lover's vows
Seem soft in every whispered word."

"You remember," he continued, "when in the

country, a little while since, you spoke of love as a necessity of the universe—its very life? Well, I agree with you. Life without love is a mere desert, without one oasis, or flower, or cooling fountain. Now, tell me, dear girl, did *you* ever feel love as a necessity of *your* being; a strong, earnest, overpowering yearning for a kindred soul, who could reflect your sentiments, share your thoughts—in short, become the complementary part of yourself?"

"Indeed, sir," she replied, somewhat confused, "you ask me a strange question, and must excuse me if I do not answer. Did I feel those strong yearnings, or rather did I cherish an affection for some one, the sentiment would be too sacred to be made the subject of discussion or discourse."

Not at all disconcerted, he proceeded :

"Do you believe in love at first sight?"

"Not having had any experience of the kind," she rejoined, "I can neither believe nor disbelieve."

"Do you think it possible for a man to fall in love with a portrait, and cherish the affection till it comes to be an overpowering passion?—until he is ready to brave every danger, and make any sacrifice to find its original?"

"Your questions, sir," she returned, "are entirely beyond my comprehension; you should ask one more skilled in the metaphysics and philosophy of love than a young and inexperienced girl like myself can possibly be."

"But you have a heart, and are a woman," he

resumed; "and women learn by instinct what men learn by experience and philosophy. But listen:— I have a friend who some time since received the portrait of a young lady of almost superhuman loveliness, and it awakened in his heart the deepest sentiment of love. It was his constant companion by day and night. The passion grew with him till it overmastered all other. He sought everywhere for the original, but, for a long time without success. At length he was informed that she was a resident of Massachusetts, but was soon to leave for a distant State. Learning that on a certain morning she would arrive in New York, and having ascertained that she was personally unacquainted with the friends she contemplated visiting, he formed a plan to enjoy her society, and get an opportunity to press his suit. It was, no doubt, a great crime he meditated and accomplished, but his love was also great. His plan succeeded; the unsuspecting girl, believing him to have been sent by her friends, went with him without hesitation to his house. His love now became worship. He adores the very ground on which she treads; but as yet he has not had courage to tell his love. Now, tell me, Miss MARY," he added, "what would you do, were you that young girl? Would not such profound affection and devotion touch your heart, and awaken an answering sentiment within it?"

"What another in my place might do," she responded, "I know not; but I could not love, however much I might pity his misfortunes."

"Look at this," said the colonel, as he drew a miniature portrait from his bosom, and handed it to her; that picture is the one which inspired this fatal love."

Pressing the spring lightly, the case opened, and, to her dismay, it disclosed her own features.

"Yes, you, dearest girl," he proceeded, "are the original, my soul's idol, and I am the unfortunate victim of a hopeless love."

"What!" cried the terrified girl, almost with a scream, rising up, and standing pale and trembling before him; "you are not Mr. ARMSTRONG, the principal of — Seminary."

"Indeed I am not," he rejoined; "I am Colonel SCRANTON, and your devout worshiper."

"Oh, base man!" cried the poor girl; "how could you so cruelly deceive me? I must leave this house without delay. I will see Mrs. ALBERTSON."

"It will be of no use," he replied; "she and all the servants are my creatures, and have orders not to allow you to leave the house, nor hold any communication with any outside."

"Oh, my God!" the poor girl exclaimed, frantically; "a prisoner! Heaven help me, what shall I do!"

"Love me, my pretty bird," replied the wicked man, "and all will be well. I am rich; you shall be mistress of this house and that pretty cottage in the country, which you admired so much; and your mother and sisters, too, shall be amply provided for."

The poor maiden was so terror-stricken that she could not speak.

The colonel, overcome by his criminal passion, seized her in his arms, and attempted to plant a kiss on her lips. She struggled a moment, but at last, with superhuman strength, broke from his impure embrace, and, rushing from the room, gained her chamber, and, locking the door, threw herself upon her bed in an agony of grief. She thought of her mother and the dear ones at home.

“Oh, mother, dear mother!” she cried, “your forebodings were not groundless. Your hapless child is indeed beset with perils.”

She tried to collect her scattered senses, so as to see clearly the calamity which had befallen her. It was plain that she was the victim of some deep-laid plot, the purpose of which was her ruin. But why should any one wish her ill?—she knew of none she had injured.

Then she remembered the words of the strange man who rescued her from the hands of MATTHEW ORALL: “Even now spirits of evil are planning schemes to bring you to harm.” He then knew of enemies and plots. The more she indulged in conjectures the more she became confused. She never once dreamed that ORALL, bad as he was, would go so far. Indeed, she had thought so little of his attempt to carry her off that she had never mentioned it to her mother or lover.

Seeing no means of escape, and utterly prostrated, the unhappy girl sobbed herself to sleep.

Sleep, gentle maiden, sleep in peace. Angels will watch over your innocence, and shield you with their protecting wings.

Meanwhile, Colonel SCRANTON was walking the floor of his library, considering his probable prospects of success. It was evident that he was not discouraged. "Let me see," he said to himself, "she said if she could not love her abductor she might *pity* him. Well, that is something. Pity is but a step from love, as the poet says :

"'Love walks with pity under arm.'

"Courage, then ; I shall win her yet."

MARY MORE was indeed in the coils of the serpent.

EFFECT OF THE SIGNET.

“And fain would her sons all her high precepts keep,
Defending the right—amid all peril and danger,
Bringing smiles of new joy to the eyelids that weep,
And befriending the poor, the oppressed, and the stranger:
 This, their life-task, her due,
 By her teachings pursue,
 With the Eye of Omniscience forever in view;
Till their labor accepted, as columns of grace,
In the temple eternal, hereafter have place.”

MARY G. HALE.

CHAPTER VI.



ATTHEW ORALL, in his peregrinations about the country, often visited New York in search of adventures and funds. He had for many years, however, well kept up his character at home, constantly associated with that class of persons who were noted for their depraved morals and successful depredations on society. He had thus early become an expert gambler and able professor of "thimble-rigging," "the little joker," and other approved means of getting possession of the money of such unsophisticated countrymen as happened to come in his way.

Falling in with Colonel SCRANTON, in one of these visits, that practiced deceiver soon discovered his thoroughly unprincipled character, and often employed him in affairs of not the most honorable description.

When ORALL was repulsed by Miss MORE, and in furious hate was contriving some scheme of revenge against her, his thoughts chanced to fall on Colonel SCRANTON. Knowing well the habits of that heart-

less libertine, he immediately conceived the idea of making him the instrument of his vengeance. He could thus, also, replenish his exhausted purse; for he knew the colonel would pay liberally if he once succeeded in placing Miss MORE in his power, which he did not doubt he could easily do.

He directly wrote the colonel, giving him a description of that beautiful girl, inclosing, at the same time, a miniature likeness of the maiden, of which, by some means or other, he had possessed himself. He proposed to deliver her into his hands for a consideration.

The colonel immediately accepted the proposition, and in due time the vile scheme was carried into effect, as has been already related.

We have seen how the colonel sped in his suit. Although he had not made much progress, he did not doubt of final success. Skilled in all the ways of the heart, he believed that in a few days, under his fascinations, that pity, which she confessed she *night* feel for one in the situation he professed to be, would, by a natural transition, pass into love. Consequently, he awoke the next morning, after the scene in the library, in excellent humor with himself and all the world.

As to our heroine, after a night of disturbed slumber, she arose in the morning, resolved, as her best course, to appear not to remember the scenes of the preceding evening, but watch closely for any chances of escape that might offer. Colonel SCRANTON had

completely bewildered her. His conversations on general subjects were so agreeable, his views so just, and then he spoke of his love with so much earnestness and apparent sincerity, she knew not what to think. Did he really love her? or was he an unprincipled villain, seeking to ruin her? She did not know whether to hate or pity him. She could not love him; for her faithful heart was fast anchored in the bosom of EDWIN MORLEY. But, then, woman is fond of admiration, and will forgive man much if she believes his crimes have been committed through love of her.

Determined to escape, and knowing that it would be useless to apply to the servants, she resolved to appeal to the honor of the colonel, and persuade him, if possible, to restore her to her friends.

The colonel, however, went out early in the morning, and she had no opportunity of seeing him till late in the afternoon, when he joined her in one of the drawing-rooms.

He was unusually courteous; for he evidently desired to gain her confidence. He saw she was no ordinary person, and would not be gained through mere passion. Her reason and conscience must be perverted, and this he thought possible through an artful and infernal logic, of which he was perfect master. It is true, this would require time, and the exercise of much prudence. He knew that to win her he must make her believe that his purposes were honorable.

Taking a seat by her side, he said, in a voice soft and tender: "MARY, dear MARY, I hope you were not offended at the occurrences of last evening. In abducting you, and keeping you a prisoner in my house, I know I have committed a great crime; but then the fatal love which consumes me seems to me a sufficient excuse. Your own nature is so calm and gentle you cannot tell what madness and folly—even crimes—a man may be guilty of who is the victim of an over-mastering passion like mine. Nay, fair girl, do not start; for I meditate no crimes toward you, sweet one; but I cannot refrain from saying how deeply I love you, and how highly I appreciate your unequalled beauty, your graces and accomplishments, both of person and mind. Now, say, dearest," he added, "do you forgive me?"

The poor girl could not answer. She knew in her heart she could not forgive him; but his soft, musical words, subdued manner, and assumed tenderness had so confused her reason she could not speak. She sat there, trembling under his fascinating gaze, like a bird fluttering in the infectious breath of a serpent. She seemed like one in a dream. At length recovering herself, she suddenly arose, and placing her hand on his arm, and looking up into his face with an earnest, pleading look:

"Oh, sir! be generous and just," she cried; "release me, and allow me to go to my friends, and I will freely forgive you, and forget that you have ever wronged me. I never can return your love, nor

voluntarily be yours, and surely you would not outrage a poor, helpless girl. Do, do let me go! See, I implore you on my knees!" And the hapless maiden sank down at his feet.

Colonel SCRANTON looked down on the graceful form now bending before him like a drooping flower, and devoured her with his burning glances. His senses inflamed, and his blood on fire, he was determined that she should not escape him. Forgetting the plan which he had adopted, and which his reason told him was the only one that could succeed, he allowed himself to be borne away by the storm of passion that now raged uncontrolled through his heart. He dissembled no longer; but exclaimed, as he grasped her in his strong arms, and covered her with his vile caresses, "Mine you are, and mine you shall be."

"Never!" she cried; and, with the strength of desperation, she broke from his corrupt embrace, and fled to the opposite side of the drawing-room, where she stood confronting him in all the dignity of offended virtue. He bent his head under the look of withering scorn which she cast upon him.

At length he said, in a voice hoarse with concentrated rage: "You cannot escape me. Your reputation is already hopelessly compromised; you are regarded as the favorite flower of my harem, and I intend this evening to introduce my beautiful mistress to some select friends. So make your-

self as charming and agreeable as possible, for I want them to see what a brilliant prize I have won."

With these words, he left the room, and passed into his library.

Left alone, the unfortunate girl, in utter despair, sunk down upon an ottoman, and buried her face in her hands, exclaiming: "Oh, my God! is there no help? Oh, my mother, my poor mother! how little do you dream of the terrible fate which has fallen on your poor child!"

The helpless girl felt herself deserted by heaven and earth. Her position was so new and strange, so wholly unexpected, she doubted whether she really possessed her senses, or might not be dreaming. She racked her brain to discover some means of escape, but without success. No prisoner was ever guarded with more jealous care.

"Oh, I shall go mad!" she cried, in a tone of indescribable woe, and fell prostrate upon the ottoman, nearly deprived of her senses.

She must have been in that stupor of sorrow for some time; for when she revived, and opened her eyes, the last glimmer of day had disappeared, and the parlors and drawing-rooms were brilliantly lighted. She arose, and was just fleeing to her chamber, when the door opened, and Colonel SCRANTON appeared, followed by three gentlemen, whom he immediately introduced as his best friends, and saying that he hoped she would find their society agreeable.

The terror-stricken child, scarcely knowing where she was, or what she did, her senses were so benumbed, saluted the gentlemen mechanically, and advanced a few steps toward the door, as if she would leave the room, when some sudden thought or impression, which she herself could not define, restrained her, and she returned, and seated herself at a table by the side of a shaded lamp, and appeared to be busy with some embroidery.

The three gentlemen were HARRY LORILLARD, CHARLES BENTON and FRANK BORLAND—the boon companions of Colonel SCRANTON, whom we have already once seen at the counting-room of the latter. They had come according to agreement to see the colonel's new conquest.

If Miss MORE had cherished any hope that she might appeal to these persons for protection it must soon have been dispelled.

Once only she turned her eyes upon them; but the bold, licentious looks they cast upon her, and the significant glances they exchanged with each other and the colonel, made her quickly cast them down.

The gentlemen conversed some time apart, but in so low a tone that she heard nothing except the following words, which caused her cheeks to crimson with the blushes of virtuous indignation:

“I say, HENRY,” said CHARLES BENTON, “is she not a most splendid creature? Isn't the colonel a lucky dog?”

"By Heaven! you are right CHARLEY," replied LORILLARD; "she is a conquest worthy of a king."

The pure-minded maiden felt that she should suffocate in that pestiferous atmosphere, and was on the point of rising to escape to her own room, when the door-bell rang, and in a few seconds a servant presented himself, and announced that two gentlemen desired to see Mr. BORLAND; at the same time placing in that gentleman's hand two cards. Surveying the cards a moment, he exclaimed:

"As I live, two of my best friends and customers, from Virginia; capital fellows! Shall I receive them here? They will be an excellent addition to our company?"

Now, the colonel, for certain reasons, had no desire for any more visitors that evening, and especially strangers; yet, as he could make no reasonable objection, he signified his willingness to receive them. Accordingly, they were ushered in by the servant. After exchanging salutations with them, Mr. BORLAND said:

"Allow me, gentlemen, to present to you my friends, General CLARK and Major HENRY, of Virginia."

The party received the new-comers with courtesy.

"You must excuse us, gentlemen," said General CLARK, "for breaking in upon your social circle so unceremoniously; but arriving in New York this evening, and obliged to depart in the morning, and desiring to spend a few minutes with our friend

BORLAND, we sought him at his hotel, and were told that he was spending the evening here; so we ventured to intrude."

"Oh! call it no intrusion, gentlemen; the friends of FRANK BORLAND shall be ever welcome here," quickly replied Colonel SCRANTON, with exquisite politeness; and he rang for a servant, and ordered wine to be brought.

The eldest of the Virginians, General CLARK, was about fifty years of age—a finely-formed man, with a countenance somewhat grave, but expressive of a most genial nature. The other was not more than forty, and everything about him indicated a gentleman of high cultivation and of the most honorable sentiments. Their acquaintance with BORLAND was of a business character, and it is not to be supposed that they knew anything of his private habits.

The wine passed freely around, and the colonel entertained his new guests in the most agreeable manner.

"By-the-by, colonel, you have not introduced your beautiful ward to my friends," said Mr. BORLAND, with a sly glance at that gentleman.

"True, I forgot," said the colonel; and, rising, he led the two strangers to the table where MARY was seated, looking abstractedly at her embroidery.

"Gentlemen," said the colonel, "permit me to introduce to you my ward, Miss MORE."

She looked up as the gentlemen saluted her, and cast a scrutinizing glance over their persons. That

glance seemed to work a sudden transformation in her appearance. The expression of dark despair disappeared from her face, and it became radiant with the light of hope. Her looks were riveted on the two gentlemen; but she did not speak. They, in their turn, gazed in wonder at her strange demeanor. She pressed her hand upon her heart—did her eyes deceive her?—could she believe her senses? No, there was no deception. Have courage, oh! child of many sorrows; your deliverance is nigh!

Yes, her straining eyes saw, unmistakably, the sure *signs* of safety. Suspended from the watch-guard of the younger stranger she beheld the *cross of jet*, with its legend of hope, "IN HOC SIGNO VINCES," precisely like the one worn by the mysterious gentleman in black, who had saved her from her former peril; while the elder stranger wore a golden key, on which she saw engraved the same cabalistic figures as those drawn on the packet confided to her keeping by her mother. The reaction in her feelings was so strong that for some minutes she could not speak. Colonel SCRANTON believed that she had really gone mad; while the two gentlemen looked at her with a puzzled air.

At length, following an irresistible impulse, she darted to the side of General CLARK, the elder of the two, and clinging closely to him, at the same time pointing to the two mystic emblems, exclaimed:

"By *this* sign and *that* I implore your protection.

Oh, save me from that wicked man!"—designating, with gesture of disdain, Colonel SCRANTON—"oh! release me from this hateful prison!"

The general placed his arm around the fair girl, and looked down kindly into her face. The scene was so strange and sudden that neither gentleman could well comprehend it.

The colonel was for a moment disconcerted; but the dark frown which shaded his face for an instant disappeared, and, in the coolest and blandest manner, he remarked:

"Do not be alarmed, gentlemen; my ward is subject to these fits of insanity; during which she fancies herself the victim of some wicked conspiracy it will soon pass off. I will conduct her to her chamber."

"Oh! do not let him touch me!" she cried, in terror; "he speaks falsely; by a vile treachery he got me into his power, and seeks to destroy me. Oh, save me!" And she clung closer to the arm of the general.

That gentleman was much perplexed. The wild looks of the frightened girl, and the strange manner he had noticed from the first, certainly seemed to confirm the statement of the colonel in regard to the state of her mind; and he was about to pass her over to him, when his attention was arrested by something which the poor child hastily thrust into his hand.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as his eyes fell

upon the object; "what new mystery is this?" At the same time he drew the trembling girl closer to him.

Looking upon the packet, he read :

"To him who can read the cabalistic letters."

He instantly broke the seals, and found a parchment, neatly and compactly folded. It was the Diploma of a Royal Arch Mason. Folded within this he found the "*Signet of King Solomon*;"—a



golden key-stone, inscribed with the symbol of Eternity, and the mystic letters—the ever-enduring record of an ancient and sacred friendship. It bore also the secret device and initials of Captain JAMES MORE.

The packet contained also a jewel or medal,

in the form of a double triangle, inwrought in gold, and richly set with precious stones, bearing this inscription:

“TO JAMES MORE,

Master and Royal Arch Mason;

KNIGHT OF THE TEMPLE, MALTA, AND THE HOLY SEPULCHER;

PRINCE OF THE ROYAL SECRET

AND

Grand Inspector General of the 33d Degree,

‘SPES MEA IN DEO EST.’

A token of Fraternal Regard.”

The general gazed on these tokens with astonishment. He had known Captain MORE well, and had cherished a brother's love for him to the day of his death.

“And you, dear child!” he said, in a low voice, looking down into the lovely face which was turned anxiously toward him—

“I am his daughter,” she replied, “and I seek your protection. Do, do take me away from this hated place, and that terrible man.”

Colonel SCRANTON trembled with rage and vexation. “She only raves, my dear general; I will conduct her to her room, and she will quickly recover.” And he advanced, and took her by the arm.

“Oh! don't let him touch me,” almost shrieked the shuddering girl.

“Be not alarmed, my child,” said the general, soothingly; “he shall molest you no more.” At

the same time, with a powerful movement, he shook the colonel off, and sent him staggering for some paces from where he stood. "Touch not this poor maiden again," he said, in a grave and severe tone; "she is now under my protection. I do not desire to know the motives of your conduct, or by what deception you have obtained possession of her person. I shall immediately restore her to her friends."

"No, by the heavens! you shall not," roared the colonel, beside himself with anger; and backed by his three friends, he rushed toward the general.

At this moment Major HENRY threw himself between them, and, presenting a revolver toward the advancing party, exclaimed:

"Not another step, at your peril!"

"What!" howled the enraged colonel, recoiling before the deadly instrument, "do you brave and insult me in my own house?"

"True," rejoined the major, sternly, "it is your own house; but vice and crime have no rights in any place, while honor, virtue, and justice are privileged to enter everywhere, and should be welcome and permanent dwellers in every human habitation. Providence undoubtedly sent us to prevent the execution of your wicked designs, and rescue this poor girl."

The colonel and his helpers, now blinded by their furious madness, and forgetting all considerations of prudence, were on the point of renewing the attack

when a new spectacle arrested them. The door had been quietly opened, and a gentleman, habited in a suit entirely black, entered the room, conducting a



lady, closely veiled, and a little boy. Taken altogether, it was a curious and strange scene. The parties looked at each other in silent astonishment, as if asking what all this meant. The stranger,

casting his eyes around, started as they rested on the sweet girl who leaned trustingly on the bosom of the general.

"Indeed! Miss MORE *here!*" he exclaimed, advancing toward her, with an inquiring look.

"Yes," replied the general, with a movement which the stranger directly recognized; "Heaven has enabled us to rescue this daughter of our deceased companion from the power of a villain."

At these words the veiled lady visibly trembled. The stranger, in an instant comprehended all. Miss MORE, at this moment, recognized him as her mysterious benefactor, and, with a cry of joy, she ran to his side, and, taking his hand, said:

"Oh! sir, your words were, indeed, prophetic! I have fallen into snares, and suffered much; but Heaven has preserved me."

"The world is full of snares, injustice, and wrong, my poor child," he rejoined; "and we constantly need the arm of Heaven to protect, and its wisdom to guide us. But Colonel SCRANTON has other crimes, beside those committed against you, to atone for," he proceeded; "and this cruelly-abused lady appears here, to-night, to demand of him a reparation of *her* wrongs."

The lady removed her veil, and disclosed a head and face lovely as a vision of Paradise. She glanced around the room, and fixed her eyes, at last, on the colonel. He and his companions seemed transfixed with amazement.

"My wife!" he gasped, and staggered backward into a chair.

The Virginian gentlemen, feeling that *their* work was accomplished, and not desiring to intrude on the privacy of a domestic scene, withdrew, taking with them the grateful girl they had released from captivity, whom they directly conveyed to her friends at the seminary.

The three roués, appalled by the beautiful apparition before them, and now, since reflection had returned, thoroughly ashamed of the part they had been acting in the earlier portion of the evening, sneaked away, and silently left the house.

The colonel sat uneasily on his chair, and the working of his features bore striking witness to the violence of his emotions; while his wife, overcome by her agitations, sank down upon a sofa by the side of her boy, and sobbed convulsively.

At length, the stranger, approaching Colonel SCRANTON, addressed him:

"Your estimable, but ill-treated wife, saved from want and misery, in a distant city, by the charity of strangers, has come to claim her own, and ask some reparation for her great wrongs."

"Oh! heaven, what a brute I have been," groaned the colonel, "to sin against so much love, purity, and goodness! My crimes are beyond all reparation. Heaven may pardon me, but I cannot forgive myself. Oh, my loving, patient, and much-injured wife! I dare not ask *you* to forgive me; and yet"—

he continued, impetuously—"although I cannot say a single word to extenuate my guilt, or relieve its terrible blackness, I can call GOD to witness that, until the fatal hour when Miss MILLWOOD, that dark spirit of evil, entered my house, I never had a thought that was not wholly devoted to you, whom I loved to adoration. And even when she had bound me fast in her voluptuous chains, and held me in absolute thralldom, my *heart* still clung to my wife. And when you so mysteriously disappeared, and, all my efforts to trace you proving fruitless, I gave you up as dead, my agony and remorse were unbounded; for days I shut myself up, and would see no one. But at length the sense of utter desolation which oppressed me became so intolerable that I rushed madly into the world, and, plunging into the fiery whirlpool of guilty excitements, sought thus to drown all memory of the past. And what a life has mine been since! Too vile to stand before so much purity, I relieve you of my presence. All that I have is yours—my entire fortune. I go forth an outcast, to do penance for my sins; but I will never cease to pray for your happiness."

He took his beautiful boy in his arms, and pressed him for a moment to his heart, and then, casting a look of remorse and tenderness upon his sorrow-stricken wife, whom he felt himself too guilty to embrace, he was rushing toward the door, when his wife intercepted him.

"Oh, my husband! my husband!" she cried, "you

have sinned, and I have suffered; but I forgive you all!" And she threw herself, weeping, upon his neck.

"My GOD! my GOD!" exclaimed the repentant husband; "I am unworthy this forgiveness—unworthy to have such an angel for a wife. But I am changed. The moment you drew aside your vail, and I saw your beautiful face turned toward me, I felt the spirits of impurity fleeing from my heart, which they had possessed so long, and an influence like an angel's presence stealing in to occupy their place."

Oh! the regenerating power of woman's love! Who can worthily describe the depth of her tenderness, or the strength of her affection, or the boundlessness of her forgiving charity!

The stranger's sad face was lighted up with a smile of satisfaction, as he looked upon this scene, and, after some kind words of advice to the reconciled couple, he departed, repeating to himself the beautiful lines of GOETHE, that great revelator of the mysteries of the human heart:

' Here eyes do regard you
In eternity's stillness;
Here is all fullness,
Ye brave, to reward you;
Work, and despair not.'

"Although," he continued, "hatred, lust, and crime march over the world to degrade, divide, and destroy, charity and love follow swiftly on their

track, to unite, to heal, and to restore. Yes, through love, patience, and perseverance, every obstacle shall give way, all vice shall be subdued, and the human race redeemed. Thus LABOR, the great primal curse, becomes a sublime benediction! Through it, the unity of humanity is vindicated, and man re-installed in his ancient rights. By it, the mighty stream of progress is made to sweep onward from age to age, bearing all nearer and nearer the throne of the great Father. Through thy ministry, oh! labor divine—once a curse, but now a blessing!—shall the thunder-laden clouds which gloom over creation's face, pouring their torrents of vice and misery on a groaning world, be rolled away, and the heavens, radiant with everlasting sunshine, shall bend down to embrace the earth, and lift up man to God!"

A HUSBAND SOUGHT.

“Thou lov'st another, then?—but what to me
Is this?—'tis nothing—nothing e'er can be:
But, yet, thou lov'st—and—oh! I envy those
Whose hearts on hearts as faithful can repose:
Who never feel the void—the wandering thought,
That sighs o'er visions such as mine hath wrought.”

BYRON.

CHAPTER VII.



AFTER the departure of Miss MORE, MAY MILLWOOD prepared all her batteries for an attack, which she doubted not would prove successful, on the heart of EDWIN MORLEY. She knew that she would have formidable difficulties to surmount, and that her object could be gained only through a long series of deceptions, stratagems, and perhaps crimes. But these did not discourage her. She had faith in the resources of her strong will, and, like an astute general as she was, sat down and calmly considered and laid out her plans.

She was well aware that MORLEY'S heart was already engaged; that he loved Miss MORE with a deep and earnest affection, and had been some months her betrothed husband; and that he would deem it dishonorable in the highest degree to violate any of his engagements. She was equally well aware that his love was fully responded to by that beautiful girl, whose matchless loveliness, purity of soul, and elevated character, could not fail to exercise a

powerful influence over him, which it would be difficult to overcome.

Besides, she was older than MORLEY, by two or three years; and, although pretty and fascinating, had nothing of the fresh and rosy beauty of Miss MORE. But, then, MORLEY did not know her age, and art could easily repair or conceal the damaging effects of years, and of the life of passion she had led. To this end, she had her long auburn tresses cut off, and dressed herself in such a manner as made her appear five or six years younger than she really was. Indeed, after this transformation, she looked like an artless girl of sixteen or seventeen.

She constantly sought MORLEY's society, and circumstances greatly favored her in this.

Her grandfather—an aged and feeble gentleman—dwelt some two or three miles distant, at Lynnville, in the same town, and near the residence of MORLEY's parents. Called often to attend on her aged relative, her visits now became more frequent than ever. Without appearing to seek him, she contrived her plans so artfully that scarcely a day passed but she met him somewhere, when he would accompany her in a walk, and return with her to her grandfather's house.

MORLEY was pleased, evidently, with her society. The originality of her ideas, her intelligence, and lively manners, were not without a certain charm for him, and he innocently yielded to the attraction which drew him to her presence.

One evening he came to inquire after the health of the old gentleman, when MAY, who had seen him coming up the street, met him at the door, with one of her sweetest smiles, and led him into the house.

"How glad I am that you thought of calling here to-night," she said, after they were seated; "I was getting so lonely, I knew not what to do with myself. Grandfather has not been so well to-day; and grandmother, worn out with watching, has retired, and I have taken her place. I was just thinking, when you came in, how I could occupy my thoughts, and amuse myself, through my solitary vigil."

"I see, however, you have the best of company-books," rejoined MORLEY; and he took up a volume that lay in her lap, which she had been reading, and opened it. It was a copy of SHELLEY'S poems, a favorite author of her's, and the numerous notes that covered the margins showed that she had been more than a casual reader of it. This MORLEY observed; but he did not observe that nearly all the notes of approval referred to the most immoral portions of the work.

Miss MILLWOOD was a good reader; and, selecting such passages as she thought would best suit her present purposes, and, among others, one entitled "*The Philosophy of Love*," she read them with such effect that when she came to the closing lines of the latter poem,

• • • • •
"The clouds of heaven mix together,
With a sweet emotion—
• • • • •

The sunbeams kiss the earth;
The moonbeams kiss the sea;
But what are all these kisses worth,
If *thou* kiss not me?"

MORLEY felt a strange, wild thrill of pleasure shoot through all his veins. He gazed on the dangerous syren with rapturous admiration. The artful girl noted, with a smile of triumph, the point she had gained, and determined still further to strengthen herself in the position she had acquired in his regard. She possessed, herself, considerable poetic gifts, and, taking from a table some recent numbers of the *Oceanville Telegraph*, pointed out to him several poems of her own, which, under the *nom de plume* of "LETTIE LELAND," she had contributed to the columns of that journal. As she recited some of these pieces from memory, he listened with increasing interest. Her soft tones, tremulous with emotion, her eyes lighted up with enthusiasm, and her face glowing with passion, all united to intoxicate his senses, and awaken a wild tumult in his heart; and when, at a late hour, he bade her good night, and departed, he went away, thinking that, *after* MARY MORE, Miss MILLWOOD was the most bewitching and lovely maiden he had ever beheld.

MAY was highly delighted with her progress thus far; but still she knew that MORLEY's heart was

loyal, and felt that, while it would be easy enough to ensnare his senses and win his admiration, it would be more difficult to gain his love. Some plan must be devised to divide the lovers, by sowing the seeds of suspicion and distrust in their hearts, or she would surely lose the game.

For some time after MORLEY's departure she remained in deep thought, as if revolving some weighty problem in her mind. At length the air of perplexity vanished from her face, and she smiled as if she had found a satisfactory solution of the questions which she had been meditating. Beating the floor with her small, pretty foot, she said to herself:

"Yes, that will do. Miss MORE must be made to believe that MORLEY has deserted her; and he must be convinced that she, having found another lover, has forgotten him. Yes, I shall have a husband," she continued; "and EDWIN MORLEY shall be the man!"

But let it not be supposed that she looked forward to such a union with that pure pleasure which a noble and virtuous soul feels who believes marriage to be the close blending together of two hearts in holiest and sweetest bonds of affection—bonds perpetual for time and eternity. Of love and marriage, viewed in this light, she had, absolutely, no conception. Indeed, marriage, with her, was simply a convenience—a necessary evil—and her wayward and fickle nature recoiled from the restraints even of

such an alliance. But, then, she shrank with greater dread from the possibility of being called an "old maid."

But her designs on MORLEY were prompted by another motive. She hated MARY MORE. The innocence and purity of that young lady were a standing reproach to herself; while she was also envious of her rare beauty and spotless reputation. It is natural for evil natures to dislike that which is good, and to seek the injury of those better than themselves. Thus, it was not merely to gain a husband, and a settlement in life, that led her to desire to captivate MORLEY, but to triumph over a rival whom she hated, and would be only too happy to destroy.

She had, until recently, been an intimate acquaintance of Miss MORE, and none were louder in professions of friendly interest than she; but at the same time her heart burned with jealousy, envy, and the most inveterate malice. She still continued to call on Mrs. MORE, and inquire kindly of MARY; but it was only to acquire information that she might, perhaps, employ in furthering her own schemes.

A few days after the interview with MORLEY which we have just described, Miss MILLWOOD returned to Oceanville, and had a conference with ORALL.

"MATTHEW," she said, "you hate MARY MORE, and desire to punish her for what you conceive to be an insult?"

"Exactly so," replied that worthy, affectionately stroking his moustache.

"And I," she continued, "must win the love of EDWIN MORLEY."

"Well!" ejaculated ORALL.

"Your last scheme—the snare you and Colonel SCRANTON devised—did not succeed, I hear."

"No, by all the demons!" he exclaimed; "she escaped in the most mysterious manner."

"So I have heard; but we must not let the matter drop; we must separate the lovers."

"Well—But how?"

"Listen. You call frequently at the post-office in Lynnville, and sometimes assist in making up the mails, do you not?"

"True."

"And you know the handwriting of both MORLEY and Miss MORE?"

"I do."

"The way is easy, then: *you must abstract and destroy all letters that pass between them.*"

"The devil! But that would be dangerous," replied ORALL.

"Dangerous!" cried MAY, with a sneer; "who ever stopped to calculate the danger, when seeking revenge!"

"Or a husband?" interrupted ORALL, with a mocking laugh. "Nevertheless, the plan is a good one, and it shall be executed."

* * * * *

Meanwhile, affairs in Oceanville proceeded in their usual quiet manner.

Mrs. MORE had received a letter from MARY, giving a detailed account of her dangerous adventure in New York, and the wonderful manner in which she escaped from her perilous condition, through the instrumentality of the "Signet of King Solomon,"—that mysterious talisman which her father had sent her, as it were, from his grave.

Mrs. MORE pondered deeply over the strange abduction of her daughter; but the more she tried to probe the mystery the more inexplicable it became. It was evident that her daughter had secret foes somewhere, who were persistently at work to compass her destruction. But why should that sweet child, whose whole life had been so quiet and harmless, whose manner was so meek, and modest, and retiring, have enemies? Her maternal heart was still agitated by sad forebodings of new dangers which might befall her beloved child; and her only comfort was, that if she were followed by invisible foes, who were working to her harm, she was also surrounded with invisible friends, and possessed the means of calling them to her aid. Wishing to urge upon her the necessity of being on her guard against new dangers, she wrote her as follows:

"OCEANVILLE, July 12, 185-.

"MY BELOVED CHILD:

"Your letter, acquainting me with the dangers you encountered on arriving in New York, is before me. Let us thank God for your happy escape, and pray that heaven will bless those who came so providentially to your rescue. Oh! be careful and watchful. It is an ungracious task, and seems almost monstrous to counsel you

to be suspicious and distrustful of all who approach you; but, situated as you are, surrounded with you know not what unknown enemies, it becomes necessary.

"My anxious heart still throbs its painful prophecy of new dangers, which may strike you at any moment; but I am consoled by the thought that your father's spirit is watching over, and invisible arms are stretched forth to protect you.

"*ANNA* sends you a thousand kisses and a world of love; and little *AGGIE* desires me to ask if you daily kiss the flowers she named for those who love you so well.

"With much love, and many prayers for your safety and happiness, I remain ever your affectionate mother,

ANNA MORE.

"P.S.—*EDWIN* has called several times to inquire after you. He seems to suffer more from your absence than the rest of us. Noble young man!

A. M."

PERPLEXED LOVERS.

"If, like a snake, she steals within your walls,
Till the black slime betray her as she crawls;
If, like a viper, to the heart she wind,
And leave the venom there she did not find,
What marvel that this hag of hatred works
Eternal evil, latent as she lurks."

CHAPTER VIII.



MISS MORE adapted herself easily to her new position in New York, and, devoting herself assiduously to her duties, soon gained the unreserved esteem of her employers and fellow-teachers, and the warmest affections of her pupils. With her rare beauty, and rich qualities of mind and heart, it could scarcely be otherwise. During the first three or four weeks, she was the picture of happiness and contentment. If she regretted the society of the dear ones at home, she was compensated by the thought that she was laboring for them, and anticipated the pleasure she would feel when she should transmit to her mother her first quarter's salary. It was a charming picture that rose before her delighted imagination: Little AGGIE, fitted with pretty new frocks; EMMA, with a new hat and cloak; and her sweet, patient, loving mother with many little comforts hitherto denied her; and all through her labor—her own earnings! It was a delicious thought to the brave, noble girl. Dear child! she never thought of herself.

After a few weeks, however, she became anxious and nervous. It was plain that some secret grief preyed upon her heart. When not engaged with her classes, she would retire to her room, and sit for hours alone. One day, after dragging through the weary routine of her labors, she hastened to her chamber, and, throwing herself, exhausted, into a chair, exclaimed :

“Oh! I can bear this suspense no longer. It is three weeks since I received a line from him, while I have written him four times. Oh, EDWIN! EDWIN! can it be that you have forgotten me so soon!” And the poor girl burst into tears.

MORLEY had early obtained possession of her deepest and purest affections ; and, after their engagement, looking upon him as her future husband, she gave her virgin heart, with all its rich treasures of love, without reserve, into his keeping. And now, was that poor heart to be cast out, and thrust away, and trampled upon by him whom she had loved with such entire devotion, as a thing of no worth ? The thought was madness. She could not think him so base ; and yet, how could she explain his conduct ? Such heartless neglect she could not reconcile with his well-known character—so noble, so truthful, so honorable, and gentle. But, then, there was the palpable fact—standing out dark and grim—he took no notice of her letters. And, besides, one of the last communications of her mother mentioned that his calls at her house were less frequent, and that he was seen often with Miss MILLWOOD.

“Oh, it must be so!” she cried, in a voice of agony; “he is false! false! false! Oh, cruel, cruel EDWIN! you have broken my heart.”

She no longer doubted his treachery. Alas! it was a painful trial for the poor girl; but she addressed herself to her duties with undiminished alacrity, throwing her whole soul into her employment, as if she would thus drown all unhappy remembrances. But they would come, notwithstanding; and it was plain enough that her great sorrow was rapidly consuming the very springs of life.

Each day the roses fell from her cheeks, and her step became less elastic; while the unnatural brilliancy of her beautiful eyes, a short, dry cough, and constant pain in the chest, awakened the most serious apprehensions among her friends.

And how was it with MORLEY? He truly love MARY; though, perhaps, his love was less intense than hers. Still, he loved her with a strong, manly, trusting affection. Great, therefore, was his perplexity and grief, when week after week passed by, and he received no answers to his letters. Had he been deceived in her? Had she so soon forgotten her engagement to him, and cast him off for some wealthier suitor? When he thought of her truth, gentleness, and virtues, and called to mind all those sweet ways in which a loving and faithful woman manifests her deep and pure affection, he found it difficult to believe her false. And yet, on the other hand, how could he account for her silence? She had been deaf to his most earnest

and passionate appeals; letter after letter had been posted, and the reply looked for with the most painful anxiety; but no response ever came. The poor youth was miserable beyond description.

Thus, by a most infernal plot, these two loving hearts, which beat so fondly and faithfully for each other, were gradually estranged. Believing each other false, they sought to find relief from their bitter recollections in forgetting that they had ever loved.

Ah! could they but have known the treachery that was working their unhappiness!

So the weeks swept along on leaden wings—to the hapless lovers weeks of direst misery. All communication between them was cut off as effectually as if the cold, dark sea of death already divided them. Oh! why cannot hearts that love speak to each other, although separated by thousands of miles, without the intervention of written language, mails, or telegraphs? How many a scheme of treachery and mischief would thus be foiled in its deadly purpose! How many hearts that are now often wrecked and broken, thus comprehending each other, would preserve, in spite of the machinations of malice, their strong affection and unflinching confidence?

Miss MILLWOOD was soon made aware, by the altered manners of MORLEY, that the blow she had directed had fallen with sure effect; and the joy of her evil soul was unbounded. She had hurled down and cast forth the idol which had so long been enthroned in his breast; he was now desolate; she

could console him; and, beneath the light and warmth of her smiles, she doubted not the flower of love would bloom in his heart anew.

One fine evening she met MORLEY, as she was walking on the sea-shore, and her heart beat wildly as she thought that the prize, for which she had been playing so desperate a game, was now almost within her grasp. Her eyes wore that soft, dreamy, voluptuous look usually seen in persons of her ardent temperament, and the young man felt his blood tingle as their magnetic gaze turned upon him, and she placed her small white hand in his.

"Mr. MORLEY, it pains me to see you looking so poorly; you must be ill," she said, in a soft and tender voice, while her beaming eyes continued to shoot their magnetic fires into his.

Poor youth, he felt the need of sympathy and consolation, and he gazed upon the fair enchantress with looks of admiration and gratitude.

The spell of the Circe was upon him. For a long time they walked the beach, in the soft twilight, engaged in earnest conversation. MAY was eloquent, and, with poetic enthusiasm, spoke of love and sympathy as the great needs of strong and elevated souls. She said:

"Without them, life is nought; the mightiest intellect falters in its sublime career, and the glittering wing on which genius soars is paralyzed. Without them, all effort, all energy and exertion are ineffectual, and fruitless of results."

MORLEY felt, in his soul, that all this was true ; for, since the light of love had been extinguished in his breast, he had been walking in darkness, stumbling in dark paths, utterly incapable of addressing himself to any occupation ; and his heart softened toward the fascinating being who could thus interpret his thoughts and feelings, and who spoke to him with such earnest sympathy.

She continued the conversation with passionate tenderness ; her whole soul spoke in her eyes, face, words, and seemed to tremble on her rosy lips ; and MAY MILLWOOD was sincere at the time, and felt all the passion she expressed. But her passion for MORLEY was not that high and holy sentiment which endures through all changes, although it was, probably, the highest form of love that such a sensuous nature as hers was capable of feeling. At best, it was only a beautiful, but fragile flower, that exhales its perfume in the glory of the morning, and dies when the shades of evening fall upon it.

It was now quite dark, and MORLEY accompanied MAY to the house.

“How happens it, MAY,” said MORLEY, who had taken a seat on a sofa, at her side, “that *you*, who can picture with such truth and eloquence the passion and sentiment of love, and seem so capable of feeling them in all their power, are not yourself in love? Is your heart, which can divine so readily the experiences of other hearts, invulnerable to all soft emotions?”

She cast on him a look of indescribable tenderness, as she replied :

“Suppose I *do* feel all I have attempted to describe, and the man whom I really love is unconscious of or indifferent to the passion he has inspired?”

“Your supposition,” he rejoined, taking her warm, velvety hand in his, “is a pure impossibility. There is no man living who *could* be indifferent to the love of a being so lovely and gifted as you.”

“Oh! do you think so?” she hastily replied; “suppose *you* were the man?”

MORLEY started. He had been dazzled—charmed; his senses had been rapt in a delicious trance; he felt his soul going forth to embrace the strange girl; but he had never questioned his heart, nor sought to explain the nature of his feelings toward her. The question, therefore, startled him. For a moment the sweet face of MARY MORE flitted before him; but it was only for a moment; and he looked down into the soft, dreamy eyes which were upturned toward him. He leaned slightly forward, as if to embrace her, when some sudden thought seemed to restrain him.

But the passionate girl, yielding to her ardent impulses, threw her arms around his neck, and was pressing her voluptuous lips to his, when she started up with a cry of alarm, and looked with a bewildered air about the room, as if she expected to see some person. Three light knocks or taps were heard on the wall. MORLEY looked around, amazed. The sounds seemed to be in the apartment; but they might have been

produced by some one outside, throwing pebbles, one after another, against the window-blinds. Come whence they would, they had a strange effect on the girl. Ashy pale, she walked around, like one entranced by a will mightier than her own. At length she darted into the hall, and quickly opened the street-door. She strained her eyes through the thick gloom, as if she expected to see some dreaded apparition. She looked in vain; no object was in sight. But, instead, a voice, which made her very soul quake, came rushing through the black night—a voice, clear, solemn, and stern as the voice of doom:

“Beware, May Millwood! beware! You are again on the path of crime, whose end rests on the abyss of eternal darkness. Beware!”

The voice ceased, and all was silent as the grave—all, save the loud beatings of her own guilty heart.

Cooling her fevered brow for a few seconds in the night air, she silently closed the door, and returned to the room. Recollecting herself, and fearful that MORLEY would think her conduct strange, she threw herself into a chair, and, pressing her head between her hands, she exclaimed:

“Oh! this terrible head-ache, which came upon me so suddenly, has almost crazed me. I must have taken cold this evening, when standing on the beach, in the damp sea atmosphere.”

MORLEY soon after departed, musing on that wild and beautiful being, and the strange revelation of her love.

THE TEMPTRESS.

“Oh! too convincing—dangerously dear—
In woman's eye, the unanswerable tear!
That weapon of her weakness she can wield
To save, subdue—at once her spur and shield.
Avoid it—Virtue ebbs and Wisdom errs,
Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers!
What lost a world, and bade a hero fly?
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye.”

BYRON.

CHAPTER IX.



SEVERAL months had now rolled away. The glory of summer had faded, and the golden days of autumn had come, trailing their gorgeous drapery of many-colored leaves and rose-tinted clouds over hill and valley, mountain and plain. Autumn—beautiful, gorgeous, shadowy autumn!—how grandly eloquent art thou in thy somber magnificence!—and deep-toned, mysterious voices, which rise and fall around us, in softest cadence, like echoes from the Everlasting Shore, bearing the soul away from all thought of self or individual interests, to the starry land of reverie—that region so melancholy, and yet so sweet!

We believe it may safely be said that there is no one who is wholly insensible to the solemn, heart-awakening influences peculiar to this season of the year. Its grand and reflective countenance has an indefinable charm for every earnest and thoughtful soul. It arouses the torpid memory, and fails not to bring up from the tomb of the past the events, experiences and persons which have played their parts in the solemn history of our ambitions, and

doubts—our hopes and our griefs. It brings them all forth, and the phantom-procession moves on in its brightness or sadness, with all the distinctness of life, through the chambers of the mind. As we walk in the dim-lighted wood, fragrant with the odors of decaying leaves, which cover the paths we tread, like a soft carpet, while their brothers, in red and brown, flutter the brief remnant of their life on the parent stock, await the blast that shall hurl them also to the earth—we find ourselves deeply moved, and turn to a retrospection of the days that are gone. Again we see, with a swelling heart and swimming eyes, the delusive hopes which once shone so fairly upon us, but now darkened forever; and hear again the thrilling voice of a love which, perchance—long, long ago—came to visit our hearts, like the smile of heaven, but of which nothing now remains but its sad, sad memory.

EDWIN MORLEY must have fallen on this train of thought, and felt powerfully the influence we have described, as he walked, on one of the finest afternoons that ever closed an autumnal day, in the grand old wood that skirted the town of Oceanville. The pensive expression of his noble countenance showed that his thoughts were busy with the past, while the deep shade that rested upon it bore witness to inward unhappiness. Every rock and tree—every flower, which still dared to grace the hill-side—every nook and glen—all reminded him of the days of trust and hope, and sweet-blossoming love; and of *her*, whom

he now believed false, and whose image, once so deeply loved, he was striving to banish forever from his heart.

Proceeding along the winding paths, he at length gained the top of a hill, and, after gazing around for a moment on the fair prospect which spread out before him, sat down upon a rock, and fell into a fit of meditation.

Love, and especially its disappointments, are great quickeners of the intellect. We do not really live until love opens to us the great portals of life, and through its power we begin to reflect on its mysterious questions. Love arouses every energy, and when one loves happily, to him the worlds seem to roll in immortal splendors. All things glow with a radiance and beauty, more than earthly, and overflow with songs of more than human melody.

But the heart that has been disappointed in its love dives still deeper in life's dread mysteries; it becomes at once a philosopher and a poet.

Thus it was with MORLEY. After musing a few moments, he took from his pocket a small portfolio, and, laying it upon his knees before him, wrote with a pencil. Sorrow had raised him to the region of poetry, and his heart wailed out its grief in song:

“AGAIN I tread these paths, and climb this hill,
Where once I walked the gayest of the gay;
But now, fast-rushing tears my eyes do fill,
And dismal night enshrouds that brightsome day.

For then—oh, joyful then!—close to my side
Did cling the idol of my youthful heart;
The glory of my dreams—my promised bride,
And of my soul the complemental part.

Ay, here she sat, upon this mossy stone;
Her head baptized in sunset's golden ray;
She seemed a goddess, on her radiant throne,
While I in worship at her footstool lay.

Yes, here, beneath the glorious arch above,
We spoke the vows that bound our hearts in one;
Ye trees and rocks did testify our love—
Also ye skies, and thou bright shining sun.

But now—oh, dreadful now!—alone I tread,
With faltering step, these sylvan paths along;
My heart mourns o'er its summer visions fled,
And blends its plaints with Autumn's wailing song."

Thus the young man of twenty-one recorded his first great grief.

"Why—oh! why is it," he said to himself, as he closed his portfolio, "that I cannot drive entirely from my heart the image of that false and fickle girl? She has forgotten me; treats me with silent scorn and contempt; and yet my thoughts turn constantly to her who has so basely deceived me; I love her still." After musing a little while, he proceeded: "Love! no I do *not* love Miss MORE now; for love dies when it is responded to with scorn, or when its object is unworthy. I love, it is true; but it is not Miss MORE, either as she was or is, but rather the image of what I imagined her to be. It

is that which I regret with so much sorrow, and my utter desolation of soul is occasioned by the loss of *that*."

MORLEY's philosophy was doubtless correct ; for it is not in the power of human nature to love baseness, treachery, or deceit. It may, indeed, waste its affections on objects that are base and deceitful ; but it is because the fancy paints them otherwise.

The young man's thought now turned to Miss MILLWOOD. He strove to analyze his feelings in regard to that young lady. He felt that she had great influence upon him, and he was drawn to her, notwithstanding himself. When in her presence, and her large magnetic eyes were fixed upon him, he was spell-bound. Every nerve thrilled with a delicious tremor, and in the charm which she threw around him, he lost the memory of Miss MORE, its pains, and all the world beside. Did he love her; or were his senses simply intoxicated by her voluptuous charms? He had asked himself that question a thousand times. When with her, he thought he did; yet, when away from her, he felt a coldness around his heart which he could not account for. He was alternately attracted and repelled. There was something about that strangely fascinating creature which alarmed while it lured him. She seemed to be a mystery which he could not fathom. That she loved him with a strange, passionate energy he felt to be true; but there was in him a conscious shrinking from that love, even when its spell was the most

powerfully upon him. All this can be easily explained. She had plunged his senses into a soft inebriation, but failed to inspire that sweet trust and confidence which are the necessary foundation of love.

There were other things, too, which exercised his conjectures. There were passages in Miss MILLWOOD's life that had been kept closely veiled. Was she a pure, high-minded, truthful girl? The event which had so suddenly interrupted their interview some weeks before, and which had agitated her so fearfully, was often the subject of his thoughts. Was it connected with some secret in her history, which she did not desire to have revealed?

Besides, two years she had spent away from home, part of the time at school, and the residue on the pretence of literary employment in Boston and New York. Scandal had been busy with her alleged proceedings during this period. She also was in the constant receipt of letters of a mysterious character—some even had been forwarded to her through him.

Such questionings and circumstances occupied his mind a long time that afternoon. But his speculations failed to throw a solitary ray of light on that subject. It was dark as ever. There she stood in his mind—an inexplicable mystery—beautiful, gleaming as a rainbow, and rosy as the face of early summer; but he could not answer to himself whether she were angel or devil. Yet he followed as she

willed, and felt every sense and nerve in his body thrill whenever he came within the reach of her seductive smiles.

The sun was now near the horizon, and MORLEY rose to descend to the town. But, as he turned his head, he saw several ladies coming toward him, and decided to stop till they had passed by. As they came up opposite to him, he saw that Miss MILLWOOD was one of the party. Directly she recognized him, she stepped forward, and spoke to him, while the rest of the party passed down the hill to the village. They saw nothing improper in the proceedings of Miss MILLWOOD, as it was known that the engagement between MORLEY and MARY MORE had been broken up, and rumor alledged that he and MILLWOOD were engaged lovers.

After a few common-place remarks, Miss MWOOD looked around silently for some moments with a troubled countenance. Ah! the spot had reminiscences for her also; and sometimes, whether she would or not, she was compelled to come even here to think. She, too, was familiar with these paths, and had often walked there with one whom she thought, at the time, she loved with a deeper and wilder passion than that she now entertained for MORLEY, and who, she knew, had borne her in his heart as the most sacred thing on earth, so long as he believed her good and faithful. Well did she know, too, of that terrible agony which brought him to the brink of insanity when he discovered her vile-

ness, and was compelled, by his manhood, to cast her, at any cost, forth from his bosom. Even now she remembered all this, and still more distinctly her last interview with Captain THORNBURY on that very spot, and seemed to hear again his dreadful words of doom: "*Unfit for a wife, you must tread the path of life alone!*" A slight palor spread over her face as these memories swept through her mind; but with a recklessness peculiar to such thoughtless natures, she quickly thrust them away, and, fixing her passionate glances on MORLEY, rushed madly toward her destiny.

MORLEY felt the old charm come over him again, and drank in with rapture the dark, subduing light of her eyes; but his love struggled with grave doubts. Taking her hand in his, he said, kindly, but solemnly: "MAY, pardon me; but I cannot help thinking, sometimes, that you are a little too mysterious; I cannot comprehend you."

Now, MAY knew that it would not be safe to enter on a discussion of the subject she saw was then in MORLEY's thoughts; and still less so to allow herself to be subjected to a fire of cross-questions.

With true woman's art, therefore, she met the implied question with an affectation of grief that any one *could* possibly entertain the least suspicion regarding her. She made no reply to his remark, but threw herself in his arms, and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Oh! MORLEY, dear MORLEY, how *can* you speak

so? You know I love—nay, worship you, with all the strength of my ardent nature. Oh, you are too cruel!” And the tears flowed down her beautiful face, which looked up into his with a soft, pleading, reproachful glance. The young man could not resist tears, and drew the temptress to his breast. She returned his embrace with passionate energy, crying: “Oh, my beloved, you do love me, I know you do—for see, how wildly our hearts now beat against each other!”

MORLEY forgot his doubts, MARY MORE and all. The little storm of tears having passed away, MAY continued:

“I sometimes think, EDWIN, that my love is too absorbing, too craving; and yet no other love can possibly satisfy my heart, which claims just as absorbing a love in return. I desire to be loved with perfect abandonment; such as a poet describes when, in burning words, he pours forth the ardent expressions of his passion into the ears of his heart's idol:”

“Come, dearest maiden, fill for me,
A goblet of the orient wine;
Now Luna's yellow tresses twine
Their gold amid the brown of thine—
I drink, my love, to thee.
Ay, twine thy glowing arms, my girl,
Around my neck, and lay thy brow
Upon my bosom closely now,
Until my breath shall fan the curl
That wantons with my lips;
The jealous moon will learn full soon,
Thine eyes are her eclipse.

Fill high, fill high—or live or die:
I clasp thee in my arms;
By heaven, I swear, that sky and air
Are drunken with thy charms.
My soul is trembling on my breath;
One kiss, and thou may'st taste it!
Soft, dearest, soft—it murmureth—
Take not thy lips away, it saith,
Taste *all*, but do not waste it."

These words, and the tone of impassioned earnestness with which they were uttered, sent the blood leaping and boiling through MORLEY'S veins, and he strained the enchantress to his breast, exclaiming: "I am thine, and my love shall even surpass that which you say your heart yearns for; but, oh, MAY, if *you* should deceive me——." She did not allow him to finish the sentence; for, hastily placing her warm lips on his, she gave him one of those kisses that, with most men, weigh more than a thousand arguments.

MORLEY struggled no more, but yielded, in a wild delirium of pleasure, to the current of passion which was sweeping him along. He was undoubtedly weak; but let those who think him unusually so remember their own young days of enthusiasm, and that MORLEY was ardent, inexperienced, and only twenty-two.

Still further to attach the young man to her, MAY delicately addressed his interest and ambition. Without any self-laudation or apparent egotism, she artfully contrived to make her lover think that he

ought to be proud of a wife who possessed, with unquestioned beauty, so many rare gifts—one who had, by superior intellectual endowments and literary attainments, raised herself so far above her companions.

She also made him understand that when her old grandfather died she would come into possession of several thousand dollars, which was a consideration not to be despised by any young man. Now, do not think that EDWIN MORLEY was sordid—far from it; he would have thought it dishonorable in the extreme to allow any such motive to weigh a feather with him in the affairs of love and marriage. And had Miss MILLWOOD directly offered any such inducements to him he would have felt hurt, if not insulted. The cunning girl knew this, and adroitly led his own thoughts to suggest what she desired. The beautiful devil could even make her victim think whatever she wished.

Oh, EDWIN MORLEY! you, too, are in the coils of a serpent. Heaven help you!

The temptress had triumphed, and when they separated that night, she was the betrothed bride of EDWIN MORLEY.

MILLWOOD'S CHILD.

"Now thy young heart, like a bird,
Warbles in its summer nest;
No evil thought, no unkind word,
No chilling autumn winds have stirred
The beauty of thy rest."

CHAPTER X.



It was the month of May—rosy, smiling, fragrant May—and the soft south wind, sweeping over the blooming peach orchards of New Jersey, scattered their sweet odors, like incense from a million censers, over the brilliant and joyous city of New York. The great metropolis of the United States was in its gayest and most genial mood. The parks, now fresh and green, invited pedestrians to their clean, shady walks; the broad branching trees resounded with the wild melodies of a thousand birds, which chanted their hymn of gratitude to the advancing spring, while the clear, silvery laugh of happy childhood responded below. Costly equipages, with liveried drivers and footmen, dashed along Broadway; while the sidewalks of that magnificent street were swept by the trailing dresses of the fashionable, the beautiful, the gay. The windows of the palaces of the rich were thrown open to welcome the balmy atmosphere which undulated around them, and loud in their glittering saloons were heard the voices of the children of fortune, prosperity and joy. But not for these alone did the

roses, and lilacs, and blooming orchards scent the breezes which fanned them ; not for these alone came down the glad, warm light of that glorious afternoon. Into the desolate garret of penury, the obscure court, where suffering virtue hides her weeping face—ay, into the haunts of crime and dens of infamy—stole the sweet, reviving breath, and golden sunshine of spring, emblems of that infinite charity which surrounds and cares for all.

About four o'clock, on this afternoon, a gentleman issued from the St. Nicholas Hotel, and paused for some time on the steps. His mild blue eye looked with interest on the tide of human beings now rolling by, and as he noted the contrasts of wealth and poverty, luxury and want, the shadow of sorrow upon his benevolent features assumed a darker shade. After a few minutes of apparent meditation, he signaled a coach, and entering, was driven rapidly up Broadway to the Fourth avenue. Arriving at Twenty-second street, he alighted, turned down to the right, and entered Irving place. Noting the numbers, as he moved along, he at length stopped before the door of an elegant residence, and rang. The call was soon answered by a maid-servant, who evidently knew who he was ; for, without ceremony, she admitted him, and, showing him to a drawing-room, retired to summon her mistress.

The apartment into which the gentleman had been ushered connected with another by folding-doors, which were thrown open. Both rooms were furnished

with luxury and taste, and were pervaded with a delicate perfume of flowers; the tables and what-nots were covered with books of the most select character, in English, French, German, and Italian, and the walls were graced with choice paintings and exquisite engravings—all bearing witness to the refined sentiments and thorough culture of the lady who presided as mistress of the mansion; while the papers and manuscripts, carelessly thrown around, plainly evinced her literary proclivities and habits.

The visitor was not left long to make observations on what he saw; for soon a light step was heard in the hall, and the lady of the house entered.

"My dear Mrs. DE GROVE!"—"My very, very dear friend!" exclaimed the lady and the gentleman, at the same time, as they rushed into each other's arms, and embraced with friendly fervor. The gentleman took both the lady's hands in his, and, looking down into her deep and earnest eyes, said:

"Oh! you know not, my sweet friend, how much pleasure I feel on being blessed with a privilege of seeing your fair friendly face once more."

"And I," responded Mrs. DE GROVE, with feeling, "I assure you, my dear sir, my pleasure is not less than yours." And then added: "I expected you soon, but was not looking for you to-day."

"My business," he rejoined, "required my presence in New York much earlier than I anticipated, which will account for this surprise."

“Ah!” said the lady, smiling, “some work of charity, as usual; some mission of kindness and benevolence, I suppose. Oh! my dear friend, you do too much—are *too* sympathetic—and the miseries of the world, which you constantly strive to alleviate, are wearing your life away. Do you not feel discouraged, at times, when, after all your labors, the wail of wretchedness still swells through the skies as loud and despairing as ever?”

“Discouraged I certainly am, at times,” he returned; “but I never despair; and continue to work with courage, and hope, and faith. You know my motto—‘By this sign we will conquer.’” And, with a hopeful smile, he raised the ‘Templar’s Cross (which he always bore about his person) to his lips, and kissed it devoutly.

Mrs. DE GROVE was a lady not far from thirty-five, possessing one of those fine, sensitive, high-toned, generous, and enthusiastic natures, of which martyrs are made. Her form was small and slight, but exquisitely formed; her complexion fair; while her face, radiant with love, and all sweet emotions, was a vision of beauty, truly angelic. Her talents were of a high order; she possessed the soul of a poet, with the heart of a philanthropist, and seemed to divine, by a rare sympathy, the wants and sufferings of others, before they had expressed them. She was ever seeking new objects of charity, and devising new means for the more efficient amelioration of the sorrows of the poor and unfortunate. She had been

for years acquainted with her visitor, and the friendship of the two had grown stronger, and stronger, and more intimate, as time passed on. She had listened with the deepest interest and sympathy to the story of his life—his sorrows, his disappointments, and his hopes. She entered into all his plans with eagerness, and often aided him by her counsel, and still more the tenderness of her generous soul. After a pause, during which her countenance became serious, she said :

“Have you no news, my friend—nothing to tell of the mother of little MARY—Miss MILLWOOD?”

“Alas! dear madam,” he returned, sadly, “that wretched girl is lost—lost. I had strong hopes that, under the influence of fear—for no other would reach *her*—she might be restrained in her career of vice and reform. Sometimes I thought of placing her in your care, hoping that, surrounded with so much love and virtue, she would catch the contagion of goodness, and rise to a nobler life. But all that is passed. She is lost. Her destiny is about to be accomplished. But,” he added, quickly, “where is the child?”

“She is out now with the nurse,” replied Mrs. DE GROVE, “but will return soon. She is a rare infant—indeed, the most beautiful child-flower I ever saw. Who would have thought that the puny, sickly infant you brought here, nearly two years ago, in a dying condition, could ever have survived, to become the beautiful witch, that she is?”

While they were speaking, the fairy herself ran

into the room, and, going up to Mrs. DE GROVE, whom she called mamma, lifted up her little face for a kiss. The lady took her in her arms, and pressed her to her heart, saying: "At least *here* you shall have a mother."

The gentleman looked with emotion upon the beautiful child; and, taking her into his lap, he gently stroked her fair little head, and its long, curly, dark hair. He did not kiss her. Once or twice he bent down his head, as if to do so, but suddenly drew it back, as if some painful memory restrained him.

That child was the daughter of MAY MILLWOOD and MATTHEW ORALL.

In order to understand this scene, the reader must go back with us about two years.

Within a darkened chamber in a boarding-house on Hanover street, Boston, a young lady is lying on a bed—ill, but convalescent. She is sobbing violently, and her pale face wears an expression of mingled grief, remorse, and fear.

At the foot of the bed sits a nurse, holding in her lap an infant, apparently dying, over which bends a gentleman with anxious, care-worn look, observing with painful emotion the agony of the little sufferer, for which he can devise no relief. After a few more struggles, afflicting to behold, the poor child sunk away into the peace of death. Contemplating for a few moments the little form before him, the gentleman rose, and advanced to the side of the bed; arousing the lady from a stupor into which she had

fallen, he informed her, as gently as he could, of the death of her child. She started up with a wild scream :

“Oh! my baby, my dear little MARY! Oh! bring her to me ; she is not—cannot be dead.”



The gentleman took the child, and placed its drooping form in the mother's arms. She strained it to her breast ; then, holding it out in her hands, she gazed some minutes upon its pale features, with a wild, wistful stare, when, turning to the gentleman with a look of deepest despair, she exclaimed :

“Baby is dead! baby is dead!” and fell back on the bed in a swoon.

The gentleman carefully disengaged the child from her arms, and laying it upon the bed, examined it attentively. He started on seeing a faint, roseate tinge stealing upon its cheek, and, eagerly tearing open its dress at the breast, placed his fingers softly on its heart. After an observation of a few seconds, he said to himself :

“The poor thing lives ; this fit, so strongly resembling death, only indicates the crisis of the disease. Alas ! far better would it have been, for its own sake, had it now fled from this world of grief to the land of angels. . And, with such a mother, what a fate it must encounter !”

After standing a little while, as if considering, he ordered the nurse to call Mrs. PAINE, the landlady. She soon appeared. He held a brief consultation apart, in a low tone, when she took the child, and left the room.

The gentleman then went out, and summoned an undertaker. A tiny rose-wood coffin was procured, bearing a silver plate, with the inscription, “*Mary Ludlow, daughter of May Millwood, aged two months.*”

In due time, this coffin was placed in a box, and deposited in the public burying-ground at East Boston ; but little MARY was not in the coffin.

In the meanwhile, the poor child was given in charge to a skillful nurse ; and when it was finally recovered was taken to New York by the gentleman, and adopted by Mrs. DE GROVE, from whom it received more than a mother’s care, and all of a mother’s love.

MAY MILLWOOD never saw her child again.

Little MARY was now two years old, and Mrs. DE GROVE was justly proud of her lovely charge. That admirable woman never tired in any good work; and on hearing from her friend the melancholy story of Miss MILLWOOD had resolved to make an effort to save the misguided girl, and she was deeply pained when informed that it was too late—that the wretched one had passed the line of crime whence there can be no return.

The two friends conversed for some time, considering plans for the future welfare of their common charge, when the gentleman, after giving the little one some pretty toys, and his friend a parting embrace, departed.

From Irving place he retraced his steps to the Fourth avenue, crossed Union Park, and entered the —— Seminary.

Some one has well said that “the most certain cure for love is the knowledge of the unworthiness of its object.” MARY MORE found this postulate correct. After some months, she became convinced that MORLEY was fickle and weak; and, summoning her pride to her aid, cast forth his image from her heart, as she thought, forever. It is true she experienced a painful sense of loss—a desolation of soul, which time alone could remove. Highly religious herself, and possessing the entire affection and confidence of her friends, she was tranquil, if not happy. And when she was made acquainted with MORLEY'S

assiduous attentions to Miss MILLWOOD, it gave her no pain, nor caused her any regrets, although she marveled much at his choice; for, although she had freely associated with that young lady, she had always felt—she knew not why—a repugnance to her. Her pure and sensitive soul unconsciously shrank from her, as from something polluted and base.

Recovering thus her tranquillity, Miss MORE soon began to improve in health, and, although at this time not wholly restored, she was so much better that her friends no longer entertained any serious apprehensions concerning her.

The labors of the day being over, and the dinner-hour passed, she had gone to her room. Seated at a table, she leaned her lovely head upon her hands in a thoughtful attitude. Presently, she took up an Herbarium, laid it open before her, and silently contemplated one of the pages. This page was evidently most dear to her, and had daily been the object of her affectionate inspection. On the top of it appeared a full-blown rose, with the words "*my mother*," written underneath. On the right, a little below, was a moss-rose, with the words "*my sister Emma*," and opposite this a rose-bud, marked "*sister Aggie*," while below was placed a sweet-william, with the name of "*Edwin Morley*." The first three she kissed with the deepest affection; and after regarding the other for some time, with a sad smile, she slowly and carefully removed it, and, after a moment's reflection, cast it out of the window, together with the memory of her love.

Then, taking an eraser, she proceeded to obliterate the name of EDWIN MORLEY from the page, as she had already endeavored to erase his image from her heart.

She was engaged in this occupation when a servant came to announce that a gentleman was waiting below, desiring to speak with her.

"Did he give his name?" she inquired.

"No; he only said he was a friend of your family," replied the servant.

Her past experiences, and the frequent warnings of her mother, had made MARY prudent and wary in regard to visitors, and she had steadily refused to be at home to any persons she did not know. She therefore hesitated a few moments, as if considering whether it would be quite safe to deviate from this line of policy in the present instance. Her hesitation was not long, however; for, feeling there could be no danger with her friends all around, and within call, she followed the maid down the stairs, and entered the parlor.

What was her surprise and joy when she saw that her visitor was her mysterious protector—the gentleman in black. He took her lily hands in his, and looked long and thoughtfully into her beautiful face, on which the roses of health had again begun to bloom. The scrutiny seemed to be satisfactory; for, leading her to a sofa, and placing her beside him, he said, while a happy smile played upon his lips:

"How delighted I am, Miss MORE, to see that

neither your arduous labors, nor any other cause, has either materially affected your health or disturbed the tranquillity of your heart."

The marked emphasis with which he pronounced the words "other cause" told MARY, plainly enough, that the stranger, who seemed to know everything concerning herself, also knew of her early love for MORLEY, and the position in which they then stood to each other, and the roses on her cheeks glowed with a redder tinge.

"Pray, sir," said the young lady, after a short silence, "if it be not impertinent in me to ask, will you inform me how you, a stranger, whom I have never seen but three times in my life, have become so familiar with all my history, my trials, hopes and disappointments; even the sufferings and dangers which await me in the future? and also why is it that you take so kindly an interest in my welfare—a person unknown to you, and having no claims whatever to your protection? I do not even know your name; and yet, with a brother's love and care, you have watched over me, and your strong arm hath shielded me from harm."

The stranger smiled; he saw that she desired to know his name, but was restrained from asking by an excessive delicacy, and replied:

"For the present, I am nameless; but your father was my friend, and the daughter of my friend is entitled to my protection and care; let this suffice you, my dear child. I cannot, indeed, promise to

shield you from your share of sorrow; for, alas! where is the heart but has its griefs—where the soul but has its dark trials? Yet I think I can assure you that bright days of happiness are in store for you—days of restored confidence, mutual trust and love.”

MARY started at these strange words, and threw a penetrating glance upon the stranger, as if seeking the meaning of his language, at the same time replying, earnestly:

“But, sir, confidence can never be restored which has been destroyed by falsehood and baseness, nor can love revive, whose object is discovered to be unworthy.”

“True, true, Miss MORE; but sometimes appearances mislead us, and, judging and acting hastily, we bring upon ourselves much unhappiness.”

“But neither my experience nor observation,” she quickly replied, “present any such example.”

“Perhaps not; yet such an example may occur hereafter,” he rejoined; and then, as if to change the subject, he asked, abruptly, “Have you heard from your friends recently?”

“I received a letter from mother yesterday,” she answered; and I intend to return home in a few days. Oh! my dear, dear mother and sisters—how rejoiced I shall be to see them again!”

“I am glad to hear that you are to go home so soon. Your mother yearns to embrace you again, and your presence with your friends will not only subserve their happiness, but also promote your own in more ways than one. You know EDWIN MORLEY, I think.”

Miss MORE gave a slight start; but, controlling herself, responded, with a tone of perfect indifference:

“Oh, yes: I am well acquainted with that young gentleman; he is, I believe, about to be married.”

“You may have heard so,” replied the gentleman in black; “but EDWIN MORLEY will never marry Miss MILLWOOD.”

“Miss MILLWOOD! Do you then know Miss MILLWOOD?” quickly asked the maiden, her eyes opening wider with astonishment.

“I have known her well for many years,” he replied; “her dark and restless spirit is destined to work her much woe and wretchedness. I am aware of her efforts to gain young MORLEY, but she will fail.”

“But EDWIN—I mean Mr. MORLEY—loves her very deeply, I have been told,” answered Miss MORE, with a sigh.

“Ah! my dear child, you are too young and innocent to comprehend that most mysterious of all mysteries, the heart of man,” he continued: “MAY MILLWOOD has no place in the inner sanctuary of MORLEY’s heart; he is fascinated, but does not love her. That she has gained his ear, and for a time enslaved his senses by some wicked means, is no doubt true; but time will unravel her plots. She will never be the wife of MORLEY.”

The stranger said no more on the subject which interested Miss MORE so deeply; and after a short time he rose to depart, saying:

“Miss MORE, I return to Massachusetts to-morrow,

and shall be happy to bear any message you may desire to forward to your friends, and will call to receive your commands before I leave the city."

After his departure, MARY sat for a long time in a stupor of astonishment. Her visitor was himself a mystery, and his words were all enigmas, which she vainly sought to solve. He appeared to her like a person whose earnest and truthful heart had at some time received a severe shock, and his habitual melancholy spoke of wounds that were not yet wholly healed over. She was convinced, however, that in all his acts which concerned her, or her interests, he was moved by a strong and untiring friendship for her family; but his perfect knowledge of MORLEY and Miss MILLWOOD, and their proceedings, puzzled her. The manner in which he spoke of that young lady proved that his acquaintance with her must have been somewhat intimate; for how else would he have penetrated so deeply into her dark spirit, and made himself so familiar with her designs? All his language was so formed as to suggest a thousand vague and indefinite thoughts; and thus the poor girl remained, floating about in a sea of wild conjectures, until the seminary bell summoned her to tea.

On leaving Miss MORE, the gentleman in black proceeded down Broadway to Wall street, and entered the office of a Life Insurance Company.

"Mr. BENTON," he said, addressing the Actuary, "I wish to take out a policy on the life of a child, for

the benefit of a family in which I am much interested. You will find the particulars in this paper ;” and he laid the application, with specifications, upon the table. “I do this,” he continued, “believing it to be the best investment I can make for them ; for, should the child happily live, still, after a course of years, the policy would have a certain value, and could be advantageously disposed of for money. I desire to have the papers prepared as soon as convenient, and deposited with Mrs. DE GROVE, at No. — Irving Place. The premium will be paid at the Bank of Commerce whenever you call for it.”

The Actuary, after attentively examining the application, replied, “I will attend to the matter without delay. Our physician, Dr. MEEKS, shall call and see the child this evening.”

“Very well ; I rely on your promptitude,” added the gentleman in black, and he passed from the office into the street.

FLOWER-GATHERERS.

“Oh! thou beloved, come home! the hour
Of many a greeting tone,
The time of hearth-light and of song,
Returns, and thou art gone.”

Mrs. HEMANS.

CHAPTER XI.



T was early June, and the hills and woods of Oceanville were covered and filled with beauty, and fragrance, and song. The sweet wild flowers, which, in boundless profusion and variety, lifted up their bright faces on every hand, spoke soothingly and lovingly to the heart, and seemed to invite all to Nature's great banquet of beauty and joy. Oh! season of bright hopes, soft emotions, tender confidences, and holy love! How the heart warms under thy balmy breath, and the soul enlarges under thy expanding smiles! Not only upon the rocks and hill-sides does thy soft influence cause the flowers to bloom, but also in man's sorrowful breast it plants anew the fair rose of expectation and of faith. All things—the sea, the earth, and the heavens—appear to dissolve in love. Even Nature's heart throbs with sacred joy, as if in response to the poet's adjuration :

“Put on, put on your richest dress;
Don all your charms, ye vales of ours;
For my love goeth forth in her loveliness—
She goeth to gather flowers.”

The earth stands before us in transfigured glory—smiling, joyful and gay—with her robe of flowers, and leaves, and rosy light. From the green sunny hills, and perfumed woods, and retired glens—where the violets and Erythroniums nestle in their fairy home—a thousand voices steal upon our ears, soft and sweet as angel's whispers, inviting us to the fields and woods, to a communion with Nature's wondrous beauty, and with him of whom all of summer's luxuriant glory is a dim reflection.

Toward the close of one fair afternoon, a company of young people, called out by the attraction of the season, might have been seen on the brow of the hill, where we have twice before had occasion to conduct the reader. They had been gathering flowers for some time in the groves, and were now seated around upon the rocks, assorting and arranging them in bouquets, according to their various fancies and tastes. They were a glad and merry group, and formed altogether a lovely picture, as they sat there in the soft evening sunshine, twining their wreaths and binding up their nosegays.

"Oh! how I wish MARY MORE was here; she always enjoyed these excursions so much! Shan't we be glad, girls, when she returns to us again?" said a tall and elegantly-formed girl, with a sweet oval face, radiant with goodness, and a pair of bright, blue eyes, whom we shall call LUCIE ELMORE.

"That we shall," replied Miss GLADSTONE; "and won't we have a joyful time when she does come?"

MARY had always been a favorite with her companions, and was ever the subject of affectionate conversation and remembrance when they were together.

"By the way, LUCIE," continued Miss GLADSTONE, "I wonder how MORLEY will appear when he meets her? Who would have thought that he could have forsaken her for MAY MILLWOOD—they are so different! I believe it is all MILLWOOD'S doings. For my part I never could comprehend that girl; there is something dark and mysterious about her."

"There, there, now, be charitable," replied LUCIE ELMORE; "you know it is said, MARY herself broke off the engagement, and refused to write to MORLEY."

"I know it is so reported," rejoined Miss GLADSTONE; "but, still, I cannot help thinking there is something strange in the affair. He thinks she found a new love, and cast him off contemptuously; but I know better. MARY is honorable and generous, incapable of a mean act; and had she found that she had mistaken the nature of her sentiments toward her lover, she would frankly have told him so. No, girls; there is mystery about this."

"Ah! here comes EMMA MORE," exclaimed LUCIE, as the lovely sister of our heroine stepped into the circle. "Why didn't you join us in our excursion when we first came out; you would have had a nice time?"

"I intended to do so; but just as I was ready to start, a gentleman brought us a letter from sister

MARY, whom he saw in New York yesterday, and I stopped to read it, and make inquiries about her. Only think," she added, with animation—her countenance beaming with joyful expectation—"only five days more, and she will be here; she will arrive on Saturday."

"Good! good!" cried the whole group at once, with genuine satisfaction. "Dear MARY, it seems an age since she went away."

"But, tell us, EMMA," said Miss GLADSTONE, "who was the gentleman that brought the good news? For one, I feel deeply grateful to him for his tidings."

"Why," responded EMMA; "he was that strange gentleman, of whose kind and noble deeds we have heard so much during the past year, and about whom we know so little."

"Indeed!" said Miss ELMORE; "he is a mysterious personage, truly; so sad and melancholy, and yet so good and benevolent—so kind to the poor, so tender to the suffering, and so amiable and gentle to all. He is a perfect gentleman, and I really believe, if I knew who he was, I should set my cap for him."

"You couldn't do better, LUORE," said Miss GLADSTONE; "he is certainly worthy to possess the heart of any damsel. Not a day passes but we hear of some new story of his beneficence. Why, sometimes I think he is the genius of benevolence itself, sent down into our miserable, grief-stricken world to lighten the burden of its sorrows."

"But, don't you think," rejoined Miss ELMORE,

"there is something familiar in his looks? I have often thought he bore a strong resemblance to Captain THORNBURY. His mouth is like the captain's, and the eyes, shade and expression of the face are the same. And then, in character, the two gentlemen are not unlike."

"I have often remarked the same," replied Miss GLADSTONE; "Captain THORNBURY, you know, was one of the most amiable and generous of men. By-the-by, I wonder where he is now! I would give anything to see him. Since he went out into the western country, I cannot learn that he has been heard from but a very few times. We have missed him much at our social gatherings. Don't you wish he would come back again, LUCIE?"

"Indeed I should," replied Miss ELMORE; "our village has been dull enough since he left."

And thus these charming maidens chatted away the time until the gray twilight began to spread over the landscape, when they gathered up their floral treasures, and set out for their homes. For some time their silvery laughter and melodious voices rang along the hill-side, and then died away in the distance.

THE PLOTTERS.

"Night, deep and black, came down on sea and land,
Cooling with dews the burning breath of day;
No sound was heard, save on the distant strand,
The low, dull murmur of the star-lit bay."

ARNOLD.

"* * * * They do their work
In secrecy and silence; but their power
Is far more fatal than the open shafts
Of malice or of hate. Like spiders on
The wall, they weave the deadly web, to snare
The innocent and good."

SWAIN.

CHAPTER XII.



EEP night had fallen on the world, and its long, thick shadows wrapt hill and wood in their close embrace.

About one hundred rods from the spot where, a little while since, we listened to the conversation of the maiden-troop, and a little to the left of the path leading into the town, lies a deep ravine, completely concealed from observation by overhanging trees and bushes, and watered by a small brook, which rolls its sluggish waters down through the meadows to the sea. In one of the obscurer corners of this secluded place, two persons—a gentleman and a lady—were engaged in earnest conversation. They were evidently in no very happy mood; for the gentleman kept beating the rocks impatiently with his feet, while the lady stirred the water angrily with the stick of her parasol.

“So, ORALL,” said the lady, “you say MARY MORE will be at home on Saturday.”

“Yes, MAY,” replied ORALL; “her mother received a letter from her to-day, announcing her return at that time. Our schemes have not prospered well; and should MARY and MORLEY meet mutual explanations would follow, and you would lose your husband.”

"And you, MATTHEW ORALL," interrupted MAY MILLWOOD, "would lose your revenge, would you not?"

"By all the demons! yes," replied the gentleman, in a voice low and husky with rage. "We have been foiled at every turn, and I cannot but think that this meddling stranger—the gentleman in black, as he is called—has had something to do with it. He seems to be as ubiquitous as the devil, always interfering, under the spacious pretence of charity and benevolence. I tell you, MAY," he added, vehemently, "you have delayed this matter too long; you should have caged your victim before."

"But," rejoined MAY, "how could I? Urging him to hasten his marriage with me would only excite his suspicion, which has more than once already been awakened. How unfortunate the girl should return so soon! If she could have been detained only one month longer, all would have been safe."

"But why, in the devil's name, does MORLEY wish to postpone his marriage for a month?" asked ORALL.

"It is a whim of his; his birth-day comes then, and he has a fancy to be married at that time," replied MAY.

"ORALL," resumed the girl, after a short pause, in a tone of deep meaning, "MARY must not return."

"It is easy to say that; but be so good as to tell me how it can be prevented?" replied ORALL.

"But I tell you it *must* be prevented, and you must find the means," said Miss MILLWOOD. "Listen: you

are a man of genius—fertile in inventions—skilled in all evil expedients, and cunning enough for the execution of any mischief. Go to New York to-morrow; seek out some of your old confederates, and create circumstances which will cast suspicion of crime on Miss MORE. Have her accused of theft, wantonness—even murder, if necessary—and thus secure her arrest for a period, and then we shall have time to accomplish our purposes.”

“You speak wisely,” replied ORALL; “what you suggest may be done; and I doubt not of success, if that devilish stranger, who has constituted himself the champion of innocence, does not interfere.”

“You need not fear him,” responded MILLWOOD, “at least, not now; for he is not in New York, and there is no probability of his returning there for weeks to come.”

“Well, MAY, I will do as you advise, and if we fail this time it will not be my fault; but remember if, to effect the destruction of that girl, we step deeper into crime you share all its dangers.”

“What care I for dangers!” replied the reckless girl. “I have set my soul on this affair, and I will effect my purpose, or perish in the attempt.”

The night-shadows grew thicker and blacker around these children of crime; but the darkness without was not so black as the fell purpose they were striving to execute. They conversed for a long time in a low tone, perfecting their plans, and pre-

paring the means to strike their victim with a new and more fatal blow.

After a time everything seemed to be arranged to their mutual satisfaction, and they arose and separated.

While ORALL, by a circuitous route, sought his lodgings, MAY went down the narrow path alone. She had just entered the street where it winds around several buildings, forming a complete turn, when a person, who had been partially concealed by an old-fashioned pump on the right, stepped out into the road, and darted rapidly along the street; but, as he passed her, he bent his head close to her ear, and whispered something which, whatever it was, had a terrible effect on the girl. She started with terror, and staggering up to a fence which surrounded a stone house on the corner, supported herself against it. She looked wildly around, but could see no person. The street was deserted, and not a solitary footfall broke the silence of the night. She threw back her bonnet, exposing her burning brow to the cool night wind, which now breezed up quite strongly from the sea. In a short time she recovered herself sufficiently to proceed on her way, and soon regained her dwelling. Going directly to her chamber, she threw herself into a chair, agitated by the most gloomy forebodings.

“Again, again,” she cried, “those dreadful words! will they never cease to ring in my ears? The voice was that of THORNBURY, and yet THORNBURY is at

the West, and I surely caught a glimpse of the flowing locks of the strange gentleman who has made himself so noted of late. Who and what is this man? Is he a detector of crime, and a punisher of the guilty, as well as a helper of the poor and unfortunate? What connection has he with THORNBURY? Does he know his secrets?"

These questions ran rapidly through the brain of the guilty girl. She had often met him, and his presence always filled her with vague apprehensions. He seemed to be omnipresent, following her steps like an avenging NEMESIS. Once, during a visit to Boston, as she was walking down Hanover street with MORLEY, she met him, and the same great fear fell upon her, and, under some pretence, she urged MORLEY to turn back. A few minutes after passing down Sudbury street, she had scarcely passed the Atlantic House, when the same mysterious person was directly before her. At this time, her agitation was so great that MORLEY had to place her in a coach.

"How strange it is!" she continued, speaking to herself; "I never see that man but I think of THORNBURY, and hear again his fearful words: 'Beware! you are on the path of crime.' But away with such thoughts! they are only fancies; I have chosen my path, and will walk in it; I have accepted my destiny, and will fulfill it. This time I will not be frustrated in my design. That hated girl, who has crossed me so many times, shall be ruined, and I shall gain MORLEY."

But, still, there were times when she did not feel quite so confident—times of regret, almost of remorse—when she would sigh for a past which could never return, and shrink with dread from a future, which, at best, must always be dark to her. “But it is my fate,” she would say—“my destiny—and I cannot avoid it.”

NEW DIFFICULTIES.

'Mysterious Future! fathomless! o'ercast!
Dread mother of events!—from whose deep womb
The ages rise; then roll into the Past!
Their cradle thou—the hoary Past their tomb!
Sea unexplored! where floats conjecture's barque,
With pilot none, nor instrument to guide
Through fatal rocks, hid in thy bosom dark;
Or to green isles, which sleep upon thy tide.
Dread Book of Fate! sealed up, yet e'er unsealing!
Thy secret ne'er revealed! yet aye revealing!

Oh! who e'er read one page of that dark Book?
Or from that sea drew forth the shell of fate?
Yet there weird Hope, with venture bold, doth look,
And, by her magic power, soft scenes create.
Sweet visions rise, and Love triumphant smiles;
All schemes successful, hopes all realized!
And golden prospects cheer us in our toils,
Whose every view in rainbows is baptized;
Deceitful all! soon fades the scene Elysian,
And disappointment grim dissolves the vision!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Home again! home again! from a foreign shore;
Oh! how it makes the heart rejoice to see our friends once more."



THUS sang MARY MORE on the morning of the day—Friday—when she expected to set out on her journey homeward. Her heart swelled with joyful anticipations, as she thought that in only one day more she would be locked again in her mother's embrace, and be permitted to press her beloved sisters to her affectionate bosom. She knew that a warm and tender welcome awaited her, not only in her own home, but among all her neighbors and acquaintances; for she had received numerous letters from her companions—particularly from LUCIE ELMORE and Miss GLADSTONE, filled with the most friendly assurances, and many loving appeals for her to shorten her absence, and return speedily to the circle of which she was the ornament, and by which she was so tenderly loved. Her imagination painted this scene of reunion in the liveliest and rosiest of colors. Already she felt her mother's tender kiss upon her cheek, and heard the sincere and heartfelt greetings of those dear friends whom she loved so well.

It was under the inspiration of this feeling that she seated herself at the piano, and, accompanying the instrument with her rich and melodious voice, sang the song, the refrain of which we have quoted above. We think we do not hazard anything in saying that, notwithstanding her bitter griefs, and trials, and disappointments, MARY MORE was at that moment supremely happy—happy in the remembrance of duties well and faithfully discharged—happy in the anticipation of innocent joys to come. This feeling of deep contentedness beamed in all her person. Her full dark eyes shone with a soft and tender light, her vermilion lips, slightly parted, were illumined with a smile; the lively expression of her face gave evidence of the cheerful animation of her soul; and as she sat there in the splendor of the morning, her long, dark curls veiling her alabaster neck and shoulders, and ornamented with June roses, fresh and fair, she was as radiant and lovely as the glorious Flower-month herself, which, on rosy feet, was now treading along the hills, the meadows and streams, leaving behind her gifts of beauty and fragrance. The morning without was fair and cloudless, and fair and cloudless was the morning in her soul. But, alas! it is when the sky is the most serene and radiant that the elements of the storm and thunder the most rapidly gather; and,

“The fairest day that ever shone
Hath frowned in darkness ere 'twas noon.”

This postulate of the poet, regarding the physical world, holds equally true in the world of human prospects, expectations, and hopes.

And thus it happened to MARY. In the very midst of her bright anticipations and quiet joy, a cloud, she knew not how or why, appeared to descend between herself and the pleasing picture she had been contemplating with so much delight. The picture itself seemed to recede gradually further and further, and grow fainter in her view, and an unaccountable sense of fear stole over her—a feeling that the brilliant dream of the morning would not soon be realized. Her heart throbbed violently, as if beating a note of alarm, or giving warning of some impending danger. But the resolute maiden was not a person to yield for a long time to any dark or gloomy fancies; and her thoughts marching forth through the morning sunshine to her eastern home by the ocean side, the neat cottage of her mother, nestling in its bower of trees, and shrubs, and roses, again rose on her sight, and the music of friendly voices fell soothingly on her ears. The cloud, for the time, was lifted from her heart, and she lightly sprung up the stairway to her chamber, and commenced making preparations for her journey. Her fellow-teachers, and some of her favorite pupils, soon joined her there, and, with hearty friendliness, offered any service she might require. She accepted their kind offers at once, and they were all employed in making arrangements for her departure,

when a servant appeared at the door of her room, and handed her a note. She immediately broke the seal, and read it.

"Why, this must be from my mysterious friend," she said, directly; "what think you of his suggestion?" And she read the missive aloud to her companions. It ran thus:

"If Miss MORE will delay her departure until to-morrow, her friend will accompany her to Oceanville."

"Do you mean that it is the gentleman who was here to see you a few days since?" asked one of her friends. "If *he* is the writer, I should urge you to stop, as it would be so much better to have some one whom you know to look out for you, and take charge of your baggage, particularly as you are so inexperienced in traveling."

"I think as you do," replied MARY; "and of course the letter *must* be from him; it is his own laconic style; and, besides, I have no other friend here; but ——" she continued, thoughtfully, "he was to have returned several days ago; probably, however," she added, after a moment's consideration, "business has detained him till now, which is a fortunate occurrence; and I shall be truly grateful to him for his protection."

So, notwithstanding her impatience to see her friends, she decided to wait for the company of one who had already, and on more than one occasion, shown such an abiding interest in her welfare.

Now Miss MORE'S reasoning and her decision were the most natural things in the world. The gentleman in black, by circumstances, had become so connected with all her affairs that, on reading this note, her mind necessarily reverted to him as its author, and her unsuspecting nature never could have imagined that it was written by any one else, or covered any sinister design. And yet there were some considerations that might have occurred to her. If she adhered to her first determination to set out on Friday, she would proceed to Boston on the "*Metropolis*," under the protection of Captain BROWN and the kind-hearted chambermaids of that steamer, whom she already knew; whereas, if she delayed until the next day, the passage must be made in another boat, where all were strangers; besides, she would not reach home until Monday, with the additional inconvenience of stopping over Sunday in Boston. Now, if she had been at all suspicious, she might have asked whether her stranger friend, who knew she could pass in perfect safety in the care of Captain BROWN, and arrive home on Saturday morning, would advise her to delay her departure, knowing, as he must, the inconvenience just alluded to, and to which she must be subjected. We say, she *might* have thought of these things, but she did not. Not a shadow of doubt ever crossed her mind in regard to the authorship of the note, and without the least hesitation she took the resolution we have seen.

Her companions at the seminary, who had become strongly attached to her, were evidently pleased with the prospect of enjoying her society one day longer, and strove to make the remaining hours of her stay as agreeable as possible. She spent the residue of the day pleasantly enough; but when she retired to rest she felt the same dark shadow or cloud, which had fallen on her in the morning, stealing over her heart again. She tossed about on her bed for a long time, courting sleep in vain. But at length nature became exhausted, and she fell into a slumber—not refreshing and restoring—but unquiet, and disturbed by fearful visitations. She dreamed she was wandering alone in a vast forest, dark and dense, and had lost her way in its bewildering labyrinths. The only sound she could hear was the distant roar of the sea, as it dashed upon its precipitous shores. Thitherward she bent her tottering steps. Night's darkest shadow now spread a deeper gloom through the grim wood. Seized with a nameless terror, on she sped like a frightened hare, with bleeding feet, and arms torn by the tangled underbrush. Horrid phantoms, with glaring eyes and threatening countenances, flitted around her in the darkness, and swept along her track in swift pursuit. Looking behind, she saw, to her amazement and horror, the faces of MATTHEW ORALL and MAY MILLWOOD—no longer wearing the features of mortals, but transformed into demons—casting glances of fiery hatred upon her. With fiendish malice they rushed toward the trem-

bling girl, as if bent on her destruction. She flew wildly along the dark path, but soon came to a sudden stop, and, with a cry of despair, cast herself upon her knees. She could proceed no further; she stood on a precipice, overhanging a strand covered with sharp rocks, and on which the black ocean rolled with a dismal funereal sound. Onward pressed the phantom train; onward rushed the demons, ORALL and MAY, and pushed her nearer and nearer to the edge of the abyss. She prayed and wept, and called for help in vain. They had seized her in their ghostly arms, and, with hellish laughter, were raising her to cast her forth to a horrible death, when a sudden paralysis seemed to strike them. The stillness and inactivity of death came over them, and they stood there with fixed eyes and outstretched arms, motionless as the trees, the subjects of some strange enchantment. Wondering at the cause of this, she raised her head to see what it might be, when a voice, already familiar to her ears, resounded through the forest: "By this sign thou shalt conquer;" and, turning her face in the direction whence the voice proceeded, she saw approaching her nameless protector. With a smile of triumph, he pointed to a crosier, which extended over the demon-troop toward her. She eagerly seized it with both her hands, when her baffled persecutors turned and fled, howling and cursing through the darkness. Her deliverer took her by the hand; and forest, and clouds, and darkness all vanished in the twinkling

of an eye, and she found herself standing among her own flowers, before the cottage of her mother.

When MARY awoke in the morning she retained a vivid recollection of this dream, nor could she banish it from her mind during the day. Was it a foreshadow of future trials and persecutions? or a remembrance of those that were past? It might be either; for, while we believe most devoutly that the Future sometimes reflects itself backward upon the canvass of our dreams, and that dreams themselves are often the shadows of coming events, we are ready to concede that, quite as often, they are the mysterious children of memory. But whether MARY'S dream were a lingering shadow of the receding past, or a mirage on the horizon before her, lifting up into view the events of the future, it left a gloomy impression on her mind. The cloud grew thicker and darker around her heart as the hour for her departure drew near; and when at length the coach arrived which was to take her to the steamer she felt a strange reluctance to leave the protection of her friends. But the thought that she was going home soon overcame this feeling, and, embracing her companions, she stepped into the carriage, which rolled rapidly away.

Going home! Every person who has been long absent from friends and beloved ones will remember with what exhilaration of spirit and emotions of gladness he took the first step homeward. How his bosom swelled with sweet expectancy, and his soul

thrilled with joyful anticipations, as he thought that his steps were now turned toward that sweet and sacred spot, where dwelt the dear objects of his love, whose images he had reverently and affectionately borne in his heart, through long, long months—perhaps years—over foreign lands and distant climes, and whose loved forms he was soon to embrace again!

Miss MORE felt all this; and no sooner did she hear the coach-wheels rattle along the pavement than the somber cloud vanished, and the warm, glad sunshine of hope and love, poured its floods of radiance through her heart. Home—mother—sisters—friends—how soon she would behold them again! Her ardent imagination constructed a rosy palace, where she dwelt with sweet thoughts, and gentle presences, and forms of love and beauty.

Meanwhile, the carriage proceeded down Broadway as far as Chambers street, where it turned off at the right, and, entering Greenwich street, stopped before an obscure hotel. The driver descended from his box, opened the coach-door, and let down the steps, saying:

“I won't keep you waiting long, ma'am; I engaged to take another person to the boat; we have plenty of time;” and he leaned against the fore-wheel of his carriage, waiting for the new passenger. He did not have to wait long; for the hotel door soon opened, and a woman, carrying a child in her arms, came out, and entered the vehicle, which immediately dashed down Greenwich street toward the Battery.

This woman was a middle-aged person of ordinary appearance, and might be taken for a nurse—some-what ambitious—or a boarding-house keeper. She was short and plump, and gaudily dressed; her arms, neck and hands were loaded with a profusion of ornaments, intended to look like gold, which they were not, while her round, full cheeks glowed with a bloom too lively to be natural. A shrewd, cunning light burned in her small, serpent-like eyes, which she kept constantly rolling in her head, as if determined that no object should escape her observation. One familiar with all classes of society, and experienced in reading countenances, would have said that her looks were decidedly vicious.

But notwithstanding the long and curious stare which the woman fixed upon her, on entering the coach, Miss MORE took little notice of her, her whole attention having been absorbed by the little child she held in her lap, and which appeared to be ill. And this child—a girl not yet two years old, but now helpless as an infant of as many months—could not fail to arrest the attention of any one. She was dressed coarsely and poorly, but her extraordinary beauty was beyond comparison—almost startling, we might say. Her little pale face wore a look of angelic sweetness, while her long black, elfin locks, falling down beneath her straw-hat, covering her neck and shoulders with a profusion of curls, in striking contrast with the pearly whiteness of her skin, gave her an appearance difficult to describe,

but which might perhaps be partly expressed by the word supernatural. Her large expressive eyes, when she opened them—for she remained most of the time in a doze, apparently the effect of some powerful opiate—beamed with a soft and tender luster, which immediately went to the heart.

Miss MORE gazed on the lovely creature with admiration and compassion. The strange, wild beauty of the little one excited her wonder, while the pains she was plainly suffering awakened in her sympathetic breast the deepest emotions of pity and love.

Glancing from the child to the woman who accompanied her, MARY could not help wondering what relationship could exist between the two—persons so totally unlike; one, the impersonation of grossness and vulgarity; the other, so fairy-like and spiritual. She had not time, however, for many conjectures; for the carriage soon arrived at the dock of the steamer.

MARY descended first from the coach, and, obeying an impulse of natural kindness, stretched forth her arms to receive the child while the woman alighted. The motion caused by the transfer, momentarily aroused it from its lethargy, and it raised its large, wondering eyes to hers, and nestled close to her breast. When the woman had stepped out upon the landing, she offered to take the child again; but MARY said she had as lief carry it on board, which seemed to suit the person well enough, for she made no objection, and they walked together to the boat, and seated themselves in the ladies' cabin.

"This poor child is very ill," said MARY, surprised at the evident indifference of the woman, as she returned it to her arms. "Is it yours?"

"Oh! dear, no," replied the latter; "its mother is in Boston; but I have had the care of it ever since it was two months old, and I am now carrying it home."

"Poor thing!" resumed MARY; "it requires all of a mother's care now—it suffers dreadfully."

"It does, indeed," rejoined the woman; "it has been quite unwell for some days."

Certain movements above, and a trembling of the boat, indicated that she had left her dock, and was now on her way to Fall River. MARY was uneasy and restless, and looked often and anxiously toward the door of the cabin. She expected to have seen her strange friend, directly she arrived on board, and now his non-appearance surprised her. She went to the door, and looked out upon the deck. A large crowd of men was gathered about the captain's office, getting their tickets, but a single glance sufficed to convince her that he was not among them. She next walked up into the state-room saloon—passed through its entire length, examined the promenade decks, fore and aft, but could discover nothing of the person she sought, and returned disappointed to the cabin.

"Can I have been deceived?" she asked herself. "Is it possible that note was written by some else, and with some design which I cannot penetrate?"

No; it must have been himself, and undoubtedly some unforeseen accident has detained him."

She sat down again beside her traveling companions, but was by no means easy in her mind. Alone among strangers, she was sad and dispirited. The frightful dream, too, of the preceding night now rose in her memory with all the distinctness of a dread reality. Again, in thought, she was fleeing from her demon-foes—again she felt herself in their hideous arms, and she started from her reverie, pale with fear. The shadow, thick and black, had fallen once more like a funereal pall around her heart. Turning to the chambermaid, she asked:

"Where is Captain BROWN? I would like to see him a moment."

"Oh! Lor, dear Miss, Captain BROWN does not go on this boat; he is the commander of the Metropolis."

"True, true," resumed MARY; "I had forgotten. But who is the clerk of this boat? I wish to make some inquiries."

"Mr. SIMONDS," replied the chambermaid; "and I will ask him to step in here, if you like."

"You will oblige me very much if you will," said Miss MORE; and the woman departed on her errand. She soon returned, saying that Mr. SIMONDS would wait on her as soon as he could leave the office.

That officer soon, however, made his appearance. He was a good-looking gentleman, under thirty

years of age, with a benevolent expression of countenance, and, altogether, appeared to be the "right man in the right place"—ever ready to do all in his power for the comfortable accommodation of his passengers.

"I expected to meet a friend on the boat, who was to accompany me home," said Miss MORE; "but he has not presented himself, and I fear he is not on board. I wish to inquire if any person answering to his description has been at the office for a ticket." And she gave the clerk a minute description of the gentleman in black.

"I am confident," replied Mr. SIMONDS, "no such person is on board. All the passengers have been supplied with tickets, and, had he been here, I should certainly have seen him, and the peculiarity of dress and appearance you have spoken of would have caused me to remember him. But, now I think of it," he added, "a gentleman such as you describe went down with us a few days ago."

"Indeed! it is very, very strange. I surely must have been deceived," replied MARY, in alarm.

"I am sorry for your disappointment, madame," continued the clerk, "but if there is any service we can render you we will do it cheerfully."

"Oh! no, I am obliged to you," rejoined MARY; "I dare say I shall get on well enough, only the unaccountable absence of my friend made me fear that I had been deceived—but not by him—nor can I conceive for what purpose."

The clerk bowed respectfully, and returned to his office. During her brief conversation with Mr. SIMONDS, MARY had not noticed how closely all her motives were watched by the little serpent eyes of the woman, who had so unexpectedly become her companion; nor did she see the sinister glance cast upon her.

At this moment the child uttered a low wail, as if in intense pain. Miss MORE instantly bent over toward it, when it opened its soft eyes, and, casting an eager look around, at last fixed them upon her; at the same time faintly crying, "Mamma, mamma." The deepest compassion of MARY's heart was now thoroughly aroused; and, disgusted with the apparently unfeeling conduct of the woman, she asked the privilege of taking the child, and tending it for a time herself. The woman readily granted her request, and, remarking that, as the air was very close in the cabin, she would go out on the deck, and get a "fresh breath," rose and went out.

In the meanwhile, MARY supported the little sufferer against her own warm and healthy bosom, with her left arm, while with the right hand she parted its glossy curls, and gently stroked its fair white brow. The child soon yielded to the magnetic influence of her caresses, and passed into a calm slumber. Turning slightly in her seat, the light of a chandelier fell full upon the face which nestled against her breast. MARY cast over it a long and scrutinizing look, and bent her head thoughtfully on her hand.

"Surely I have never seen this child before," she said to herself; "and yet how familiar this face is to me! How closely it is joined in my memory to some other face, which I *have* seen, I know not when nor where!" And her memory went away in a long search for that other face, but failed to find it.

While Miss MORE was thus employed with her conjectures, the woman—we call her thus, not knowing any other designation—was "taking the air." On gaining the deck she paused for a moment, and looked around. The steamer at this time was heavily loaded, and the passages leading fore and aft were necessarily very narrow and dark. After a moment's examination, the woman darted into one of these, and, proceeding carefully along, paused in the obscurest part of the passage. Uttering a low, sharp sound, something like the hissing of a snake, a dark mass was seen to move cautiously on a pile of leather above, and a figure slid down, and stood at her side.

"Is all going well?" said the figure, in a low, quick voice.

"Admirably! admirably!" replied the woman; "the young lady already seems attached to the child, and tends it as carefully and affectionately as if it were her own."

"'Tis well," resumed the figure; "and here are the articles." He gave her two parcels—one, a small white paper, apparently containing a powder,

and the other, a phial, partly filled with some kind of liquid. The woman hastily put them in her pocket, and returned to the cabin, while the figure stealthily climbed up again to his bunk on the leather.

During the evening, several of the kind-hearted lady-passengers came to MARY, and offered their services in the care of the child, whose wonderful beauty elicited remarks of admiration, while its sufferings awakened their deepest pity. As the three had come on board together, and Miss MORE had been in constant attendance on the child, they supposed, naturally enough, that it was connected with her by some tie of relationship, while they looked upon the gross woman who accompanied her as a servant or nurse. But MARY, so absorbed was she in the sacred duty she was then discharging, never noticed this. The artful woman, with the serpent eyes, had skillfully contrived to give the matter this appearance. It was precisely what she desired, as it suited her purposes, whatever they were.

The evening wore away; most of the ladies had already retired, and MARY, feeling weary, signified to the woman her desire to do the same, and placed the still sleeping child in that person's lap. Her preparations were soon made, and she was just falling asleep when a low cry from the child aroused her. Raising her head, and looking down from her berth, she saw that the poor sufferer was awake, and rested uneasily in the arms of the woman.

"As she is so restless with me," said the latter, "and so quiet with you, Miss, would it be asking too much of you to allow her to lie by your side? She will not trouble you, and she seems more tranquil and easy when near you."

MARY willingly received her, and, laying her again on her bosom, kissed the little pale face that rested against hers, with deep emotion. She had always been noted for her strong affection toward children, and her young heart overflowed with tenderness for them when they were ill. Her whole soul was now moved by the sufferings of this sweet child, so strangely thrown upon her care, and she prayed earnestly for its recovery. "And yet, who knows," she said, speaking to herself, "but it would be far better for it to die now?"

The child soon became easy again, under the caresses of the loving girl, who had drawn it close to her breast, and they both, in a few moments, were fast asleep; and thus those two innocent hearts throbbed on, side by side, through that fair summer night. Nothing disturbed their slumbers, until, on the boat approaching Fall River, the passengers were called to take the cars for Boston.

Miss MORE quickly arose, and, seeing that her charge yet slept, gently withdrew from her, and stepped out into the cabin. Most of the passengers had already completed their preparations for leaving the boat, and had gone out on the deck, with the usual impatience of travelers; each of whom seems

to be impelled by the singular ambition to be the first to land, and the first to embark. She was, therefore, quite alone. Her first impulse was to look for the woman; not seeing her anywhere, she supposed that she had not yet been awakened, and went to her berth to call her. To her surprise, the woman was not there, nor had the berth been slept in during the night. She ran out, and sought for her through every part of the steamer, making inquiries of many; but the missing nurse could nowhere be found. Confused and bewildered, the poor girl returned to the cabin. She now saw that the carpet-bag and band-box of the woman were gone, also, and nothing remained of her luggage but a small basket, which, on examination, was found to contain only articles of dress, belonging to the child. She knew not what to think, nor what to do. At first, she thought of calling the officers of the boat, and, acquainting them with the circumstances of the case, leave the child with them. But none of them were in sight; nor had she time to look them up, as the passengers were already landing; and, besides, how could she leave the poor, helpless thing among strangers! At this moment she thought of Mr. CLAFLIN, the conductor, and her resolution was immediately taken. She would carry the child to Boston. She doubted not that this gentleman would aid her in finding its mother; perhaps, even, as she was expecting the child, there might be persons at the railway station to receive it.

So, hastily throwing on her things, and wrapping the little girl in a shawl, she hurried from the boat to the cars.

It was certainly a perplexing situation for a young girl to be placed in ; for many an older person would have found it difficult to decide what to do in such an extraordinary emergency. Notwithstanding her previous experiences, Miss MORE'S nature was as confiding and unsuspecting as before ; and in all her conjectures, regarding her present singular position, it never crossed her mind that all which had occurred was the result of deep-laid plans ; nor that the poor, deserted child she held in her arms could in any way seriously affect her own destiny. That the unknown woman or nurse had wickedly abandoned her charge she did not doubt ; but she could not suspect that this circumstance had any reference to herself personally. And now that she had become by accident the sole protector of this waif, which, on the great sea of humanity, had floated to her arms so mysteriously, the kindness of her heart, and her deep compassion for its sufferings, were such that no considerations could have moved her to cast off the responsibility upon others. Believing, without a doubt, that in a few hours, at farthest, the little invalid would be safely restored to its mother's arms, where it could receive all the loving care which its state required, she cheerfully assumed, for the time being, the united duties of mother and nurse ; and never was a child the object of a tenderer care, nor

watched over with a truer affection, nor protected by a braver or more loving heart.

She was wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the tiny countenance, which, pale as a lily, lay before her, and musing on the strange resemblance it bore to some other face which her memory could not identify as belonging to any of her acquaintance, when a voice at her side aroused her :

"Tickets, Miss?" and Miss MORE turned directly toward the person from whom the voice came, fully expecting to see the familiar face of Mr. CLAFLIN. But she was surprised, and somewhat troubled, to find another, a total stranger, in his place. She gave the conductor a ticket, and, thinking that possibly Mr. CLAFLIN might be on the train, she inquired after him.

"He is not on the cars this morning. Sundays he is frequently off," replied the conductor, and he passed along.

This was a painful disappointment for MARY. She knew Mr. CLAFLIN would interest himself in her behalf, and had placed her entire dependence on him to relieve her from her embarrassing situation. She shrunk from making any appeal to strangers, although she could scarcely explain why. Perhaps it was an instinctive feeling, which had not yet taken the palpable form of a definite thought, that she would be looked upon with suspicion, and her simple story fall on incredulous ears. Her expectations of assistance from Mr. CLAFLIN having, therefore, failed

her, she felt her heart sink as she thought that she now must depend wholly upon herself.

The reply of the conductor, also, awakened her to the knowledge of another perplexity. The thought had never occurred to her before that she would arrive in Boston on Sunday morning, and be compelled to stop in the city till Monday. This, indeed, would have been of but little consequence, had she any friends in the city with whom she might tarry; but she was absolutely a stranger, and could not think of a single acquaintance in or near Boston. Pondering on the various incidents connected with her journey, since receiving the note, inviting her to defer her departure till Saturday, she began to feel a vague apprehension of—she knew not what, stealing over her. The shadows again grew heavy and dark around her heart. Her imagination was now busy at work, and painted a gloomy picture for her mind to contemplate. "What," she said to herself, "shall I do if the mother or friends of this poor child are not at the station to claim it?"

Although she asked the question with considerable anxiety, yet she believed fully that this part of the woman's story was true, and that the expected child would be sought for and received by relatives directly it arrived in the city. Still, should they, from any cause, fail to appear, she could not but feel that the difficulties of her position would be frightfully augmented, and this possibility she contemplated with even increasing uneasiness.

Meanwhile, the train whirled along, with the speed of the storm, and, while she was still plunged in her painful meditations, came to a stop in the station-house. In her impatience to find the friends of her protégé, she almost ran from the car; and, unheeding the numerous hack-drivers who accosted her with the everlasting question: "Will you have a carriage, Miss?" walked rapidly up through the depot, scanning carefully every countenance she met. She examined the ladies' apartment, and went out upon the sidewalks, but could discover no person who appeared to be waiting for, or expecting the arrival of friends. The bewildered girl continued the fruitless search, until she saw that she was an object of suspicious curiosity to several persons who still lingered around, when she hastily returned to the place where she had left the cars. A coachman chanced to be near, who, noticing her perplexed demeanor, approached her, and offered his services to take her to whatever place she desired. She followed him mechanically.

"Have you any baggage?" he inquired, as he let down the steps, and assisted her to enter. In her anxiety, and the confusion of her ideas, she had entirely forgotten it, and taking her checks from a *porte-monnaie*, she gave them to him. The baggage was soon procured, and lashed to the carriage, when the driver again came to the door, and asked where she would go. The unhappy maiden knew not where to go. She disliked going

to a hotel, and, after pausing a moment to consider, replied :

“Take me to some respectable private boarding-house. I am a stranger in the city, and do not know of any one that I would prefer.”

“All right,” he rejoined, and, mounting his box, drove away, and, after a few minutes, MARY found herself in a comfortable boarding-house, in Bedford street. It was yet early in the morning, and none were stirring in the house but the landlady and servants. MARY resolved, as soon as possible, to acquaint that person with her anomalous situation, and seek her advice ; but her first care was for the deserted child. She procured warm, fresh milk for its breakfast, washed and dressed it with care, and made it as comfortable as its condition rendered possible.

In the course of the forenoon the landlady came to her room, when Mary, in simple and earnest language, explained to her the unfortunate circumstances in which she found herself entangled. She described to her, minutely, every incident, from the time the woman and child entered the carriage in New York, to her arrival in Boston ; and ended by imploring her advice and assistance.

“It is, truly, a strange tale,” replied the lady, coldly ; “but it is a little too romantic to be true,” and she eyed the amazed girl with looks of suspicion and distrust. MARY was thunderstruck. She felt herself on the point of fainting, and would have

fallen to the floor, had she not supported herself by the side of a bed. The lady sat opposite, watching her attentively, as if studying her fair and beautiful face, and tearful eyes, now rendered more interesting by the expression of sorrowful anxiety which they wore. The study was not without a favorable result; for she hastily rose, and, taking the weeping girl kindly by the hand, said:

“Have courage, child; we’ll see what can be done.” And then, turning toward the bed, she appeared to be struck by the marvelous loveliness of the little castaway, which lay there so still and pale, as well as touched by its helpless condition. After a few more words of a friendly character to Miss MORE, she left the room.

MARY was by no means reassured. The cruel remark of the landlady, so plainly implying a want of faith in her story, rankled like a barbed arrow in her breast; and, for an instant, she felt a slight emotion of displeasure toward the child, which had thus become the innocent occasion of her painful embarrassments. But, instantaneous and faint as the feeling was, the kind-hearted girl immediately reproached herself for permitting it; and, casting herself upon the bed by the side of the foundling that lay there, watching her with its soft, earnest eyes, took it in her arms, and embraced it tenderly. The poor child responded to her caresses by placing its little white arms around MARY’S neck, and laying its pale, cold face close against hers.

“Poor deserted thing!” she said; “what mother could be so heartless or thoughtless as to trust so fair a flower away from her, and intrust it to the guardianship of strangers? Who, and where is that mother?”

This latter was certainly a very pertinent question, and Miss MORE felt that her first endeavor must be to find its answer. But how was this to be effected? She had not the slightest shadow of a clue to guide her in her researches. She might advertise the lost one, or enlist the aid of the police, which would be well enough, supposing the parents had not themselves discarded the unfortunate child, and desired to reclaim her.

MARY anxiously revolved these matters in her mind for some time, when she suddenly started up, and, taking the basket containing the child's clothing, began an examination of each article separately. Every piece of linen was closely scrutinized, in the hope of finding a name on something, that might serve to throw some light, however faint, on the mystery. Her search for a long time was fruitless, and the contents of the basket were nearly emptied, when, on taking up a little frock, she felt something carefully concealed among its folds, that crumpled beneath the pressure of her hands, like paper. She quickly unfolded the dress, and, on shaking it, a large envelope fell to the floor. Eagerly seizing it, she saw it was unsealed, and bore no direction; and, immediately opening it, discovered a paper, folded

in a neat business-like manner, which she began to read. She had not proceeded far, however, when a frightful pallor spread over her face. She trembled violently in every limb, and seemed to be entirely prostrated by some powerful emotion, either of fear or amazement.

“Gracious heavens!” she cried, at length; “Is there to be no end to the labyrinth of mysteries in which I am wandering?” And, casting a wondering, inquiring look upon the child, sank down on the side of the bed.

The paper, the reading of which had produced such strange results, was a policy of insurance on the life of a child, one year and eleven months old, and duly described therein; the amount of which—five thousand dollars—was to be paid, on the event of its death, to MARY MORE, her mother and sisters! The description, in the document, of the child was so minute that MARY could not doubt for a moment that the fragile infant at her side was the person indicated. But in what way had their destinies become so strangely united? What connection was there between them? By what unaccountable fatality had they now been thrown together? What persons, interested in the child, had manifested an interest, in this singular manner, in her and hers? These questions ran through her mind with the rapidity of thought; but the astonishment of the maiden had so bewildered her that she could not even form a conjecture by way of response.

After many vain attempts to look into the mystery, she arose, took up the policy, placed it again in the envelope, and returned it to its hiding-place in the folds of the frock, which she replaced, with the other articles, in the basket.

She had no time for further questionings; for the child now uttered a sharp cry, as if in great distress. MARY flew to the bed, and, becoming alarmed by the increased paleness of the sufferer, ran to the bell, and rang for assistance. The landlady soon made her appearance, and, going to the bed, examined the child attentively.

"It is, indeed, dangerously ill. Had I not better send for a physician?" she said, at length.

"Oh! do, do!" replied MARY, earnestly, and the tears started into her eyes as she beheld the alarming symptoms, which were now rapidly manifesting themselves. A physician was sent for, and while MARY, holding the little girl in her arms, tried to soothe her to sleep, the lady prepared some quieting drinks for her. But nothing they could do brought any relief. She was plainly failing fast. MARY bent over her, with the most intense anxiety and sorrow depicted in her countenance. The affectionate girl forgot all her own troubles in her solicitude for this poor stricken one. She grieved over it as if it were her own, and she prayed fervently that it might be spared. Others now came into the room, treading softly, as all do, by a natural impulse, who approach the place where

a life, whether young or old, is known to be trembling on the shore of the Eternal Sea. They drew near silently, and surveyed, with curious glances, the beautiful death-struck child, and the fair girl, now pale with grief, who tended it with such loving care.

They had heard, in the morning, from the landlady, of Miss MORE's strange adventure, and, like that person, were disposed to discredit it. There are many—too many indeed—of malicious hearts, who, having once harbored a suspicion, through vanity, persist in seeking confirmations of it; and they fail not to give to every appearance such a construction as will seem to justify their evil surmises. And so it happened now. The very excellence of MARY's character, and the excessive kindness of her heart—the strong affection she evinced toward the dying child—all were made to testify against her, in the minds of those who crowded around. Her evident love for the little one, and, above all, her grief, so deep and sincere, proved clearly enough to *them* that the child was not a deserted foundling, but her own, which *she* wished to cast off; and the love she now manifested toward it they accounted for on the supposition that it was a transient feeling awakened by remorse. MARY, however, happily saw none of these looks of doubt and distrust, so absorbed was she by her grief.

Meanwhile, the physician arrived, and commenced

an examination of the patient. In answer to his inquiries, MARY gave a particular description of the child, and all the symptoms it had shown since it had been in her care, and then, in a voice choked with emotion, she cried :

“Oh! doctor, do save her! Oh! do not let her die!”

“I cannot save her,” he replied, gravely; “*she has been poisoned!*”

MARY started with a look of horror.

“Oh! no, no; say not that!” she exclaimed, vehemently; “oh! do not say that. Who could be so cruel as to do so wicked a deed? She is so lovely!”

“I know not, young lady,” he replied, “who could have been so base as to cut the threads of that young life. All I know is that she is poisoned—*murdered*, probably.”

“Oh! poor dear, dear child,” sobbed MARY, passionately; and she raised the lovely form tenderly in her arms, and kissed its now livid lips. The dying infant opened its eyes for a moment, beaming with supernatural brightness, while a sweet smile played around its mouth. At this moment the rays of the setting sun streamed into the room, and falling upon the child, seemed to envelop its fairy form in a golden shroud, and the soul of the murdered infant floated away on the sunbeams—away to its bright home among the angels.

The exciting events which had been crowded into the last twenty-four hours of her life, terminating in this tragical manner, were too much for the sensitive girl, and she fell into a swoon. She lay in a state of unconsciousness for some length of time, and when she finally returned to herself, she was not sufficiently restored to comprehend her position, nor fully to understand the proceedings that were going on around her. As the clouds, however, cleared away from her brain, she saw that several men were in her chamber, one of whom advanced with some rudeness toward her, but paused a few paces distant, as if struck, not only by the exceeding beauty of her person, but, also, by the artless and innocent expression of her face, and perhaps touched by her unaffected sorrow. Assuming a more respectful demeanor, he said :

“I have a most unpleasant duty to perform, Miss. Dr. LORING, who was called to your child, alleges that it was destroyed by a combination of poisons, while other extraordinary circumstances attending the case—together with the fact that this phial and paper, containing portions of the poisons, were found upon your person—fasten suspicion upon you, and I have been ordered by a magistrate to arrest you as the probable murderer.”

This terrible blow was too much for the unfortunate girl, and she would have fallen to the floor had she not been caught by the officer.

“Murderer!” she whispered, faintly; “I, a mur-

derer! Oh! my GOD, my GOD, what can all this mean?" And she looked around in utter bewilderment. Stunned by the horrible accusation, she spoke no more, but did mechanically as she was bidden. The officers gathered up her effects, and placing her unresisting form—for she was as helpless as a child—in a carriage, conducted her to prison.

IN PRISON.

“What next befel me, then and there,
I know not well—I never knew:
First came the loss of light and air,
And then of darkness too;
I had no thought--no feeling--none;
On dungeon walls I leaned alone.

'Tis done! I saw it in my dreams;
No more with hope the future beams;
My days of happiness are few.
Chilled by misfortune's wintry blast,
My dawn of life is overcast;
Love, hope, and joy, alike adieu,
Would I could add, remembrance, too!”

CHAPTER XIV.



THE coroner's inquest, held on Monday morning, on the body of the murdered child, was brief, and resulted in a verdict of "*death by poison, administered intentionally by MARY MORE;*" and the examination of the unfortunate girl was ordered to take place on the following Saturday. The terrible situation into which she had been so suddenly thrown completely benumbed her senses, and throughout that dismal Sunday night she remained in a state of partial delirium. In the morning, however, she became more calm and collected, and, strengthened by a consciousness of her innocence, resigned herself with Christian fortitude to her fate. Notwithstanding the perils that environed her, she never once thought of herself, nor of any shame or pain she might herself suffer; her mind was in her old home by the sea, and with those who were looking with such anxious love for her return. Her grief was fearful, as her imagination pictured the dreadful agony of her mother and sisters, when the news of her arrest, and of the awful charge alledged against

her, should reach them. Although she knew that they, at least, would never believe her guilty, she felt that she should lose no time in acquainting them with all the circumstances—so far as she could herself comprehend them—which had led to this misfortune. With this end in view, she rose, and taking a small traveling case, containing writing and other materials, emptied its contents upon a small table attached to one of the walls of her cell, and was about seating herself to write, when the door was opened, and several persons entered. She saw at a glance, by their badges, that they were officers of the law, while one of them wore the insignia of High Sheriff. This latter gentleman was in truth Sheriff CLARKE, a person well known for his benevolence and humanity to the unfortunate. He looked upon the fair prisoner, now shrinking before him, with sorrow and pity, while the others surveyed her with looks of abhorrence, indicating plainly that there was but one opinion among them in regard to her guilt. A crime of unparalleled atrocity had indeed been committed—one that could not fail to arouse the deepest indignation of the whole community—and, as every circumstance seemed to fasten the dark deed upon Miss MORE, it was but natural that all should entertain a feeling of detestation toward one who was believed to be guilty of an offense so shocking.

“I am compelled, Miss MORE,” said the sheriff, after a short pause, “to take charge, for a time, of

your papers and effects, except such articles of clothing as you may need;" at the same time he made a sign to the officers to remove them. They obeyed with an alacrity somewhat rude and indecorous, and withdrew from the cell. In the meantime, the sheriff, drawing nearer to the table, and glancing casually over its contents, uttered a slight exclamation of surprise. His eyes seemed to be riveted on some object that deeply interested him. After scanning it closely a few minutes, he took it up, and, hastily laying open several paper infoldings, with increasing surprise examined its contents.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, with some abruptness, at the same time casting a look of suspicion toward the trembling prisoner, as if he supposed she had stolen it.

"My mother gave it me on the day I left home for New York, nearly a year ago; it belonged to my father," she replied, in a tremulous, but somewhat eager voice.

"What! you—you a daughter of Captain JAMES MORE, my old friend?" he cried, astonished beyond measure. "A child of Captain MORE should not be here, and charged with such a crime!"

"I am, in truth, his most unfortunate child," she rejoined, earnestly; "and it is equally true that I am innocent of this fearful crime. Oh! in my dead father's name, I implore you to believe me. If you were bound to him by any secret ties—if there are any obligations which connect you with those whom

he so much loved on earth—if there be any power or virtue in the mute appeal of that jewel, called the ‘*Signet of King Solomon,*’ as my father’s letter seems to imply, I beseech you to assist me in my present trials!”

The sheriff was deeply moved, and replied, in a tone of kindness: “As an officer, I am compelled to repress my own feelings; and what the laws decree I must execute, although the blow should fall on my own flesh and blood; notwithstanding,” he added, “the sword of justice should not strike the innocent, and justice itself should be the protector of virtue. As to yourself, my heart and your truthful and earnest manner forbid me to believe you guilty; yet I must not conceal from you the fact that circumstances are strongly combined against you; and others may not be so ready to acquit you as I. However, you shall not want friends, to assist you—friends,” he continued, laying his hand upon the mystic jewel, “who comprehend the duties which this token calls them to discharge.”

On leaving the cell of Miss MORE, the sheriff went to the jailer’s office, and, after a short conference with that officer, rode away in his carriage. A quarter of an hour after, the jailer’s wife appeared in MARY’s cell. She stood for some time gazing upon the poor maiden with a look of astonishment, which seemed to say: ‘Who could accuse, or even suspect, such a girl of this dreadful crime? She is an angel, rather than a murderess.’ “I have come,” she at

length said, "to conduct you from this cell. The sheriff has ordered us to furnish you with better accommodations, and to do what we can to promote your comfort while here, which I pray Heaven may not be long."

The new apartment into which the lady led her was a very tolerable chamber in the most pleasant part of the prison. It was fitted up with some care; the table was covered with books, and ornamented with newly-gathered flowers, which the kind jailer had ordered to be placed there, and the room throughout wore an air of comfort and quiet.

MARY now resumed the task—which had been interrupted by the entrance of the officers—of writing to her mother. She related all the circumstances which had so mysteriously accumulated around her, until they formed an immense net, which had now entangled her in its fatal meshes. To mitigate, as much as possible, the grief of her parent, she wrote in a strain of cheerful hopefulness, which she was far from feeling herself; and, in closing the letter, exhorted her mother not to be too anxious about her, as she was kindly treated, and their invisible friends, who had so many times shown their will and power to serve them, were already acquainted with her situation, and would spare no pains to establish her innocence and discover the guilty.

After folding and sealing her letter, she leaned her head forward on her hands, and commenced to

review in her mind the various events which were connected with her present condition. Did she really have enemies who desired to effect her destruction? Was the note which led her to postpone her departure for home till Saturday intended to lead her into this dangerous snare? Who was the woman who so basely deserted her charge? and, above all, who was that child, so fair and sweet, and so foully murdered? The mysterious policy of insurance, too, what did that mean? was it a part of a plot? And the poisons found on her person, how came they there? She was satisfied that all these circumstances could not be the result of accident, but must have been planned with a malice as cunning as it was infernal. But what motive could have induced any one to perpetrate so dreadful a crime against her? It was not easy to find an answer to these questions. The whole matter was a dark and terrible mystery, and, when she thought of the possible results to herself, she shuddered. Even should she escape with life and liberty, would she not be looked upon with distrust and cold disdain? The very name of prison had always inspired her with horror, and was associated in her mind with vice and guilt; and now she was a prisoner herself. Would not the taint of the place always cling to her? If set at liberty—emerging from this abode of crime—could she again hold up her head in society? She knew that she could lay her wounded heart and aching head upon her mother's breast, and there,

and in the arms of her sisters, find all the old love—perhaps more—but would not others shun her as an infected thing, and treat her with scornful neglect?

Her nature was always over-sensitive, and now, rendered more nervous and excitable by her misfortunes, her fancy painted the future in the darkest and gloomiest colors. She felt that the world would never again have any joy or brightness for her; that she must bid adieu to all the sweet delights of friendship, and, with a bleeding heart and broken spirit, drag her weary way along to the end. At the same time she pictured her companions—the playmates of her childhood and youth—radiant with expectation and love, advancing through a life of sunshine, which they at once ornamented and enjoyed, while she, a poor, blasted flower, must droop and die in shadows and darkness. Thus, drearily and slowly, wore away the first day of MARY'S imprisonment.

On Tuesday, the little courage which had so far sustained her was gone, and, both mentally and physically, she was completely prostrated; and, on Wednesday, she was a picture of hopeless despair. Visited with frequent attacks of hysteria, she would toss on her bed, moaning piteously. The jailer's wife, who watched over her with sisterly affection, could not restrain her tears, as she witnessed these paroxysms of grief. Sometimes the hapless maiden appeared to be partially delirious, and would walk the room, wringing her hands, and calling loudly on her mother to come and save her.

During one of these fits of utter despondency and despair, the jailer softly entered the room, accompanied by a lady dressed in deep mourning. She was a handsome woman, in the prime of life, but she stepped feebly, and her head and body bent downward, as if burdened with a mountain of sorrow. MARY'S back was toward the door as they entered, but the noise drew her attention, and turning round, she gave a wild cry of joy, and cast herself on the bosom of her mother.

"Oh, mother! mother!" she exclaimed, as she wound her clinging arms around her parent's neck; "oh, save me from this horrid place! I did not murder that poor child. Oh! indeed I did not, and yet they will kill me!" The mother's grief was so great she could not speak; she could only strain the unfortunate one to her heart, and try to soothe her with loving caresses. And the pale, suffering child nestled there upon that faithful breast, where, a tiny infant, she had lain, under the shelter of a mother's great love and a father's anxious care; where, in childhood, she had fled to sweep away her childish sorrows; and where, in youth, she had ever found consolation and support. There now, like a fearful dove pursued by some bird of prey, she sought refuge from the blasting storm. It was the one solitary rock in all the boundless, surging ocean of life to which she could cling for safety. The affecting scene moved the jailer to tears, while his wife sobbed audibly. They soon softly

left the cell, and the mother and daughter were alone.



Mrs. MORE, after a short time, was sufficiently recovered from her agitation to address some soothing words of encouragement and hope to her daughter, who soon, under these gentle ministrations, became more calm. "Your friends at Oceanville, she said, "desired me to express to you their warmest sympathy and love."

"They do not believe me guilty, then?" cried MARY, eagerly. "Oh, Heaven bless them for that!"

"Oh! no, my child," replied the mother; "who that ever knew you *could* believe you guilty? They are all fully convinced that your connection with that awful mystery was either the result of accident, or of some wicked scheme to get you into trouble. They fully acquit you, and are filled with indignation that any one should even suspect you. Miss MILLWOOD may be an exception; for her demeanor has been strange of late, and she has several times, when your friends have spoken of you with approbation, been heard to make disparaging remarks. And yet, when the news came that a poor child had been cruelly slaughtered, and you were accused of the deed, she was terribly agitated, and fell down in a fainting fit. This was of short duration, however; the agitation soon passed away, and she was as cold and indifferent as ever."

"And—ard MORLEY?" said MARY, inquiringly, and with some hesitation, "what does he think?"

"He appears to be deeply grieved on your account," rejoined Mrs. MORE; "but expresses no opinion. He is completely spell-bound by MAY MILLWOOD; and yet, judging by his melancholy and restless manner, one would say that he was far from being happy, or satisfied with himself; he is indeed much changed—LUCIE ELMORE and Miss GLADSTONE," she hastily added, as if desirous of changing the subject, "intend to be here on Saturday, to support you in court."

"Do they? Oh! how grateful I feel for their confidence and affection; it will be such a comfort to have them to lean on—and you, mother?"

"I shall remain with you," she replied, "to the end, and shall see you every day."

And through that day and the succeeding ones, that strong and loving mother strove to soothe and cheer her child, and impart to her strength to endure the annoying publicity of an open court, and the painful trial which awaited her.

When the sheriff left the prison, after his interview with Miss MORE, on Monday, he repaired to his office, and wrote several notes, which he immediately dispatched to the persons for whom they were designed. After sending off the missives, he remained for some time in a meditative mood, as if he were endeavoring to seize the clue to the foul transactions which had so fatally entangled Miss MORE, and imperiled her peace of mind, and even her life. At length he arose, and went out to attend to some official business.

Not far from eight o'clock, on the evening of the same day, he was again at his office, where he was soon joined by several gentlemen, of a grave and dignified demeanor, who, after exchanging fraternal greetings, seated themselves around a table.

"Gentlemen," said the sheriff, immediately, "I have summoned you here to-night, in the name of our Order, to lay an extraordinary case before you, for your consideration. You have all, probably,

heard of the murder—unexampled in atrocity—which was committed on Saturday or Sunday last, and of the arrest of a young girl, on suspicion of being the criminal. I called on her this morning, and, notwithstanding the chain of circumstances which attaches the offense to her appears to be unbroken, I fully believe her to be as ignorant of the cause of the death of that child as I am myself. She is a person of unusual beauty, and so modest and gentle in her manners, one would say she was an angel, rather than a murderess. But, aside from the fact that she is the victim of some fatal accident, she has claims on our sympathy which we must not ignore. You were acquainted,” he added, “with that worthy brother, Captain JAMES MORE, who died some years ago?”

“Ah! a better man, or more enlightened Mason, ever lived,” replied one—the eldest of the company—“and, in consideration of his distinguished virtues, his family was adopted by the Order, and has ever since been under the protection of the Royal Arch and the Knightly Orders. There are three daughters, I believe, fair and promising.”

“And the alledged murderess,” resumed Sheriff CLARKE, “is the eldest of the three.”

“His daughter!” the gentlemen all exclaimed at once, astonished beyond measure.

“Yes,” continued the sheriff, “she is his daughter; and has now in her possession his ‘diploma,’ ‘mark,’ and a letter written some time before his death, in

which he confides his family to the care and protection of the Brotherhood; and, by these tokens, she to-day demands our support."

"And they shall not fail her," said the same one who had spoken before, with deep emphasis; "and aid shall she have, through the 'Signet of King Solomon,' and a sure refuge under the 'arch of steel.'"

"Amen!" was the hearty response of the company.

The sheriff smiled at the enthusiasm of his brethren, and said, gravely: "But we must not forget our duty to the laws. The sword of justice must fall on the offender, whoever the guilty one may be. If Miss MORE be really guilty, we cannot save her from the penalty of the law; we can only deplore her sad fate. But, believing, as we do, that she is the victim of accident, or of some conspiracy, we can furnish her means to procure the ablest counsel for her defense, and also aid her materially, in looking up testimony in her behalf. I expected one here to-night, who is the very person to take charge of this affair—he always shows such a feeling interest in the unfortunate and distressed."

"You mean our Knight of Charity," said one of the gentlemen; "and you do him no more than justice. He is indeed the man to—." At this moment the speech was interrupted by a noise without. The door immediately opened, and the gentleman in black stood before them.

"Why, this is an agreeable surprise," said the

sheriff; "we were just speaking of you, and lamenting your absence, as we need your advice in an affair of great moment.

"I should have been here before, but only received your note a few moments since, having been absent from the city all day," replied the gentleman in black. "But what is the affair of which you speak?"

"A daughter of our Order," resumed the sheriff, "is in prison, charged with murder, and by the Signet of Solomon and Hiram, and other sacred tokens, she calls us to her aid."

"What! you amaze me!" exclaimed the former. "And who is the unfortunate who is accused of so dreadful a crime?"

"MARY MORE, daughter of the late Captain JAMES MORE," answered the sheriff.

"MARY MORE! Did you say MARY MORE?" cried the gentleman, bounding from his seat, pale with agitation; "MARY MORE accused of murder, and in prison! "Oh! righteous heavens!" he continued, stretching his arms above, as if to call down the thunders of eternal justice, "how long shall crime and vice prosper in this wretched world, moving in sunshine and glory, while virtue and innocence weep in darkness, or pine away in dungeons?"

"You know her, then?" said the sheriff, in some surprise.

"Know her? I have known her for years; poor child, she has suffered much."

"And you believe her innocent?" interrupted the sheriff.

"Innocent? If there be yet a solitary ray of innocence lingering on earth, to pierce the fearful gloom that infolds humanity like a pall of death, that ray has taken refuge in the heart, and beams from the eyes of MARY MORE. But tell me," he added, eagerly, "how all this happened? I supposed she was at home before this time. She should have been there on Saturday."

The sheriff then proceeded to relate what was known in regard to the matter, first giving Miss MORE's story, from the time she received the note requesting her to delay her departure till Saturday, and then stating the circumstances which bore against her.

"We have the story of the accused," he said, "on one side, and the facts on the other. A murder, of the most cruel description, has been committed by some one; the coroner's inquest has demonstrated that poison was the instrument employed; the child was brought to Boston by Miss MORE, and portions of the very poison were found in the pocket of the dress she wore."

"And yet, she is as free of guilt as the murdered innocent itself," quickly replied the gentleman; "she, guileless and gentle as she is, has bitter enemies, and this must be their work; but we have no time to lose in conjectures. When does the examination take place?"

"On Saturday," rejoined the sheriff.

“The time is short, and we must be diligent, as there is much to do. The druggist who sold the poison must be found; by the way, was there any mark on the paper or phial containing the poison, which would serve as a guide in this search?”

“There was,” responded the sheriff; “both phial and paper bore the label of ‘Rushton & Clark, Broadway, New York.’”

“Good!” resumed the gentleman. “That is important. We must also find the coachman who took Miss MORE, and the woman and child, to the steamer, and also the woman herself. A messenger must be sent to New York; and I will go myself to Newport, where the woman must have left the boat, and see if I can find any traces of her.”

After making some other arrangements, which were considered important to the elucidation of the mystery, and the vindication of the prisoner, the gentlemen took leave of each other, and separated.

THE EXAMINATION.

“Speed on, ye faithful champions, speed!

And blessings with you go,

Still aid the widow, in her need,

And soothe the orphan's woe;

Still by the heart-sick stranger's side,

With words of kindness, stay,

And bid the deep and troubled tide

Of sorrow pass away.”

CHAPTER XV.



SATURDAY—longed for, and yet dreaded by so many anxious hearts—at length came, smiling and fresh, glorious and radiant, as only one of the earliest summer days can be. A sky of purest azure, and filled with fragrance and song, looked down upon the world in smiling beauty, as if that world were not stained with crime, and had not come to be a vast and terrible receptacle of crushed and bleeding hearts.

The examination of Miss MORE was to take place at ten o'clock. For half an hour, however, before that time arrived, the court-room was crowded to suffocation, by persons, whom a desire to see the alledged perpetrator of so dreadful a crime had called out. Precisely at the hour, the magistrate appeared, and took his seat on the bench, and not many minutes after, the accused herself entered the court, leaning on the arm of Sheriff CLARKE, attended by her counsel, Hon. CHARLES TRAIN, her mother and sisters, LUCIE ELMORE and Miss GLADSTONE, all of whom seated themselves around her. Several of the most prominent and influential gentlemen of Boston

were also seen to join the circle of her friends. The assembly was sensibly moved when she drew aside her vail, and disclosed her sweet face, so gentle and artless in expression; so pale, and yet so beautiful. The court itself gazed with wonder on the trembling maiden, who, after a brief and anxious look around, drooped her head upon her mother's shoulder, as if she would draw courage from the maternal breast.

After the preliminary formalities had been gone through with, the attorney for the state proceeded to set forth what he expected to prove. This person was a stern, flinty man, by the name of WRINGHEART—an appropriate name, surely—who had no faith in virtue, nor even in its possibility, and who pursued his victim with a spirit of animosity and bitterness unparalleled. He identified himself with his cause, and felt deeply mortified when he failed to secure a conviction, and exhibited an indecent and ferocious joy when he succeeded. Like a merciless hawk, he now pounced upon the poor, fluttering dove, who, cringing beneath his pitiless glances, and the frightful picture of guilt he was portraying, drew closer to her mother.

He said, he hoped the court would not allow itself to be influenced by the personal attractions, nor the youth and apparent artlessness of the accused; for it often happens that external graces and accomplishments, and even the appearance of innocence, are only masks that conceal the deepest inward depravity, and the wildest and most criminal of passions. Some of

the most noted criminals, of which history preserves the remembrance, have possessed all these to an eminent degree; and it will be proved that this case is worthy to be placed in the same record.

It is admitted that a murder, of the most shocking character, has been committed. A lovely and innocent child, over whom two summers had scarcely passed, has been sent, by the hand of ruthless murder, to a bloody grave. Who perpetrated the hellish deed? Who, but the prisoner at the bar, could have done it? It was killed by poison—the most unimpeachable scientific testimony assures us—by poison of a peculiar character, and that poison was found on the person of the accused. And she, when the crime was charged upon her, showed all the agitation of guilt. Innocence is firm, and calm, and strong whereas her appearance was quite the contrary.

He proceeded to say, that, as the counsel for the defense conceded the material facts, he should call no evidence to substantiate them, but would present a witness to prove that, for some reason or other, the prisoner *desired* the death of the child, notwithstanding her apparent love for it.

He made a signal to some one, and the audience and court scarcely breathed, as a lady moved out of the crowd, and stood on the witness' stand. After being sworn, she gave her testimony as follows:

Her name was JANE RICHARDSON; she resided in Boston; was on the steamer Saturday night; had seen the accused and child and strange woman in

the ladies' cabin; supposed, from appearances, that the child was Miss MORE'S, or some near relation; saw the prisoner feed it with milk once; did not see the phial nor paper containing the poisons, nor did she see anything put into the milk, after it was brought by the waiter into the cabin.

Mr. WRINGHEART here asked her to state whether she saw or heard anything which would create a suspicion in her mind that the accused had a motive or a desire to have the child destroyed. The lady hesitated, and evidently disliked to proceed, and the residue of her evidence was given with every appearance of reluctance. But, in reply to WRINGHEART'S questions, she proceeded to say, that she slept in the cabin in a berth contiguous to the prisoner and the child; heard her speak to it; could not hear distinctly all she said, but these words—“*yet after all, it is better for you to die now*”—were plainly uttered.

MARY gave a stifled cry, as those words were pronounced by the witness. She was horrified; they were nearly what she had actually said; but what an awful construction to put on them!

The testimony of this witness had plainly an effect on the crowd and court, adverse to the prisoner. It was reluctantly given, and, therefore, had more weight than if it had been offered without hesitation.

The countenances of MARY'S friends looked troubled; not that *their* faith in her innocence was in the least shaken, but they feared the effect of the testimony on the court. Mr. TRAIN, the counsel for the accused,

was not without uneasiness ; for witnesses, in behalf of the prisoner, who, he had been assured, would be there, had not yet made their appearance.

Mr. WRINGHEART having said that he should offer no more testimony at present, but claimed the privilege to introduce, at a subsequent period, such as might be deemed necessary, the prisoner's counsel proceeded to state his theory of defense. His introductory remarks were brief, touching, and eloquent. He said he should make no attempt to awaken the sympathy and pity of the court for his fair client, but should rather seek to find the means of unraveling the murderous mystery in which one innocent life had already been lost, and which placed another in circumstances of danger. His client confided in her innocence and the justice of heaven, and desired, more than any one else, the fullest investigation—feeling sure that the result of such investigation would be her complete and absolute vindication. He then went on to state all the case, from the time when Miss MORE received the anonymous note, which led her to remain one day longer in New York, to the death of the child ; commenting on each, and explaining them in a manner consistent with her innocence.

“ Now, do we not here see,” he continued, “ revealed, as plain as the light of day, traces of a plot to insnare this unoffending maiden?—that she has enemies, who, from some secret motives, have followed her with their persecutions, seeking nothing less than

her utter ruin, is certain? Have not those invisible hands, now red with murder, created these circumstances, and set this trap, to accomplish their nefarious purpose? It is admitted, by the prosecution, that a strange woman accompanied Miss MORE and the child to the steamer, and mysteriously disappeared. Is it not a reasonable conclusion that she, or some one of the conspirators, administered the poison before the accused even saw the child; and then, when she was wrapt in the sleep of innocence, placed the poison in her pocket, to fix suspicion on her? Is it asked, what motive any one could have to conceive and carry into execution such a diabolical plan? May we not ask, with still stronger emphasis, what motive could the prisoner have had to destroy that deserted child? That she loved children, to an extraordinary degree, is notorious. That, during the few hours she had the care of the victim, she became strongly attached to it is proved. What good could she derive from its death? In what way could its removal affect her interest? No; murders are not committed without powerful motives; and, in this case, there is not even the faintest shadow of one to hang a suspicion upon. Under all the circumstances, it would be far more easy to conceive almost any one else guilty of this crime, rather than the accused. True, a witness has sworn that Miss MORE uttered some words, which implied a desire for the death of the child; but the witness herself says she heard but a *part* of a sentence. Now, the words which the prisoner spoke,

and which the witness did *not* hear, would undoubtedly have conveyed a very different idea."

At this moment, the advocate was interrupted by a movement at the door, which attracted the attention of the court. The crowd parted, and a gentleman, accompanied by a female, and a young man of prepossessing appearance, entered the chamber of justice. The arrival of this party created a lively sensation throughout the assembly, and the prisoner, on looking up to see what the agitation was, uttered a cry of joy and surprise, as she saw, standing directly before her, the gentleman in black, and the woman whose mysterious disappearance had caused her so much trouble.

After a short consultation with this gentleman, the advocate informed the court that the expected witnesses were now present, and, with his leave, he would proceed with their examination. The first witness called was the young man. He was a comely youth, not far from twenty years of age, with dark complexion, large black eyes, sparkling with intelligence, and a face that would be called decidedly handsome, were its beauty not slightly marred by the nose, which was unmistakably puggish. On being sworn, he deposed as follows :

"Am prescription clerk in the drug store of RUSH-TON & CLARK, New York ; I recognize the phial and paper now shown me ; put up and sold the articles on Friday last ; they are used medicinally ; but, taken in certain quantities, are deadly poisons, producing death in from three to thirty-six hours, according to

the amount given; never sell poisons only when ordered by a physician, and as the prescription, ordering these, appeared to be in regular form, did not hesitate to put them up."

"To whom did you sell these articles? Was the purchaser a man or woman?" asked the advocate.

"A man," replied the witness; "I should think about thirty years of age."

"Can you give a further description of him?"

"His complexion was rather sallow; nose, slightly Roman; eyes, dark and restless; his moustache was thick and black."

As these were the principal points which the defense desired to have elucidated, the witness was relieved, and the woman was placed upon the stand. Her appearance was pitiful in the extreme. She seemed to be completely crushed with feelings of remorse and fear. She gave her testimony, however, without hesitation.

She said that on Friday of the previous week a gentleman, whom she had several times seen, but whose real name she did not know, called on her, and asked her to aid him in an enterprise, which, he assured her, should result in no permanent harm to any person, and that he would pay her well for it. She consented, and he gave her directions, which she, to her lasting regret, had blindly followed. She knew that some trouble was intended to the prisoner, but had no thought that it was anything serious. The child was brought to her about two hours before she took the coach, where she met, as she had expected, the accused.

It was then somewhat stupid and listless, which she thought nothing of, as the gentleman told her it had been some time ill, but was convalescent. Following his counsel, she exchanged its rich clothing for some of a poorer quality. On the boat she met the gentleman again, and received the phial and paper, and placed them, as he directed, in the pocket of the prisoner; had made it appear that the child belonged to the young lady; that she herself was a servant; left the boat at Newport, and was on the point of returning to New York, when she was arrested, and brought on here as a witness. She declined to tell what her occupation was, but solemnly affirmed that she had no knowledge of any intended crime, and had been only a blind instrument in the hands of others. When asked to describe the person who brought the child to her, she answered that she had his miniature, that he accidentally dropped when at her house; and she gave it to the advocate.

As her statement had every appearance of truth, she was released, but ordered not to leave the city, as she might be called to testify further in regard to these matters.

While the last witness was giving her testimony, a person came into the court-room, and going directly to the attorney for the state, placed in his hands a document, which he remarked was important for the prosecution. Mr. WRINGHEART opened it with eagerness, and hastily glanced over its contents. To judge by the smile of triumph which lighted up, for a

moment, his stern countenance, they must have been very gratifying to him.

Meanwhile, there was in the court one person, whom we have not yet noticed, who watched the proceedings with intense anxiety. That person was MATTHEW ORALL. He stood in an obscure corner, leaning against a column, which partially concealed him from observation. As the last two witnesses were giving their testimony, he was fearfully agitated, and gave a sigh of relief as they left the stand. But, with the recklessness of those who follow an evil destiny, he resolved to remain, and see the end; still hoping that the evidence against Miss MORE would be sufficient to send her to a higher court for trial.

The counsel for the defense, after showing that the testimony of the woman, and the clerk of RUSHTON & CLARK, completely exonerated his client, by fixing the crime on other parties, demanded her discharge, when Mr. WRINGHEART suddenly rose, and vehemently opposed the motion.

"Your honor will remember," he said, "that I claimed the privilege of putting in other evidence, if it should come to hand, and have an important bearing on the case; and I now claim that right. I hold in my hand a document which changes entirely the aspect of affairs, and fastens the crime so strongly on the prisoner, that I must move that she be fully committed to answer before the Superior Court for this atrocious murder.

"My learned brother, who has conducted the defense," he continued, "dwelt long upon the fact that

the accused had no motive for her awful crime, and, therefore, could not be guilty; and I am willing to grant that there was wanting an important link in the chain of circumstances, but that link is now found. There is evidence that the death of that child would affect, most materially, the interests of the accused and her family. This instrument is a policy of insurance on the life of a child—described herein, and named MARY LUDLOW; the amount, five thousand dollars, to be paid in the event of her death to MARY MORE, her mother, and sisters. This document was found to-day, concealed among the clothes of the murdered infant."

It is impossible to describe the first effect of this new discovery. The prisoner fell in a swoon on her mother's breast, and all her friends were struck with dismay. The gentleman in black, pale as marble, and trembling violently, supported himself on a table, near which he was standing. It was not, however, any fear he felt for MARY MORE that caused his agitation, but a new horror that suddenly started up before him. He thrust his hand into a pocket, and snatched therefrom two letters, received some days before from New York, which, in the anxiety and excitement of his mission, he had entirely forgotten. He hastily opened them. One was from Mr. BENTON, the actuary of the insurance company, where he had taken out the policy, informing him that the document had been duly executed, but had been stolen, as he suspected, by a person who had called one morning to

ask employment as a soliciting agent, and who had been left alone a short time in the office.

The other was from Mrs. DE GROVE, and ran thus :

“Come to me, without delay, my dear friend, for I am in great trouble and sorrow. Our dear little MARY has been stolen, and we can find no trace of her in the city. My grief is so great I can scarcely inform you how the disaster happened. Saturday morning the nurse took her out for a walk, and went, as she says, to Union Park, where she sat down on a bench, while our lost darling played around her. A gentleman, at this time, sauntered along up the gravel walk, and, seeing the child, patted it gently on the head. The little one seemed to be attracted to him, and played around him in perfect confidence. After a little time, he asked her name, which she gave him. The nurse says he seemed surprised, and repeated it to himself, and at length remarked, ‘I have heard that name before;’ at the same time he took a paper from his pocket, which he unfolded, and scanned for a moment, when he replaced it, remarking to himself, ‘It is, indeed, the same.’ His attentions to the nurse and child now became more assiduous, and he appeared so gentlemanly and kind, no suspicions were excited in regard to him in the mind of the woman. At length he said to the child: ‘Let us go down there,’ pointing to a fruit and candy stand, not far off, at the lower end of the park, ‘and get some oranges and candy;’ and, taking MARY by the hand, she walked off with him. The nurse, entirely unsuspecting, looked in another direction, for an instant, and when she turned to look for the child neither she nor the stranger was in sight. She went immediately to the fruit-stand, and the woman who kept it informed her that the gentleman stopped to purchase a couple of oranges, and then hurried to a coach standing near, and drove rapidly away.

This is all we know of the terrible event, and I am crushed by the affliction! Oh! do not fail to come speedily.”

After reading this letter, he stood a moment, speechless with horror. His suspicion had become a frightful certainty. “Oh! righteous Heaven,” he at length exclaimed, “how terrible are thy retribu-

tions! But, oh! why couldst thou not punish the guilty, without striking, also, the innocent?"

At this moment his eyes fell on MATTHEW ORALL. Surveying him an instant, with mingled abhorrence and pity, he turned to the judge: "I have a communication to make," he said, "which will fill the court with dismay. The insurance policy, which has just been read, so far from testifying against Miss MORE, is the key which unlocks her prison—the evidence which establishes her innocence, and brings to light the guilty. I, myself, took it out for the benefit of an estimable family, in whom I am interested. It was stolen from the insurance office, by an enemy of Miss MORE, probably with the intention of destroying it, so as to prevent its being of any benefit to her. But, by a terrible fatality, he accidentally met the hapless child, and learned that she was the person named in the instrument. Then the infernal idea came to him, that he could employ it as an instrument of vengeance against an innocent girl, and he resolved to murder the child, and make Miss MORE suffer the penalty of his crime. But," he added, after a moment's reflection, "I have something more to say, which invests with unexampled horror the offense, which is terrible enough, viewed in its present aspects. There were two parties to this crime, MATTHEW ORALL and MAY MILLWOOD, and the murdered *Mary Ludlow was their own daughter!*"

At this dreadful revelation, so unexpected and sudden, the whole assembly was paralyzed with amaze-

ment. ORALL stood like one in a dream, unconscious, apparently, of anything around him, and made no resistance when the officers bore him away to prison.

After the agitation had somewhat subsided, the court gave Miss MORE an honorable discharge, expressing the warmest sympathy for her trials, and fervently wishing her a bright, prosperous, and happy future. After receiving the congratulations of her acquaintance, and others who had become interested in her, she left the room with her friends. As it was too late in the day for them to return home, they went to a hotel, where they decided to remain till Monday. Although heartily rejoiced at her deliverance, neither MARY nor her friends could shake off the gloom that oppressed them, when they thought of Miss MILLWOOD and ORALL, and the awful fate they had brought upon themselves. During the evening, the gentleman in black called upon them, and, after conversing with MARY and her mother some time in a low tone, departed.

At a late hour that night, a carriage, containing three persons, left the city by the Chelsea ferry, and drove off rapidly toward Oceanville.

THE END OF THE PATH.

"It ceased—and then she thought to speak;
Then burst her voice in one long shriek,
And to the earth she fell like stone,
Or statue from its base o'erthrown.
But yet she lived, and all too soon
Recovered from that death-like swoon—
But scarce to reason: every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense.
The past, a blank—the future, black;
With glimpses of a dreary track,
Like lightning in the desert path,
When midnight storms are mustering wrath."

BYRON.

CHAPTER XVI.



UNDAY morning arose on the little village of Lynnville, in quiet serenity and glory. The ocean rolled softly and musically on its sunny shore.

The woods, stirred gently by the west wind, were melodious with song, and redolent of flowers; and the hills and rocks appeared to repose in a joyful rest. The blessed Sabbath seemed to have fallen on both nature and man, with a soothing power. "Rest, tormenting cares and wild ambitions! rest, worldly longings and stormy passions! rest, anxious hearts and throbbing breasts rest, ye daughters of grief, and sons of sorrow! for it is God's holy day—the day for high aspirations and pious resolves—for penitence and prayer, reform and worship." Thus the sky, and the sea, and the woods, and the hills, seemed to speak to man; calling his thoughts and affections away from earth, and bearing them up to heaven; lifting his soul from the contemplation of the transient and mortal, to the enduring, the immortal, the infinite.

Early in the forenoon, a lady was seen to come out of an ancient and venerable-looking mansion, and

walk leisurely toward the woods. She followed a path which led up a hill of considerable height, and, reaching the most elevated point, sat down on a moss-grown rock. The hill was covered with wild roses, and the sweet eglantine, and the prospect from its summit was enchanting in the highest degree. The lady gazed upon the fair panorama with evident pleasure. Her countenance was animated, and radiant with an expression of gratified ambition and pleasing anticipation. This person was MAY MILLWOOD. She had not heard, of course, of the extraordinary turn events had taken in Boston, and in what a fearful position they had placed her, and could not hear, in any ordinary way, until Monday. Little did she dream, therefore, what an earthquake was slumbering at her feet; what lightnings were gathering in that peaceful sky, to strike her with their blasting bolts!

It was, indeed, a far more pleasant dream that occupied her thoughts that morning. She had gained her end. MORLEY had consented to wed her, at eventide, and the marriage was to take place in the village chapel. It is needless to inquire, now, what had induced MORLEY to change his determination not to be married until his birthday; perhaps it was MAY's importunity—perhaps he could not himself explain it, if he tried. But his determination had changed, and he was to be married that night. The rumor of this event had spread on Saturday through the village, and the young people were all alive with

anticipation. MAY was wrapt in a delicious dream; her cheeks rivaled the roses which bloomed around her; her heart bounded with joy, and she was just saying to herself, "Now I have reached the goal of—" when a voice seemed to fall from the skies on her startled ears, striking her motionless as a statue, and changing the roses on her cheeks to ashes: "*May Millwood! you have reached the goal—the end of the path—the black abyss yawns at your feet!*"

Amazed, the girl looked timidly around, but could see nothing but the old mossy rocks, and waving trees, and nodding flowers. But her dream and its bright visions had vanished; and after remaining some time, as if considering her position, she rose from her seat, and, pale and trembling, returned to the house.

The holy Sabbath rolled away, and the sunset glory poured its floods of radiance on the ocean; calling to mind the time when the Son of Righteousness himself walked on the Galilean sea, leaving behind him there, and on the vast heaving ocean of human life, to remain and increase forever, the splendors of immortal truth.

The evening shadows grew longer and longer, wider and wider, until, at last, they infolded sea, and sky, and all things in their dusky embrace.

The chapel was already filled to overflowing, and the minister was at his desk, when EDWIN MORLEY and MAY MILLWOOD, supported by a groomsman and bridesmaid, entered, and stood before the pulpit. MAY was dressed simply, and with good taste, in

spotless white, and her hair was ornamented with a wreath of white roses. Although she had recovered from the shock of the morning, and seemed to be borne up by a strong will, she betrayed considerable nervous anxiety, and perceptibly trembled.

The minister had proceeded through the opening ceremony, and was about to speak the irrevocable words, which would make the couple legally one, when a voice, deep and solemn, and stern as death, rolled through the chapel: "*May! behold the end; thy path is traversed—behold, now, the opening gulf! Edwin Morley will not wed with a murderess, and Millwood's hands are red with the blood of her murdered child, Mary Ludlow!*" At the same time, a stranger stepped forth from the crowd, and said: "In the name of the law, I arrest the person named **MAY MILLWOOD**, on the charge of murder!"

It would be impossible to describe the consternation and horror that were painted on the countenances of the persons assembled there, at this strange termination of a marriage scene. **MAY** gave one long, wild shriek, "O GOD! my child!" and fell insensible into the arms of the bridesmaid. It was long before she recovered, and even then she could not clearly comprehend what had taken place. She stared wildly around, crying, "my child! my child!—murdered, murdered, murdered!" Ever repeating these words, she was placed by the officer in a carriage, and taken away.

There was no service in the chapel at Lynnville that

night, and with sad hearts the congregation dispersed to meditate on the tragical events that had occurred.

MORLEY was entirely stupefied by these events, and wandered out, scarcely knowing whither he went. With his head drooping on his breast, he walked slowly up the path which was traversed by MAY MILLWOOD in the morning, and seated himself on the same stone. His senses were so benumbed that he did not notice that he was followed; nor was he conscious that any person was near, until a light touch on his arm, and a sweet voice, softly speaking his name, recalled him to himself. Quickly raising his head, what was his astonishment on seeing the smiling, yet sad and tearful face of MARY MORE wearing the old loving look, turned toward his.

"MARY MORE *here!*" he cried, starting up and staring wildly upon her.

"Yes," said the fair girl; "I have heard all, and have come to forgive you. By the artful management of the misguided MILLWOOD, our letters were intercepted and destroyed, and we were made to believe each other false. That good gentleman in black has explained everything to me."

"She speaks truly, EDWIN MORLEY," said a voice near them; and a moment after Captain THORNBURY stood before them. Both MORLEY and MARY looked at each other and Captain THORNBURY with amazement.

"Captain THORNBURY *here!*" they both cried at the same time; "we thought you were far, far away, in the wilds of the West. When did you return?"

"Last evening," he replied; "just in time to see a dark mystery unraveled, and two lovers, so long estranged, once more happily united."

MARY, who had been looking earnestly down the hill, now said, "Where can the gentleman in black be? I left him at the foot of the hill, and he said he would join us directly."

"You will never see that gentleman again," replied Captain THORNBURY; "he has accomplished his mission, and departed, never to return."

"It is very strange," MARY resumed; "I cannot understand it." But a new idea seemed suddenly to flash upon her mind, and, casting on the Captain a look of intelligence, she was about to speak, when he placed his finger on his lips, and said, with a smile, "Meddle not, young lady, with the secrets of the gentleman in black." And added, "But come, my young friends; it is getting late. MORLEY, you will conduct Miss MORE to the house of her friend, where she is to remain till Monday." He bade them "good-night," and departed.

For some days, only three topics occupied the minds of the people of Oceanville and Lynnville—the first of which was MAY MILLWOOD and her strange history. Her arrest for the murder of a child was sufficiently astonishing, but that that child should be hers and ORALL'S, filled them with amazement; they had never dreamed of such a scandal. The second, was Captain THORNBURY'S sudden return; and the third, was the mysterious disappearance of the

gentleman in black. It was considered a remarkable fact that the strange gentleman should have made his appearance simultaneously with the departure of THORNBURY for the West, and disappeared the moment he returned. They wondered much who he was, whence he came, and whither he went; but their conjectures amounted to nothing. Only one thing they knew—he had vanished, and they never beheld him again.

The examination of ORALL and MAY took place on Tuesday. The latter was discharged; for, although the terrible fate of her child was the result of her wicked suggestions, it did not appear that she ever contemplated so awful a crime as murder, and particularly the murder of her own daughter, of whose existence even she had no certain knowledge. Owing to her peculiar condition when the child appeared to die, and was removed from her, she only had a vague idea that it was dead, and sometimes thought that it yet lived. Yet she remembered distinctly its sweet little face, and its soft eyes, and loving smiles.

ORALL, however, was fully committed for trial.

After her discharge, MAY returned home; but she was no longer the same. She had, indeed, found the end of her path. Shunned by all, she never again mingled with society. Her mind appeared to be unsettled, her eyes wore a wild and weary look, and she often fell into fits of musing and melancholy. She fancied that her murdered child was constantly following her. Of what had belonged to little MARY,

she only retained a lock of hair, and a small blanket, neatly trimmed with white satin, that had often enfolded the lovely form, and which she had sacredly kept concealed at the bottom of her trunk. These she would now frequently bring out, and gaze upon them for hours in silence. Sometimes she would walk by the sea, or in the most secluded parts of the woods, saying ever to herself: "*Alone! alone! You must walk the path of life alone!*"

MARY MORE and EDWIN MORLEY grew more and more in love every day. MORLEY frankly confessed his weakness in yielding to the fascinations of MAY MILLWOOD, and was generously forgiven by MARY. After a few months, they were married. Mrs. MORLEY ever preserved a grateful remembrance of those friends who were so faithful in her days of trial, and the reader may be assured that she never could forget, nor be induced to part with, "*The Signet of King Solomon,*" that powerful talisman which had brought her safely through so many dangers.

EPILOGUE.

THE SIN BLOTTED OUT.

“There is joy in heaven!

There is joy in heaven!

When the sheep that went astray

Turns again to virtue's way;

When the soul, to good subdued,

Sobs its prayer of gratitude.

Then is there joy in heaven!”

CHAPTER XVII.



T was the twenty-fourth of June—the day sacred in all time, since the Advent, to the memory of St. John the Baptist, the first herald of the New Dispensation, and the patron Saint of the mysteries of Solomon and Hiram. The Knights

of the Temple were again assembled to celebrate their favorite anniversary, to offer their hospitalities to pilgrims from afar, and review the condition of that Brotherhood which, in all ages, has been the most faithful defender of the Christian religion, the shield of innocence, the protector of the weak, and the nursery of political and religious freedom.

After the encampment was organized, the Grand Commander said :

“Senior Warden, are there any pilgrims or penitents at our gates, who have come to crave our hospitality, or to reclaim their rights?”

“There is one without,” replied the Warden, “both a pilgrim and a penitent, who has traveled ‘for a year and a day,’ protecting the defenseless, helping the poor, visiting the sick, defending the widow and orphan, and honoring our Order by illustrious virtues. He now returns, to resume his place in our councils, and find repose under the banner of the Temple.”

“Let him enter, then, in the name of God.”

The door opened, and a person, covered with the cloak of a pilgrim, and holding in his hand a staff, entered, and, proceeding to the altar, knelt for a few moments in silent prayer; at the same time an organ gave forth a strain, at first sad and melancholy, like the wail of remorse and penitence, and then pealing out like the voice of trumpets, or the shout of victorious armies. As the organ tones died away, all the Knights raised their voices in a solemn chant.

“There is joy in heaven! There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.”

The pilgrim at the altar now rose, and, laying

aside his cloak and staff, approached the Grand Commander, and bowed respectfully before him.

"Pilgrim," said the chief, "you have made the tour of penance and of warfare, and for a year and a day have traversed the labyrinths of sorrow, and labor, and tears. You went out, bending under the cypress and willow; you return, crowned with the myrtle and laurel. In humility, you accepted the doom pronounced by the Commandery, and faithfully have you achieved the severe labors which we required at your hands. The joyful tears of the wretched, the forlorn—of widows and orphans, and of those who had none to help, form a diadem for your brow, more brilliant than an emperor's jeweled crown, and bear witness to your fidelity and knightly truth and valor. By sacred labors you have expiated your fault, and to-day your sin and its memory are blotted out forever.

"Take notice, Sir Knights, and let the heralds proclaim it to east, west, north, and south—the name of Sir JOHN THORNBURY is erased from the book of doom, and inscribed in golden letters on the column of honor and renown.

"Sir JOHN, behold your sword, now restored to you with our confidence, and love, and profound regard. We know you will wear it with honor, and ever wield it in defense of innocent virgins, destitute widows, helpless orphans, and the faith of CHRIST.

"Receive, also, this scarf, and the other decorations of your Order, and consider yourself reestablished in all the rights and exalted privileges of knighthood.

"Sir Knights, the example of Sir JOHN THORNBURY is worthy of imitation. Let us learn from his history that, although *penitence, and labor, and charity will*

not open to us again the temple of Innocence, they will bring us, with honor, to the temple of Virtue.

“And while you strive, as faithful Knights, for the establishment of order, and justice, and truth in the earth, forget not the sacred ties which bind you to each other. If you see a Brother bending under the cross of adversity and disappointment, look not idly on, neither pass by on the other side; but fly to his relief. If he be deceived, tell him the truth; if he be calumniated, vindicate his cause; for, although, in some instances, he may have erred, still recollect that indiscretion in him should never destroy humanity in you.

“Finally, let us remember that *memento mori* is written on all mundane things. The whole system of worlds is subject to change and decay. The time of our warfare on earth is short; and how numerous the foes, within and without, we have yet to subdue, before we can lay aside our armor, and rest from our labors! Let us be vigilant, then, and diligent; for, before the holy-day of St. JOHN shall dawn upon us again, some of us may have fallen upon the battle-field of life, and the laughing spring and rosy summer will come, only to scatter flowers upon our grave. Watch, therefore, labor, and pray.

“Sir Warden, what is the hour?”

“The end of day.”

“What remains to be done?”

“To practice virtue, flee from vice, and remain in silence.”

“Since there remains nothing to do but to practice virtue, and flee from vice, let us enter again into silence, that the will of GOD may be accomplished.”