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THE PETTIBONE NAME

BY MARGARET SIDNEY.

AFTER THE FRESHET

BY EDWARD A RAND.

GRANDMOTHER NORMANDY

BY AUTHOR OF "SILENT TOM."

MY GIRLS

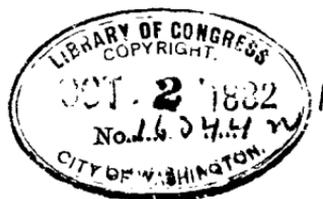
BY LIDA A. CHURCHILL.

D LOTHROP AND COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS.

MY GIRLS

✓ BY
LIDA A. CHURCHILL

“ I count myself in nothing else so happy,
As in a soul remembering my good friends ”



BOSTON
D. LOTHROP AND COMPANY
32 FRANKLIN STREET

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TO MY MOTHER,
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY HER
LOVING DAUGHTER.

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MY GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

A CONSULTATION.

“No man can order his life, for it comes flowing over him from behind. / But if it lay before us, and we could watch its current approaching from a long distance, what could we do with it before it had reached the now?—GEORGE MACDONALD.

ONLY a little week! Seven short days to stay in our offices! O, girls!”

It was between the hours of six and seven. Nearly all the operators had gone to tea but four girls; Grace Farwell, Cecil Emerson, Carmen Moore and Natalie Ainslie, had remained in their offices to have “a good talk.” They had chosen that time because then they were less liable to be interrupted by messages passing over the wire, and would have fewer listeners. The noon train had brought them each a letter, written by the superintendent of

the railroad on which their offices were situated, and each letter had told the same story; namely: that after September 25th, 18—, the services of the recipient would be no longer required by the S. & M. Railroad Company.

“I am very sorry,” wrote the kind-hearted superintendent to each, “to be obliged to send you such news, and I regret that I was not able to inform you ere this of the proposed discontinuance of your office. The road is heavily in debt, and, as the double track is now completed, rendering the running of trains by telegraphic orders unnecessary, it is thought advisable to lessen the expenses of the company by dispensing with the services of as many of its employés as possible. It was not decided until yesterday—when the directors’ monthly meeting was held—what offices would be closed.”

The superintendent’s decision was quickly known and spoken of among the operators along the line, and so each of our girls soon learned that a like misfortune to her own had come to her three friends. These girls, generous, impulsive Grace, proud, brave Cecil, patient, tender Carmen, and sensitive, well-

meaning Natalie, had a sincere respect and much affection for each other. Each felt a desire to say some sympathetic word to and receive the comfort she might safely look for from the others; and for this reason, the consultation I have alluded to was planned.

It was Grace who wrote the words at the beginning of the chapter.

"That wail goes straight to my heart," clicked some one briskly in reply.

"Is that you, Cecil?" questioned Natalie.

"The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever," responded Cecil. "Carmen, report yourself."

"Present," pounded out Carmen, and then added, "isn't it nice we can have this little talk together? And I wonder if Mr. Horton wrote you all as kind a letter as he did me."

"Of course he did," wrote Grace, running her words very much together in her eagerness to praise a favorite. "He's the best man in the world. One might talk of his virtues all night and not do him justice."

"Assuredly," said Natalie; "but I beg you will 'season your admiration for a while,' while I ask Cecil the Lion-hearted if she has

thought of any thing by which four lone female women can earn an honest living without taking a book agency."

"Or a husband," put in Grace.

"Cecil, I charge thee, speak!" commanded Carmen.

"Stand and unfold yourself!" clattered Grace, not to be outdone in the Shakespearean line.

"Courage and comfort. All shall yet go well," quoted Cecil.

"Hear! hear!" jumbled out Natalie, enthusiastically waving her hand at the sounder, as though it was a rather sleepy audience that needed rousing.

"Well, girls, putting joking aside," said Cecil, "I have been thinking hard this afternoon, and have come to the conclusion that if we are ever going to be any thing *but* telegraph operators, it is time we" —

"Made an effort," interposed Carmen. "Pray excuse me, and go ahead."

"Yes, an earnest effort," Cecil went on seriously. "Grace, you feel that you are fitted for reading in public, and would prefer it to any other employment. You, Nattie, long to make yourself a name in the literary world. I sup-

pose Carmen has her dreams, but she has not spoken of them to me, and I cannot say what she wishes to do or be. As for me, I am resolved that henceforth I will make it the chief object of my life to improve and cultivate my voice, and oblige it in part, at least, to support me at present, and yield me a grand maintenance by and by. Why should not the rest of you take the same resolution in regard to the talents you feel that you possess?"

"But," said Grace, "it might take us a long time to get started. Would it not be well to get telegraph offices if possible in the city, and still work along with what we want to do? We should feel safe then, you know."

"Yes," Cecil answered; "and that feeling of safety is just the rock on which our barks would founder, I'm afraid. When the mother-bird wishes to teach her young ones to fly, she does not coax them to soar just a little way directly over the nest, so if they don't fly they will fall back into it. That would give them too safe a feeling altogether. She just tumbles them out, and they know they must fly or do something far less agreeable—fall to the ground. Please don't understand that I mean we must be driven

into trying to make what we hope for come to us. I simply wish you to know that I think a person is far less likely to put forth his strongest energies to gain an object while he is comfortable without it."

"Cecil means," answered Grace, "that we should treat ourselves on the principle that surgeons do their patients: that it is well that they should suffer for a time, that it may be well with them afterwards. Well, I am quite ready to do any thing that will give me supreme success in the end. I think nothing short of that would satisfy any of us."

"Young ladies," said Natalie, "I congratulate you upon having given this nail a good square whack on the head, and I join hands with you most heartily, and am all eagerness to commence my new life. What says Carmen?"

"Just this," answered Carmen. "I am well satisfied with my present work, and shall try to get another office when this is closed. I am nothing but a very commonplace sort of a person, with no ambitious yearnings, you see. You dear, brave girls will always have my sympathy; but it will be glory enough for me to be spoken of as the friend of the talented reader Miss F., the

musical prodigy Miss E., and the brilliant authoress Miss A."

"Carmen has no nonsense about her, girls," said Cecil.

"O, girls," said Grace, "let's all go to New York and set up housekeeping together. That will be jolly!"

"Just what I was thinking of. Won't that be splendid!" rattled Carmen.

"An idea worthy of your fertile brain," commented Cecil. "I say a fervent amen to it."

"I wish I had somebody here to hug, to express my delight," wrote Natalie; "but as I haven't, I have beckoned for a boy on the platform to come in, and I'm going to give him five cents, which proceeding you will all acknowledge is, under the circumstances, very extravagant. I shall so like to be with you all!"

"That's very *Nat-ural*," replied Cecil, referring to the last remark of Natalie, knowing that young lady's aversion to solitude.

Then followed a few minutes' earnest conversation, by means of which a plan of operations was adopted, and then the subject dismissed, as the usual evening business hour had arrived,

and only for a few minutes at a time could they hope to hold the wire longer.

Please do not expect a lengthy description of these girls, reader. I am no interesting pen painter, and in failing to give such a description, spare you some tiresome reading, as well as myself some tiresome writing.

Imagine Grace and Carmen as tall, and rather slight, the former with almost black hair, and dark-brown eyes; a half-wayward, half-sweet, wholly interesting expression of countenance. The latter with light-brown hair, blue eyes, a face pale, pure, half-sad, and only handsome when transfigured by her wonderful smile. Cecil and Natalie rather short, and a little inclined to chubbiness. Cecil a trifle the taller of the two, with bright, soft, beautiful hair, light hazel eyes, and a spirited, mobile face. Natalie with brown hair with a reddish tinge, gray eyes in which a humorous twinkle often showed itself, and a plain, sober-looking face.

They each felt, these four, that their two lives, the old and the new, had met. The one looking so peaceful and pleasant when gazed back upon, was ebbing away, away. The other, which to three of them at least, must be for

a time full of difficulties, abounding in paths exceedingly steep for those unused to them, was rising, rising. But Ambition held high her flaming beacon. Aspirations which had slept—only slept, not died—were fully aroused, and smiling hope whispered of gloriously successful to-morrows beyond the toiling to-days. Light words came sometimes from Carmen's lips, but much more seldom and far less naturally than from those of my other girls. But none of them were less brave and strong because of such words. True souls can afford to be merry. God, looking into their hearts, knew them to be earnest enough.

When the good-nights were said, calm, trustful Carmen turned away from her desk, saying softly: “‘*He* knoweth the ways that we take.’”

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE GLANCES.

I saw through all familiar things
The romance underlying ;
The joys and griefs that plume the wings
Of Fancy skyward flying.

— WHITTIER.

IN one of the many villages which are scattered along the banks of the Blackstone River, Grace Farwell spent her childhood, and some years of her early womanhood. Her mother dying when Grace, was but a mere child, her father married his wife's sister ; and exceedingly well did this noble woman fill the place she had consented to occupy.

I think the joy of the angel mother must have been greater for knowing her husband and little ones were cared for so carefully.

Of the large cotton mill which drew so many laborers to the place in which he lived, John

Farwell was, for a good number of years, superintendent. He hoped to amass a fortune sufficiently large to allow him in the future to go into some paying business, and doubtless would have seen his hopes realized, had he contrived well.

But the steady confinement, together with the hot, oily, close atmosphere of the mill, slowly but surely undermined his health, and sadly lacking in bodily strength, he retired from active life with means adequate only to keep himself and wife in comfort during their possible lives. Three children were his, Henry, Albert and Grace. For his sons, gay, careless fellows, employed in the mill of which he so long had charge, he entertained a warm, fatherly feeling; but Grace was the idol of his heart. For her more than for any other, he wanted wealth, and when it was known that she must go away to earn what he could not give her, he grieved long and sorely, and felt like cursing fate. But Grace, with her democratic ideas and sound sense, thought it rather a fine thing for a girl to earn her own living, and rejoiced in her ability to do so. She learned telegraphy, and, as about the time her study of it was

finished several new offices were opened by the S. & M. Railroad Company, she applied for and obtained one of them.

But there was one way above all others in which Grace Farwell wished to obtain a livelihood; this was by becoming a public reader.

She dreamed of and hoped for this from the time she listened to a popular reader whom her father took her to the city nearest her home to hear.

But at that time Mr. Farwell's health had begun to fail, and his face to cloud with anxiety when the future was mentioned; so his daughter, although she was longing to do so, spoke no word about taking lessons in elocution, knowing it would cost more than he could well afford to expend for her. But she resolved to earn money to pay for the coveted instruction; and when she became an operator, nearly all her first year's salary, with the exception of the money paid for board, was used for this purpose.

Her teacher found her an apt pupil. She was naturally a good reader, and her soul was in her work while she studied and practised. Her instructor was highly pleased with her

progress, and in a few months from the time her lessons began, informed her she was capable of going forth as a public reader. But she did not know how to begin the work she was so anxious to perform, and for a time took no steps towards gratifying her most earnest desire; but the fact that her office was soon to be closed, and Cecil Emerson's words, caused her to determine to begin at once to make any effort necessary to give her the position she so longed for, and was so willing to bear many hardships to gain.

“Look, little daughter! That is papa smiling at us; wave your hand at him, darling.”

A tiny hand was fluttered vigorously, and a childish shout went up, as, among the blue-coated “boys” marching along the streets of a Rhode Island city, baby Cecil recognized her father.

Papa Emerson marched on, smiling as long as possible on his wife and wee girl; but before he lost sight of them, the hand that had waved was still, and its owner stood perfectly motionless, her countenance beaming with delight. Until nothing of the music at the head of the

out-going regiment but faint drum-beats could be heard by her, did Cecil cease to listen. At last she asked, looking into her mother's face :

“Mamma, will papa hear the pretty noise every day ?”

“Yes, dear, I dare say he will,” replied the mother, drawing her little one very close and fondly kissing her.

“Then Cecil wants to go with papa,” said the child. “She wants to hear the pretty noise every day too. She loves it *dearly*.”

When she had quite outgrown baby dresses, and misses' garments were put aside for womanly waists and long skirts — when Mr. Emerson was at home again, handling the plane and saw of the carpenter, instead of the musket and bayonet of the soldier, Cecil had not outgrown or forgotten her love for “pretty noises.” She had learned to know them as music now, and to feel for them a glowing, soul-stirring love amounting to a strong passion. Her father who was interested in and knew something of music, taught her to read notes, and considerable about singing. Over the cradle of the brother who came to take her place as baby of the family, she would warble the strangest, sweetest airs,

which she composed as she sang. As she grew older she sang in the concerts her Sabbath-school sometimes gave, and to her mates at school; and her voice began to be commented upon and praised. Later she sang in the choir of the Church she attended; but the Church was poor, and none of its singers were paid for their services. I do not know when the idea of becoming a public concert singer first came to Cecil. I only know that it came to be brooded over and cherished until it seemed to her that life would hardly be worth the living unless the longing of her heart was satisfied.

“It is not the money I should earn,” she said to me once when she vouchsafed me a few words on a subject that was too near her heart for her to speak often or lightly of it — “although I do not pretend to think wealth a thing to despise — that I crave so much, nor yet to be spoken of as being among the noted ones of our land, although fame is sweet; but a chance to *sing out* the feelings within me to people who would understand me.”

But the Emersons had no gold with which to pave their daughter's way to success, neither did they claim any influential musical friends.

Even the price of the piano which she so longed for must be withholden, for five children younger than Cecil, had come to be her brothers and sister, and the father's hardly-earned dollars did not long remain with him, but found their way into sundry money tills, to be represented in the Emerson family by various articles of food, and the wherewithal to clothe many bodies.

"I will earn money for myself," Cecil said, while she was yet younger by several years than most girls when they leave home. Knowing that she must surely do this if she had more than would suffice for her barest necessities, her parents made no objection to her learning telegraphy, thinking since she must have some work away from home, this was as good as any in which she could engage. And so she became after four months' study in an institute near home, where telegraphy was taught, manager of one of the new offices opened by the S. & M. Railroad Company.

Most families have their one great sorrow, and the Emersons had theirs. Among others who went to the station to see the regiment in which James Emerson served, off, was a

dark, handsome boy, holding fast to the hand of a tall friend who had kindly volunteered to take him to see papa aboard the train.

“Good-by, Ross, good-by!” said Mr. Emerson with husky voice and moist eyes as he stepped on the rear platform of the already moving train; “God bless my son!”

It is strange that one surrounded with such home love and care as was Ross Emerson, should have so easily learned to go aside into the labyrinths of sin. After leaving school, which he did at seventeen, he was employed as clerk in a book publishing house in his home city. He was fond of reading and study, and found many hours, putting the odds and ends of the days together, in which to devote himself to books. It is probable, had he continued steady and industrious, that he would have risen to a high position in the house; for he was intelligent, active, and quick to see what was required of him.

Among his brother clerks was one named Charles Morse. This young man had a good salary, which he spent for the most part in aristocratic drinking saloons and fashionable gambling dens.

Finding Ross Emerson with his handsome face and engaging manner, very attractive he set about making himself agreeable to him also, and held out temptations which Ross, with his pleasure-loving disposition, could not resist; and soon the face of the boy-clerk came to be known to the frequenters of the vice-haunted places of the city, and its owner to be looked upon as one of themselves. The commands of his father, the tears of his mother, the reproaches and entreaties of his sister, proved powerless to draw him from the eddying, swirling stream of sin that had engulfed him, and he was borne rapidly down with its polluting current.

At last, both his own and his companion's habits becoming intolerable, their employer discharged them. Soon after this, having been engaged with others in some street brawl from which mischief resulted, fearing they might be arrested and imprisoned, they stealthily left the city; and, when my story opens, four years had gone by since the departure of their wayward son and brother, and no word had come to tell the Emersons aught of him. They had not sought to bring him back, thinking he

would probably be no worse away than he had been at home.

And now when his name was mentioned, which was not often, James Emerson's face took on a grave, stern look, and the expression of pain in his wife's eyes grew deeper; but away down in the disappointed, outraged father-heart was a warm feeling for the erring boy, and over her first-born his mother yearned with a tenderness such as mothers alone can feel. And Cecil was far from forgetting or ceasing to care for her brother. To see him reclaimed was one of the strongest wishes of her heart. With a nature too buoyant and hopeful to allow her to become gloomy or misanthropical, "too proud to ask or wish the sympathy of the world in any sorrow or misfortune," she went on bravely, and often even merrily, with her work.

She had long been dissatisfied with her advancement in the world of music, and in an hour from the time she had learned that her office was to be closed, had made the decision of which we have already read.

"What, of all things, would you like most to do?" I once asked of Natalie Ainslie.

"To write a book that would do good and

be successful," was the ready and quick answer.

From a child she had been composing stories. She told them to her kitten, the chickens, the frogs in the pond a short distance from her home, and to imaginary listeners. Later, but before she knew a rule in grammar, or could be quite sure all her words were spelt correctly, she wrote tales and read them to her schoolmates. And later still, the idea of writing stories for publication came to her, and of the many she wrote and sent away, a few came back to her in printed form, making her heart thrill with a realization of what might be in the by and by of her life.

But Nattie's progress was very slow. She knew no one in literary circles to whom she could apply for help, and must fight on single-handed.

Nattie could remember indistinctly, a kind-faced man who used to take her on his knees, and whom she was taught to think of as her father. He died long ago, and she, together with the rest of her family, had learned what real poverty is.

But none of the Ainslies were given to sitting down morbidly and bewailing their hard lot. The mother and those of her children who

were old enough to do so, worked at any thing honorable which came in their way, or could be had to do by looking for it, to get money for their own needs and those of the others. There were a garden and a cow, and with these and the pay for the labor, actual want was kept away.

As the children—there were five girls and two boys—grew into women and men, all but Natalie, the youngest of the seven, married and settled in comfortable homes in the old Pine Tree State where they had always lived, Mrs. Ainslie having rooms in the house were one of the daughters resided with her family, and all the children contributing towards her comfortable support.

Nattie was called the “odd one” of the family, and she deserved the name; her tastes being very unlike that of its other members.

“It would be dreadful to me,” I heard her say once, “to settle down to such lives as my brothers and sisters have chosen, and be and do just what anybody else might become or accomplish.”
“a whole world.”

The world of letters was an enchanted region to her, and with all her brain, heart and strength

was she willing to labor to effect an entrance to it.⁴⁾

But her unknown pen would not give her the livelihood she must earn for herself, and so she learned telegraphy. Through the influence of a friend employed by the S. & M. railroad, she obtained a situation on that line.

She had been writing and sending away stories during the three years she had been in a telegraph office, and of late fewer of them had come back to her in manuscript, and more in print; and she took courage accordingly; and when the subject of going to New York was broached, she was favorably impressed with it, as many of the publishers who had from time to time accepted her contributions, were there. And then the idea of being with "the girls" was a delightful one to her, who being two hundred miles away from her relatives, and in a village where she had but little congenial society, had suffered much from loneliness.

I know less of Carmen Moore's past than of that of my other girls; but I am certain her tender feet were called upon to walk in stony places, her childish heart to bear trials that older ones might well have shrunk from. Had she been asked, like the mother in Mrs.

Piatt's beautiful poem, to say how many graves were in the world, she might have answered like that mother, that surely there were two. ^(1.)
The graves of father and mother, who died ²
within a few months of each other, when Carmen was about eight years old, leaving three daughters.

The eldest of these daughters was married and lived in one of the Eastern States. When her father's home was broken up, she took the second daughter home with her, and Carmen went to live with an uncle in one of the Middle States.

You may have read Mrs. Whitney's *Hitherto*. Carmen was wont to say that her uncle's wife was very like the grim, austere, but really kind-hearted woman with whom Anstiss Dolbeare spent her childhood.

Very dull and gray, almost utterly devoid of the brightness which usually makes childhood a time to be remembered with joy, must have been the poor child's life. Her uncle would have educated her for a teacher, but she began early to feel the bitterness of dependence, and begged to be allowed to learn telegraphy, that she might soon be able to support herself.

Her request was granted, and so diligently did she apply herself to her task, that in a few months from the time she entered the institute where she was taught, she was competent to take charge of an office. But an office for her to take charge of was not easily found; and while waiting and looking for one she did a number of kinds of work. What the work was cannot matter. I only know it was honest, but not congenial.

She grew sick of her life, and longed to lay it down. Yes, even had times of wondering if it was very dreadful under any circumstances, to put an end to one's earthly days, and hours when a wish to do this grew into a determination. But she could never quite bring herself to arrange the details of so ghastly a plan, and so it was never carried out.

How, from the sorely-tempted, bitterly-tried, suffering child, the calm, trusting, beautiful Carmen of my story grew, I cannot say. But surely the years that have intervened between the time when our Saviour astonished a world by his wondrous works, and our to-day, have not taken away God's power to perform marvellous things.

Hearing through a gentleman who had interested himself in her, that on the S. & M. Railroad several new offices were to be opened, she made an effort which was successful, to obtain one of them.

The managers of the four new offices finding that the operators already at work in old offices along the line on which they were now employed, seemed to consider them rather insignificant and worth but little notice, became all the more readily friends to each other, and after a time this friendship ripened into affection. When it was decided their offices could be dispensed with, and would be closed, they counted it no small blessing that they could go away and commence their new lives together.

CHAPTER III.

A START IN HOUSEKEEPING.

Present mirth has present laughter,
 "What's to come is still unsure."

—SHAKESPEARE.

YES, I think this will do very well," said Grace—rather patronizingly, it must be confessed—to the red-faced woman who had brought my girls to look at the "flat" whose advantages had been set forth in the *Times* under the heading "To let." "This paper," glancing at the wall, and then looking at the other girls, "is rather old-fashioned, but we can replace at our own expense, with little cost."

There had been a little whispered conference in a sleeping-room which opened out of the large sitting-room in which they now stood, and all four girls had enthusiastically voted that they should secure this suite of rooms, as all

were agreed that they were "perfectly splendid and just what they needed;" but Grace, who was acting as spokesman—I mean spokeswoman, critical reader—for the party, evidently thought would-be landladies, like would-be husbands, should be treated with becoming coolness, and so had signified her approval of the apartments in the words quoted at the head of this chapter.

"By the way," she added suddenly, as though this was quite an unimportant matter, but must be brought up for form's sake, "I believe you have not mentioned your price for the rooms."

"Well," replied the lady in a reflective tone, as though she had never let the rooms, and really did not know what it would be right to ask for them, when to tell the truth about the matter, she had rented them for the last ten years and always at the same price, "I think, seein' there is a nice sittin'-room and kitchen, and two big bedrooms with clo's-presses in both of 'em, I will call the price thirty-five dollars a month. That's cheap, for the furniture is good 'n this carpet's most bran new."

A look of dismay slowly spread itself over Grace's face; Carmen turned to the window

to hide a smile ; Nattie with knitted forehead dug the toe of her boot into the "most bran new" carpet, and Cecil quoted under her breath :

Oft expectation fails ; and most often then
Where most it promises.

But Grace was equal to the occasion. Turning to her three friends, she said :

"It isn't best to be too hasty in our selection, girls. I think we had better look at the other rooms we saw advertised, before deciding about these. What do you say?"

"Yes ; let's look at the others by all means," said Cecil, with as much warmth in her tones as though she quite disapproved of these.

"It seems best to me," replied Nattie, buttoning her gloves, and looking now as serene as though she had been secretly hoping affairs would take this turn.

Carmen said simply, "I am ready to go," and started towards the door.

It had previously been determined that they *must not* pay over twenty dollars a month.

"Up-stairs and down-stairs and in the lady's chamber," sang Cecil, springing down-stairs two steps at a time.

"This business strikes me as being rather flat," said Nattie, picking herself up from the hall floor to which she had been thrown by her boot heel catching on a stair.

"Never mind, Mousie," said Carmen, walking slowly down-stairs by the side of Grace, who wore rather a discontented look; "I dare say we shall see some reason why it wasn't best for us to have these rooms. Smaller ones will do as well, and be the more easily kept clean."

"Shall I let the rooms 'f anybody else wants 'em?" shouted the owner of the house from the top of the stairs.

"Yes. I beg pardon for not saying as much," answered Grace politely.

Forth into the rush and rabble of a New York street they went, and moved on with the surging, hurrying throng.

It would, I doubt not, prove as tiresome for you to read as for me to write of all the visits my girls made that day to houses where there were "Rooms to let," so I spare you and myself that trial of our patience.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they stopped before a wooden building on G— street, as Grace said this was one of

the places she had marked down on her tablets.

“Number 13,” said Cecil, giving the house a look that was not one of admiration.

“‘There is a divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance, or death.’ I feel ‘in my bones’ we are to be domiciled in this — building.”

“We can hardly disregard so infallible a sign,” replied Carmen a little wearily.

“I suppose the old rooms will be a thousand dollars a month if they’re fit to live in,” said Grace, who must be pardoned if she was inclined to be cross, and make exaggerated suppositions. It is conceded by all who have tried it, that house hunting is extremely demoralizing.

Natalie rang the lower door bell furiously, and when the landlady—who looked like the twin sister of all the landladies they had seen that day—appeared, demanded with a business-like nod and a no-beating-about-the-bush look, to be told the price of the apartment she had to let.

The woman, looking as though she was rather afraid of the scowling and imperative young lady before her, stammered out, that as the

carpet on the bedroom had got so badly worn that she had been obliged to take it up, she had concluded to take twenty dollars a month till she could replace it.

"We will look at them if you please," said Nattie, with a somewhat mollified tone and air, and presently was tramping up a flight of uncarpeted stairs, followed by her three companions.

"Well," said Grace, sinking into a stiff-backed chair with a sigh of resignation, after they had examined the rooms—a very small kitchen, a fair-sized sitting-room, and a bedroom containing two beds, placed pretty near together, all rather shabbily furnished—"they are pretty low-lived, but I don't know as we can do any better at present."

"Oh, we can fix these rooms up with our things so they will look real cosey and home-like," said Carmen, who always found or made a bright side to every thing.

"I sha'n't go out prowling around for any more rooms, I assure you," said Natalie, stretching herself on the hard sofa, "unless that woman who so considerately left us to ourselves a few minutes ago, takes a notion to

pitch me out for my savagery at the door."

"We shall undoubtedly consider this place 'a thing of beauty and a joy forever,' in a few days," said Cecil, brushing the dust off the old-fashioned centre-table with her handkerchief.

"What about supper, girls?" asked Carmen.

Cecil declared she would constitute herself the gentleman of the family for the time being, and go out and get a half a dozen plates, and have some coal, kindlings, molasses, salt fish and a loaf of baker's bread sent in, as she believed these were what people usually commenced housekeeping with.

"Send the coal and kindlings first, and I'll have a fire when the eatables appear," said Nattie. "We shall want our fish broiled, I s'pose."

"Don't forget to get some tea and an earthen teapot, Cecil," said Grace.

"Send a baggage man for the trunks," added Carmen. "And O, Cecil! if it won't give you any trouble to find it, order a little honey."

"We'll want some milk, Cecil," called out Nattie from the kitchen, where she was washing her hands under the faucet.

“My family evidently think I’m made of money,” Cecil replied, putting on her hat and a stingy-provider look at the same time.

She paused to tell the landlady whom she met in the lower hall, what that lady had already concluded from their lingering so long, that they had decided to take the rooms.

Carmen said she would wash the dishes, and all decided that Grace, who was the most delicate one of the four, must keep very quiet the rest of the day and during the evening, and rest. When Cecil returned with a basket of dishes and a tablecloth, said dishes were made clean, and the table set.

That first supper in New York was a cheerful and merry one. Cecil had forgotten to purchase any knives, forks or spoons; so they borrowed the two first-mentioned articles of the landlady, and stirred their tea, with a stick, prepared for that purpose by Nattie, and placed in the middle of the table so it might be handy.

Later, when the tea things were put away—Carmen washed the dishes in a pint bowl, that being the only available dish they had, and Grace, against orders, wiped them—they sat in the

moonlight while Cecil, whose voice sounded wonderfully soft and sweet, sang *Sweet Home*; and when four white-robed figures knelt on the bare floor of their room to pray, four hearts sent up a petition that these little rooms, in spite of their barrenness, might prove a sweet home indeed to those who were to occupy them,

CHAPTER IV.

TRIALS AND POVERTY.

"There are inscriptions on our hearts which are never to be seen except at dead low tide." BULWER.

I'VE half a mind never to write another line for publication," said Nattie in a discouraged tone, one dark afternoon about six months after that day when she and my other three girls commenced housekeeping in New York. "I've left this story," and she glanced fiercely at a packet the postman had just handed in, and which lay in her lap, "at every publishers within three miles around, and none of them want it. I consider it the best story I ever wrote too. I presume half of them didn't condescend to examine it."

"It's dreadful, the way things worked since we've been here," said Grace. "I'm sure I don't know what we shall do. Can you think

of any thing, Cecil?" looking up beseechingly.

"I should say we had done about every thing already," said Cecil, savagely assorting music sheets. "You have been to every committee you could hear of who were getting up entertainments, and offered to read for any price or nothing, and been rebuffed every time."

"It makes me so mad to think of it!" exclaimed Grace with an indignant look in her brown eyes.

"Natalie," continued Cecil, "has offered stories which I am confident were better than half the published rubbish in our popular journals, at about half their worth. I believe you have sold three in six months, haven't you, Nattie?"

"Yes," said Nattie. "Please keep on scolding. It's as refreshing as a shower-bath to hear you."

"I feel like freeing my mind," Cecil went on. "I have been to everybody that I could learn ever had any thing to do with a concert or church choir, or any thing else that requires singers, but Mr. This tells me that Mr. That might give me a trial, and Mr. That says Mr. So-and-so has better facilities for favoring amateurs than he, and Mr. So-and-so is

sorry, but is quite fully supplied just now, and will I call again, say in a few months, etc., etc. Through Mr. Ehrenfried I have been invited to several parties where I was snubbed and neglected, and asked to sing with an you-may-consider-yourself-highly-honored-by-the-invitation air, when I was invited to those parties simply because I could sing, and the givers of them wanted somebody for that purpose.

“I despise myself sometimes for going, and have done so only because I have thought my singing at those places might lead to my being engaged to sing elsewhere. But among the crowds of curled, scented, broadcloth-clothed men, and befrizzled, bejewelled, silken or velvet-clad women I have met, I have not discovered one who seemed to have any idea of real music in his or her head, or any appreciation of it in his or her heart.

“The only person I have met who seems to have any feeling on the subject, is Mr. Ehrenfried, and his hair is as straight as a broomstick; he only smells of clean linen, and the gloss on his clothes is an indication of hard wear, instead of richness of the cloth from which they were made. He is invited for the same

reason I am. Last Thursday night when I was at Mrs. Van Horne's, he and I had been singing, and were standing near the piano, speaking together, when a woman whom I heard somebody tell somebody else used to do fine ironing for a living, but was now married to a rich distiller whose shirts she used to do up, passed us in company with another woman. She drew her dress around her as she came near us, as though afraid her royal purple would come in contact with our homespun, and I heard her say: 'Oh, those are the people that sang! I wonder if the poor things don't feel dreadfully out of place in an assembly like this. I hear they are nobodies.'

"Mr. Ehrenfried only smiled in his grave way, but I know my cheeks blazed, and I was aching to tell her I certainly did feel very much out of place, for I was in the habit of associating with people who were decently polite and had a few brains.

"Then you and I, Grace, have answered all sorts of advertisements that promised to lead us to any thing by which we could earn money, and Nattie has hunted everywhere she thought copying might be had, and it has all amounted

to nothing. But, girls, we are not beaten yet, so we'll 'fight it out on this line,' with 'Never give up' inscribed on our banners."

She wheeled around on her piano-stool, and commenced playing stormily; and for a time only the music broke the stillness of the room.

Presently there was a tap on the door, and in answer to Grace's "Come in," the landlady appeared holding out a small package.

"The boy from the shoemaker's over the way brought this for Miss Farwell," she said. "He rang the lower bell."

"Thank you; a pair of boots I've been having repaired," said Grace, taking the package. "I hope he hasn't bungled them up any way," she said, when Mrs. Handy had left the room, "for if things continue in this state I don't know when I can have another pair."

She unrolled the boots, and was passing across the room to throw the paper that had contained them into the stove, when her eyes fell upon something which she stopped to read. Turning about she went to the piano and said:

"Cecil, here are two advertisements, one for a nurse girl, and the other for a woman to

sew. Nurse girl can board away if she wishes, as her services will not be required in the evening or on Sunday. Sewing girl can take her work away or remain at her employer's house, as she desires. This paper was published to-day. Let's apply for these positions. If you can get the place as nurse you can take your music lessons in the evening. These may be two of the 'ways out' that Carmen talks so much about."

"I'm your man," said Cecil, "and will be ready to escort you out in five minutes; but I daresay you will find some Jane Spriggins or Sally Brown has taken possession of the sewing room at 21 Cavendish square, and I shall discover some Nancy Jones or Mary Smith has charge of the infants at 18 Dorset street."

She had taken the paper out of Grace's hand, and looked at the advertisements.

"I am rather tired of saying I wish you success," said Nattie, "but you can imagine I've said it, if you please. Carmen will be here in an hour," glancing at a little clock on the mantle—it used to tick away on a bracket in her office; "I'll make a fire in

the stove pretty soon and have supper ready for her and you when you return."

"Guess you won't find much trouble preparing supper to-night, judging from my knowledge of the food in the house," said Grace, a little bitterly. "Cecil," glancing over her shoulder into the small mirror behind her, "please fix my overskirt. I knew something ailed it by the feeling. I shall have a fit if it looks like that long."

"I shall use every effort to fix it then," replied Cecil, "for we shouldn't have any thing to give you but kerosene oil."

"And not much of that," said Nattie, looking towards two lamps beside the clock, one of which was about half full of, and the other quite destitute of, oil. "The can is empty."

Gas was too expensive for my girls. As you will readily suppose from the conversation I have given, they, or three of them, had met with many disappointments and trials since coming to New York. Soon after her arrival in the city, Carmen had been so fortunate as to secure a situation in its principal telegraph office. Without her salary I know not what the family on the second floor at 13 G— street

would have done ; for in that great, crowded town there seemed to be nothing for the other three to do.

They had each brought a small sum of money with them on coming to New York, and Cecil, confident that she should soon find something to do which would enable her, besides paying her proportionate part of the household expenses, to afford them, had hired a piano and a music-teacher. But as the weeks went by and no work was to be had, she proposed to give up both, but had yielded to Carmen's entreaties that she would keep the piano at least a while longer ; and when she told Mr. Ehrenfried, her music-teacher, that she should be obliged to dismiss him for a time, as she could not pay him longer for his services, he said :

“Miss Emerson, while I have as much time as I do now on my hands, please do not deny me the pleasure of practising with you. We will say nothing of pay, and when I have any thing of importance to keep me away, I will not come ; but believe me, dear Miss Emerson, I enjoy this hour with you too much to readily give it up. A favor will be done me if you allow me to keep on coming.”

Cecil could hardly say no to this, and so the lessons went on. But now the money my girls had brought with them had been spent three weeks ago. The coal bill and the rent for the rooms had swallowed up all they could jointly raise. The time for which the piano had been paid was not quite out, but when it should be, Cecil had quite made up her mind she must give it up. The cupboard in the little kitchen on the second floor of number 13 G—— street was in a state strongly resembling that of another cupboard which has been made famous in story, and was owned by a lady called familiarly Mother Hubbard.

The situation of my girls was truly disheartening. To send to her relatives for aid, thereby acknowledging how unsuccessful she really was, was something each unemployed girl would have prevented her doing unless suffering from extreme want.

Carmen was receiving a salary that would have maintained her alone comfortably; but in the loyalty of her friendship she had spent it all, only such a part as enabled her to make some absolutely necessary additions to her very plain wardrobe, for the common necessities of the

family, saying to her friends' protestations:

"Please don't talk about it, girls. Indeed, I enjoy doing so; and it is no more than any one of you would do in my place."

Grace and Cecil had sought diligently for something to do that would enable them to pay their way while hunting and waiting for places to read or sing; but all their efforts had proved futile. Nattie had asked for copying at every place where she could learn it might possibly be obtained, but had invariably received the stereotyped reply: "We have a corps of writers who do all our copying."

So she wrote on, trying to make her stories better and better, and hoping and praying for better success in disposing of them.

In this time of anxiety and trial, I think the thought of going back to telegraphing, if that work could be obtained, must often have been in the minds of the three from whom success kept so steadily aloof; and one evening Nattie — who had that day received back from a publisher she had strongly hoped would accept them, two "respectfully declined" articles — spoke of it.

"I earnestly advise you all not to think of

that at present," said Carmen. "If you obtained offices in the city, you would be obliged to work so hard during the day that you would be unfitted for doing any thing in the evening; and this would prevent you, Cecil, from practising your music, and both you and Grace from looking about for any opening there might be in musical or literary circles. You would be about as likely to hear of such openings in a prison as a telegraph office in this city, for no visitors are allowed, and little is thought or talked of but business.

"In the country you would be out of the way of hearing of such things. You want something to do in this time of waiting and looking for opportunities, that will take you out among people sometimes where you can hear folks talk, see a good many different papers, and be constantly on the lookout for the 'main chance.' Only in a country office would Nattie find time to write. And there she would, I fear, be lonely and miserable, and lack one incentive she now has to make her stories worth publishing. I feel sure you will all see a way out soon.

" "There are 'real folks' in the world, and a real God who loves his children overhead."

And so the subject was dropped.

"Young ladies," said Cecil, entering with Grace leaning on her arm the sitting-room where about half-past six of the dark afternoon of which I have spoken Carmen and Nattie sat, "allow me to present to you the sewing-girl from Cavendish square."

"And be it known unto you," said Grace, making a low bow, "that this youthful companion of mine is she who is to keep the manners and noses of the cherubs at 18 Dorset street in good order."

The two had appointed a place at which to meet when their errands should be done, and so came in together.

"You don't mean to say you got the places," Nattie questioned with a doubtful look.

"Course they did," said Carmen. "I felt they would when you told me what they'd gone out for. 'When things get to their worst, they begin to mend,' is a proverb 'somewhat musty,' but true nevertheless."

"Come to supper," called out Nattie, who had gone to the table and was pouring some very weak tea.

"Cecil, please take your place at the foot of

the board, and serve this humble but exceedingly nutritious food."

Not by bread alone is mankind nourished
To his supreme estate,

quoted Cecil, passing around the potatoes.

"I guess it will be principally from potatoes the nourishing will come to-night," said Nattie, glancing at a solitary cracker which no one offered to touch, and a piece of butter about half the size of an egg, which were all the food, excepting the vegetables mentioned, on the table.

"Never mind," said Carmen. "They are done nicely, and it might be so much worse, you know."

"Carmen, you are a capital female Mark Tapley," said Cecil.

Carmen only smiled in reply as she put a large potato on Grace's plate.

"You blessed child!" said Grace. "What do you mean by giving me another potato when I've had two already and you only one. I know you're starving."

There had been just eight potatoes in all.

"Not a bit of it," said Carmen, rising. "Please

excuse me. I've got a few stitches to take in my dress. Tore it to-day."

"I raised a couple of dollars on a ring while I was waiting for Grace," said Cecil, "and I'm going to run out and get a few things so we can have some breakfast. It wasn't my engagement ring," she added brightly, seeing the look of concern on the faces of her companions, "so you must not think I've done any thing heroic."

But it was a highly prized birthday gift.

"Anybody want some more tea?" asked Nattie, who had only allowed herself half a cupful of the beverage named, fearing the others might be stinted. "Plenty of it here, friends."

"You might turn it into the teakettle," said Cecil. "It wouldn't color any water that happened to be in said kettle, I'm sure."

Just as Cecil was going out to buy the "few things" referred to, Grace slipped something into her hand, saying:

"Please take this and dispose of it somewhere where they will give you a decent price for it. Use the money it will bring for any thing we need."

And so it happened that Grace's gold pencil which a year ago she would not have sold for

three times its value, found its way into the hands of the man who had purchased Cecil's ring.

These girls had a rule that when they had any thing special to talk over together, they should leave it until they could all sit down quietly in the sitting-room and "take all the good of it," as Carmen said. They had come to call the hour between half-past seven and half-past eight at night, the "consultation hour." So to-night, when the tea-things were ready for use in the morning, and Cecil had done her errands and returned home, they drew their chairs around the centre-table, and an account was given of the visits to, and agreements entered into, at 21. Cavendish square and 18 Dorset street.

Had my girls realized how, in their hearts, during these shadowy days, the lonely flower of unselfishness was growing into a hardier blossom than it could have become in a sunnier time; how thoroughly many lessons which would well serve them in the future were being learned, they would rather have thanked God for them than wished them brighter.

CHAPTER V.

CARMEN'S NEW FRIEND.

Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of the unhealthy and o'erdarkened ways
Made for our searching; yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

—KEATS.

MISS MOORE, will you think me very impertinent if I ask you to stay here to-night? Two of our night operators went out into the country this afternoon, and I have just received a message from them, saying they had missed the only train by which they could have reached town to-night, and it is too late to hunt any one up to take their places now. I don't like to keep one of the day men on at night, for the work is extremely heavy just now during the day in the gentlemen's department, and

I find an operator isn't good for much when he's been up all night.

"You know we usually switch all these wires into the men's room at night; but if you will stay, I will leave enough of them for two to attend to here, and also send Arlington for to-night, so it won't be so lonely for you; that is, if you wish him to come. And you needn't come in to-morrow. Probably Brewster and Henderson will be in at ten, and I will send one of them to your desk. I dare say the other girls here can get along with your wires and their own until he comes."

Thus spoke, one April day, the manager of the office in which Carmen was employed. She belonged to the sort of people to whom one turns instinctively when any difficulty presents itself. She assured him she was quite willing to stay, and that she thought his plan a good one. And with a relieved look on his face, he thanked her and said:

"Will you come out to a restaurant and get some tea, or shall I send a lunch here for you? You live so far away I am afraid you wouldn't be back by the time you will be needed if you went home for tea."

Carmen replied that she had plenty of food in her lunch basket, and only wanted a boy to take a note explaining her absence, to her three friends.

"I will send one here directly," said the manager. "Now I believe every thing is all right. You will only have Brewster's work to do. The boys must get along with Henderson's and their own somehow. Good-night!"

The boy was sent with the note, the other lady operators said good-night and left the office; Mr. Arlington was brought in and introduced, and the night work commenced.

Until twelve o'clock the instrument clicked away continually, and nothing but their working, the sound of pens, which, guided by trained fingers, moved so rapidly over the paper whereon the messages received were written, and the street noises, which grew fainter as the night advanced, were all that broke the stillness of the place.

But after midnight business began to lull, first on one wire and then on another, and at half-past one every sounder was quiet.

Weary with her day and night's toil, Carmen leaned her head against the back of her chair

for a few minutes, and closed her eyes, while Mr. Arlington, going to a window, looked silently down upon the nearly deserted street.

After a time Carmen, finding that sleep was likely to overpower her, and thinking her companion did not have the manner of a social person, and that she must manage in some way to keep awake, roused herself, opened one of the keys before her, and commenced writing; and very distinctly on the ear of the man by the window fell the words written by means of the characters which meant so many letters, and were so well understood by him.

If there be some weaker one,
Give me strength to help him on;
If a blinder soul there be,
Let me guide him nearer Thee.
Make my mortal dreams come true
With the work I fain would do;
Clothe with life the weak intent,
Let me be the thing I meant;
Let me find in Thy employ
Peace that dearer is than joy;
Out of self to love be led,
And to Heaven acclimated,
Until all things sweet and good
Seem my natural habitude.

Having written these lines, she stopped send-

ing and closed the key. Mr. Arlington left the window by which he had been standing, and, coming near to Carmen, sat down, and fixing his dark eyes upon her face, asked :

“Miss Moore, why did you commit those lines to memory?”

For the first time Carmen looked attentively at him who now questioned her, and noticed how handsome a face was his. How young, and anxious, and troubled it was too, and into her heart came a great pity for him, and in her gentlest tone she answered :

“Because they express better than any words of my own could, a wish of my heart.”

“There is,” he said, still with a searching look upon her face, “a great deal of poetical religion in the world. It is easy to talk in some poet’s grand words, of saving souls; a fine thing to sit comfortably down and sing of lifting the fallen; but I think nearly every one shrinks away appalled from any real sinner he may meet.”

He said this in no complaining way; only as one might declare any fact. Suddenly he asked :

“Miss Moore, do you think there is any thing in the religion of Jesus Christ?”

No learned words came to Carmen then. No theological argument had she to help her, but her voice was full of earnestness as she said :

“More in it, Mr. Arlington, than can be told. Life, peace, happiness are in it.”

“You *know* this?” Eagerly, wistfully he asked it.

“Yes, Mr. Arlington, I *know* this,” rang out the thankful young voice.

“And do you believe it will take away a man's love for drink? Will it keep him away from the gaming table? Will it unwind all the coil of sin that holds him so tightly in its grip? Will it do all this, think you?”

“‘If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Former things have passed away. Behold all things have become new.’”

This was Carmen's answer.

“Have become new,” repeated Mr. Arlington. “That's what I would like to become, new. To leave my old self, my old past, and become really new. But” — in an anxious tone — “you read that. Please tell me of the things you know.”

“I know nothing better than that, Mr. Arling-

ton," answered Carmen. "Why, Mr. Arlington, I have seen the time when it seemed to me my life was being ground right out of me. I can't tell you the story. It's too long, and then, as Mrs. Whitney says, 'One never can tell a story, all of it.' But the world seemed full of hard things, and my heart was filled with bitterness towards a God who allowed these things, but whose mercy I had never accepted. I railed against him because I was hungry, but would not reach out my hands for the manna he is constantly offering. But when I did come to him, a poor, weary, persecuted child, and gave every thing up into his hands, asking not that any thing should be this or that way, but simply that he would 'undertake for me,' he brought light out of darkness, smoothed rough places, made unjust people just. And you know his declaration is that '*Every one* that asketh receiveth.' I haven't found words to say this rightly, or plainly perhaps, but I felt I must say it somehow. Must warn you against trying to bear burdens which God wants to take off your shoulders. Try him, Mr. Arlington, and see if he fails you."

He sat, when she had finished speaking, for

some time in silence, and then, without answering any thing to her words, asked :

“Miss Moore, will you be my friend? I am very lonely in this great city, full of people.”

She knew nothing of him save what his words had told, that he was a sin-stained, suffering man, but a compassion which I think must have been very like that of Him who, when the woman with her grievous fault was taken to him for judgment, did not condemn her, and found for her no harsher words than “Go, and sin no more,” moved her, and, laying her hand on his clasped ones, she said :

“Indeed, indeed I will. Your real, true friend.”

“Perhaps it was not generous to ask you that before letting you know how bad I am,” he said. “Miss Moore, when I was coming here the night before this, acting upon a sudden resolution, I turned aside and went down to a wharf, intending to put an end to my miserable existence. I had not a cent in the world. I had lost all the money I had that day at the gaming table, and then in a quarrel nearly killed the man who gained it. As I stood there, with the dark-looking water at my feet,

waiting for two men who were standing near to move away, I heard a woman in a house a short distance from me, singing a song my mother used to sing; and such a longing came over me to see that mother again, that I could not do the thing I planned. Since then I have been thinking, thinking, until my brain seems on fire. I was a runaway boy, Miss Moore. A runaway from those who loved me best, but whose hearts I had sadly grieved by my conduct. I am the almost-murderer of another man—but please believe I did not mean to kill him—the nearly-murderer of myself. I am a wine-bibber and a gambler. Take back your promise if you will. I shall not blame you if you do; and, if I did, the blame of such as I cannot harm you.”

Steadily Carmen answered, holding out her hand: “I will let the promise stand. I am really and truly your friend.”

CHAPTER VI.

QUIET DAYS.

‘The chief secret of comfort lies in not suffering trifles to vex us, and in prudently cultivating our undergrowth of small pleasures, since very few great ones, alas! are let on long leases. † SHARP.’

NOW three of my girls went forth daily to their labor, and Nattie kept house for the family.

Each of the other girls had at first insisted upon rising earlier than usual, that she might assist with the housework; but to this Nattie soon put a stop.

“You see I can do more good as maid-of-all-work than in any other capacity. I can find time to write more stories than I am able to sell,” she said, with just a hint of sadness in her tone, and then remembering, I dare say, that any thing like repining was by tacit and common consent tabooed in that joint stock home, added more brightly:

“I can wash dishes just as well as sit nibbling my pen-holder while I determine whether Jerusha Anastasia Le Grand shall marry Charles Augustus St. Clair for love, and struggle for years with poverty, or take old Sir Moneybags for his wealth, and commence at once to live in grandeur.

A wife, but with such wild imaginings.

“And while I’m scrubbing the knives I decide how I shall go to work to rub the bad habits out of my generous-hearted, but reckless Mr. Thusandso. And oh! girls, when I’m thinking of some fearfully mean and stingy old curmudgeon I’m using as a character, you don’t know with what a relish I pound away on dirty clothes, imagining I’ve got the old fellow in the barrel and am pelting his avarice out of him. And it’s a real pleasure to plan when I’m ironing, that as smoothly as my iron glides over the surface of the article before me, shall the lives of my good heroes and heroines glide on by and by when they have surmounted the thousand and one obstacles that block up their way to happiness. I’m not sure but I shall write a book and make

the subject 'Life Among the Pots and Kettles.'"

"Well, I'm glad you enjoy being hewer of wood, and drawer of water, and et cetera, as our old switchman used to say," said Grace, "for I confess I think it's horrid getting up in the middle of the night."

"Evidently the worm that the early bird is supposed to catch is as nothing to Grace compared with her morning naps," said Cecil.

"Don't interrupt, young ladies," said Nattie, with a majestic wave of her hand, "but

Lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

"I think in this establishment the somewhat stale proverb, 'Too many cooks spoil the broth,' has been verified. Only this morning when I had put some oatmeal on the stove to cook, and had sufficiently salted it, I saw you, Carmen, go to the sauce-pan and salt it; I mean the meal, not the sauce-pan. Presently, Grace, I gazed upon your form near that pan, and something white descending from your fingers into it. When I asked an explanation of your conduct, I was informed you were salting the oatmeal. Ere long you,

Cecil, issued forth from the sitting-room, and, true to the instinct that ever turns your soul from any thing *flat*, took with a wild grab a handful of salt from the salt-dish and stirred it into that necessarily briny meal.

“I had been hoping something would be spoilt, to show you girls the folly of so many taking part in the affairs of the kitchen; and so it was with a serene mind and silent tongue I beheld all this. I quietly threw that meal away and put some more on, and as you all took your breakfasts separately and in a hurry this morning, I waited for our consultation hour before ‘saying my say.’

“Then when I’m about the housework in the morning I’m always running into some of you. If we had a cat and another coal-hod, I couldn’t get around at all. Now ‘hear the conclusion of the whole matter.’ If you don’t stay out of the kitchen *I* shall.”

“There’s method in Nattie’s madness,” said Carmen, laughing.

“Well, I’m resigned,” said Grace. “I never did like kitchen work. I got my hands all grimmed up yesterday blacking that old stove.” Grace had beautiful hands, and may be pardoned

if she was a little particular about the way they were used.

“ ‘What miscarries shall be the general’s fault, though he perform to the utmost of a man,’ ” quoted Cecil.

“You are just as good as can be, to be willing to do so much for us,” said Carmen, clasping her hand over that of Nattie, who sat near her. And so Nattie became the authorized house-keeper for the establishment.

The piano still occupied its wonted place, and the girls had come to call it “Cecil’s barometer,” since they declared they could tell the exact state of her mental weather by the way she played. Both Cecil and Grace were constantly on the alert for any thing which might give them a start in the direction they wished to go. Their work through the day was not irksome, for Grace liked to sew, and Cecil was fond of children, and used to caring for them, but it could never satisfy either.

As Cecil walked the crowded streets, she often looked earnestly into the faces of young men; and many times when she saw a youthful figure reeling along, would she look sharply at it, and when she did not recognize it, turn away her

face with a half-disappointed, half-relieved expression upon it.

When she passed, with quickened footsteps, some saloon from which came forth sounds of drunken revelry, would she cast a glance which had something pitiful in its wistfulness, towards the outside of the building that might hold the dear one she was seeking.

Many and many a time did she move more rapidly, that she might overtake some person in advance of her, whose gait or hair reminded her of the carriage or wavy locks of the boy who used to lead her to school and bring her nuts and candies.

But among the multitude of faces into which she looked she never saw *his* face. None of the eyes that met her own were Ross' eyes.

In the days—which seemed already to be very old days—when she and her three friends were all employed as telegraphers, she had never told those friends of this wayward, but much-loved brother. But one evening, sitting with them in the sitting-room in New York, she did so, and in tender words was assured of their sympathy.

Grace's sewing was, for the most part, done

at home, so the days were not lonely ones to Nattie.

A piece of fancy work here, a bracket there; a plant on a little stand in a corner, another hanging in the sunniest window, with its fresh green tendrils falling over and below the half-raised curtain; a few books on the table, and more in the small book-case fastened to the wall; work-baskets on the window ledges, and a canary—a present to Carmen from her sister—in his cage which was suspended from a hook in the ceiling, robbed the sitting-room of its barren appearance, and gave it a cosy, homelike look, which my girls fully appreciated.

Many quiet pleasures came to these girls of mine. Though each differed in many ways from the others, they were congenial, and enjoyed each other.

Their evenings were exceedingly pleasant to them.

When the supper was over, and the tea things put away, and Cecil had finished taking her music-lesson—she took two a week and, since commencing work, insisted upon paying for them—and practising, she would sing something her friends loved. Then came—later

than it used to come — the “consultation hour.”

Then three of them would listen while the fourth read aloud. Grace was usually selected for reader, and with good reason. Seldom have I heard one to whom it was more of a pleasure to listen than it was to her. She always seemed to fully catch and express the author's meaning.

Nattie's stories were read, criticized, and discussed, and the young writer received many helps and hints about plots for future tales.

Mrs. Leander, Cecil's employer, was one of those mothers who wish their children, however good a nurse they may have, to learn to feel that mother is necessary to, and interested in them. So she took charge of her two little ones in the evening — excepting when she went out, when they were left with their fond grandma — and on Sundays, taking them both, as soon as they were old enough, to church with her once a day, which was as much as she ever went herself. While they were infants she stayed from church on Sunday, that she might care for them. So Cecil was free on the Sabbath; and, when the hundreds of church bells sent

their music into the Sunday air, went, with the other girls, to seek some place of worship. At first they entered the first Protestant church they came to; but after a time, a little way out of the busiest part of the city, they found a church whose white-haired minister with his earnest, tender, simple words, quite won their hearts.

“I fancy that man preaches as Christ did;” said Grace in a hushed sort of way, one Sunday when she, together with the other girls, had listened to one of his sermons.

And it seemed to them that the music here was just what church music should be. No person in the choir seemed anxious to show off his or her musical talent, but every note of each singer’s voice, and every vibration of the deep, mellow-toned organ, seemed sending praise up to the Saviour of all music. And so this comparatively humble church became the sanctuary in which my girls worshipped.

And when the warm weather had come, they took long walks on Sunday afternoons. Away from the narrow streets, with their rows of high poor houses; away from the business blocks, where commerce held its week-day sway, they

wandered to that part of the town which held the residences of men who were rich enough—and that means very rich indeed—to afford a lawn or generous grass plot in front of their houses. How beautifully green and fresh these lawns or grass plots looked! And, indeed, well they might, having the clear water from fountains playing so continually upon them. Bright flowers bloomed before the grand houses of these rich men; and only those who live month after month in houses before which nothing save the bare, brown, hard-trodden earth can be seen, know how lovely flowers can look. But sometimes they had flowers at home. Mr. Ehrenfried, coming back to the city from a half day's trip into the country—he had a few pupils out of town—would bring for the girls he had come to regard as his friends, a handful of some sweet wild blossoms whose odor caused their pleased recipients to long for daisy-spangled meadows and flowery hedges.

And thus the busy, but uneventful days sped away, and still these girls waited, labored and prayed.

But God's time to answer their prayers had not yet come.

CHAPTER VII.

CECIL'S TWO LOVERS.

Many a wooer has commenced his suit,
To her he thinks not worthy.

— SHAKESPEARE.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with
might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling pass'd in music out of
sight.

— TENNYSON.

JULIAN SYLVESTER was "one of those people who seem to have an idea that they do the world infinite honor by living in it. Who hold such high opinions of themselves, that their admiration being so heavily drawn upon, gets very much weakened before it reaches anybody else."

one of those!

⌈ If this Julian had lived in Shakespeare's time, and had in one of his walks, or rather lounges — for he never moved with any degree of animation

—met the famous “Bard of Avon,” I verily believe he would have extended his hand as though he was rather uncertain whether it was “the thing” to do or not, and condescendingly said something like this: “Ah, good-morning, William. I don’t bother to shake hands with people usually, but it strikes me I’ve heard you were a little ahead of the average man in point of, ah—what-do-you-call-it—intellect, and so I don’t mind being a bit friendly with you.”

In his mind apparently all that could make a man interesting, fascinating, in short, altogether lovely, was personified in J. Sylvester, son by a former marriage of Mrs. Allenworth, said Mrs. Allenworth now residing at 18 Dorset street, New York city, and son residing with her. He was also evidently one of those who think it not worth their while to be enthusiastic over any thing; who consider any show of emotion—well, really rather verdant, you know, or not quite genteel, my dear.

He had travelled. Oh, bless you, yes; travelled extensively. On the western continent he had roamed in tropical South America I don’t know how long, and so won’t try to be exact about the time. He had visited all the

principal cities in the United States, and made trips to many noted bodies of water. And then he had been to Europe. Not on a flying visit, mind you, but had spent three years there. He was wont to say of South America, that he "really couldn't remember much about it, only that it was deuced hot there; enough to bake a fellow's brains."

Possibly his had been baked, and that's what ailed them/ Niagara Falls was "quite a pretty waterfall, but so infernally noisy one couldn't enjoy being near them;" Bunker Hill Monument "a mighty homely concern. What did the Yankees want to build that for anyway?"

The Coliseum was "that nearly torn-down affair, you know, where the men and animals used to have their little skirmishes." St. Mark's, Venice, was "that church of what-you-call-him, in that wretchedly unhandy city with its everlasting boats."

J. Sylvester had an office "down town." An office before which swung a sign on which was painted with great artistic skill, "Julian Sylvester, Attorney." But if it ever happened, which it seldom did, that any would-be client found his way to the door of the up-stairs room where

Julian Sylvester was supposed by the ignorant to spend the most part of his time, he found the door securely locked, as the man who carried the key to it found it far more agreeable to lounge around his elegant home or at some far more objectionable places, than to be in his office poring over law books; and he always did what was most agreeable to him if possible. The fact that he was the possessor of a large fortune (left by Mr. Sylvester deceased) probably did not stimulate his energy. His mother after her marriage with Mr. Allenworth, banker, who was a liberal man and glad to supply his wife's every want from his fat pocket-book, had made over her part of the wealth left by her deceased husband, to her two children, Julian and Maria, who were already well provided for.

How young Sylvester ever mustered up life enough to go through a course of law readings, however desultory, is something I cannot understand. But in his languid way he rather cared for his mother, and she thinking, I suppose, that the words "my son lawyer Sylvester," would be pleasant ones to speak — she often spoke them in after times as though speaking of half a dozen presidents, several statesmen, and a baker's

(dozen of foreign ministers all in one — suggested the idea and kept it alive until it was carried out.

You are now made acquainted with J. Sylvester of 18 Dorset street, New York, the gentleman who sauntered one morning into the music room where Mr. Ehrenfried waited for Miss Evelina Allenworth to come and take her music lesson. He held a few lovely rose-buds, with the leaves springing from their stems, still wet with dew, in his hand, and as he lounged along bound them together with a string.

“So you’re waiting for your pupil are you, Ehrenfried?” he said, as, having taken a chair, he held the bouquet from him and surveyed it with an approving glance. “By the way, what a confounded name you have.”

“Yes, I am waiting for Miss Allenworth; and I believe my name is rather an odd one in America,” replied Mr. Ehrenfried, his full, rich German voice making a pleasant contrast to the rather thin, drawling tones of his companion.

“Ehrenfried,” said Sylvester, still looking at the buds, the hand that held them now resting on his knee, “I don’t suppose you would ever guess who this deuced little nosegay is for.

Ha, ha, ha! It's all a good — what-is-it — joke."

"As I know nothing of your friends I shall be obliged to decline to guess on the subject," replied Mr. Ehrenfried.

"Well, if you knew them every one," said Sylvester, "you would never guess. Ehrenfried, do I look like a — what-you-call-it — man" — he stroked his slight, straw-colored moustache with its waxed ends complacently as he asked it — "who would be likely to fall in love with a nurse girl?"

Mr. Ehrenfried, seeming for the first time to take an interest in what he was saying, looked sharply at his questioner.

"I don't wonder you stare," Sylvester went on, not waiting for an answer to his question, thinking, I dare say, it could have but one honest reply. "The thought of it is enough to make any man stare. But as true's your born, Ehrenfried, I, Julian Sylvester, am head and ears in love with Cecil Emerson."

A fierce look came into Mr. Ehrenfried's eyes, but he said quietly:

"Are the children Miss Emerson has charge of your mother's?"

"No; sister Maria's. Husband in India a

good deal, you know, on business for Norton & Co. Mother thinks best to have her daughter under the—what-you-call-it—parental roof, you know, as long's the natural protector's away so much. I go into the nursery once in awhile. Play the role of fond uncle, and that sort of thing. Ha, ha! You ought to see Miss E., Ehrenfried. She's a perfect little—what-do-you-call-her—Hebe, you know. Didn't suppose I could get so spooney over anybody. Won't there be a precious row, though, when I inform my maternal relation that I intend to make the nurse of my nephew and niece Mrs. Julian Sylvester! Fortunate girl, Miss Cecil, eh, Ehrenfried? Perhaps half the girls I know—and they are not few, Ehrenfried—wouldn't be dying with jealousy if they knew how matters stand. Oh, no, perhaps *not!* Ha, ha!”

Sylvester crossed one leg over the other, and cast a very knowing look on his polished boot.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Ehrenfried, in a way strangely hesitating for one who usually spoke so promptly, “that you are not engaged to the young lady as yet.”

“Oh, no!” replied Sylvester; “but that little

matter can be arranged any time. I shall speak of my desire to make her Mrs. S. some day when every thing is just right. No hurry, you see. Well, I'll take these buds in to her I guess. And Ehrenfried" — with a see-how-jovial-and-pleasant-I-sometimes-condescend-to-be-with-the-lower-classes air — "when you choose the girl you wish to become your — what-you-call-it — life companion, you know — ha! — the idea of a poor devil like you thinking of marrying is too absurd — may she be as handsome as she I have chosen to be *my* wife."

He strolled away lazily whistling a love song, and Mr. Ehrenfried rose to meet Miss Allenworth. Patiently did the music teacher listen to the discords made by his not-over-promising pupil; patiently corrected her; patiently played parts she was to play after him. Later in the day he as patiently listened to the discords made by other not over-promising pupils; as patiently corrected their mistakes; as patiently played for them.

At four o'clock his teaching for the day was over, and he went home to his room. It was a dreary room, although well furnished,

for it wore the sort of cheerless aspect which nearly all rooms that show no trace of woman's hands, wear. *Home.*

But when Mr. Ehrenfried had been looking for a room for himself in New York, this one had been chosen because from its windows the great sea could be seen.

And he was fond of looking upon the sea; fond of letting his mind go far away across its waters to the land he had left behind; fond of thinking of the days when, with his mother, he had lived so peacefully and quietly in that distant Fatherland; fond of thinking how all day long — when it shone anywhere — the sun lay soft and warm upon the hillside graves where beside the father he could scarcely remember, that mother slept.

Many and frequent rumors had come across the ocean of the large and liberal country on its other side, where active brains and willing hands were always eagerly welcomed, and ever in demand. He had commenced to learn the language of this country at one of the schools he had attended, and afterward studied it with an occasional word of help from some one who understood it, at home until he

spoke it with more accuracy than many who knew no other.

When he was left alone — he had no brothers or sisters — he sought this land of promise, and found it with its cities full to overflowing, its villages crowded, both lacking rather in work to keep their millions of brains and hands employed, than in brains and hands to perform their work.

And only in its cities or villages could he hope to gain a livelihood by his chosen labor.

For months he scarcely earned enough to supply his necessities ; and now, after two years in New York, he found himself receiving from his pupils only a sufficient sum to give him a comfortable maintenance, and occasionally allow him to lay by a trifling sum for the always-to-be-expected "rainy day."

But to-night as he sat looking out over the heaving water — there was a high summer wind — he thought not of those quiet days passed in his own country ; not of the graves on the sunny hillside, nor of his disappointment and trials in the land of his adoption. Bare lay his heart before him, and he knew what all its

pain meant ; knew why all through the day it had been a heavy, sick thing.

“Yes,” he muttered ; “the idea of my thinking of marrying is indeed an absurd one. What could I offer the only woman I should ever care to marry, but love and the poorest of homes ? I have told myself repeatedly that she will not marry him ; but how can I know this ? She may not look upon him as I do ; may not despise him as I in my uncharitable heart can but do ; may even have learned to love him. She has been poor all her life, and all her life longing for the beautiful things that only the rich can afford. She told me this. Now, when the hand of this wealthy man is offered her, will she not think she can be happy with him who proffers it and his wealth, and, even if she does not love him, accept it ? But he is not worthy of her ; surely not worthy of her. And yet, why should I say this ? How do I know but much goodness of which his manner and conversation give no hint, is hidden in his heart ? What am I that I should judge a fellow man ? And if this man did not exist, should I try to win the love of this lonely, talented child, knowing that I could, if she were mine, provide

only a bare, poor home for her? Knowing that by marrying her I might prevent her fulfilling her young dreams? Answer, heart of mine! Would I, could I do this thing? No! A thousand times no. You answer well, oh heart! Lonely, but, thank God, honest heart, you answer truly. I repeat it, a thousand times no! I am getting to be an old man"—and involuntarily he glanced into a mirror which hung on the other side of the room from where he sat, and saw the reflection of a man too old for his years, with hair mixed here and there with gray—"forty-seven last month. Old and poor. And she so young—so young and full of promise! Yes, heart, you were right in your answer. A thousand times no!"

The wind lulled, the sea became calm, and the sun sank down; the splendor in the west died out, and it was night. The moon rose above the church spires—far above them—and sent a flood of radiance into the room; and still Ernest Ehrenfried sat looking out toward the sea, but thinking nothing of it. At last, just after the city clocks had struck the hour of twelve, he slowly arose from his chair, slowly sank upon his knees.

“Most gracious Father,” he cried—and oh, how full and earnest was his voice!—“if ever in all my life I have done aught for which thou wouldst bless me, let not the blessing come upon me, but upon her. Sweep all selfishness from my heart, and let me ever have the spirit which will best enable me to perform aught that thou wilt show me to do for her good or pleasure. Draw and hold her close within the radiance of thy love. Keep her heart blithe and strong, and her feet from stumbling. If he with whom I yesterday talked is to be her husband, kindle within me a love for him, since I strongly desire to be a sincere friend to all for whom she cares. Make him the manliest of men. May he at all times be every thing her heart can desire. I entreat for her, as long as she shall live, thine especial favor and most loving kindness. In the dear Redeemer’s name I ask it all. Amen.”

The moon still looking into that little room, saw an upturned face that looked as though glorified. No herald told of the victory gained by this humble man, but I doubt not God has it recorded in his book of great deeds.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LESSON FROM THE LILIES.

From the reek of the pond the lily
Had risen in raiment white—
A spirit of airs and water,
A form of incarnate light!

— LUCY LARCOM.

IT was time for the evening service to commence at the Church my girls attended, and for several minutes they had sat in one of its pews. And for several minutes a dark-faced young man in the shadiest corner of the dimly-lighted place, had kept his eyes fastened upon them.

They occasionally turned their heads towards one another when speaking, thus giving him sight of their faces.

“The same bright hair and hopeful look,” he whispered to himself. “Dear little Cecil! What was it I used to hear about ‘the peace that pass-

eth understanding?’ I think that must be the kind my friend Carmen has found. How calm and sweet her expression is! And yet the world has often used her far from gently, I judge from her words.”

The organ played a voluntary, and the dear old hymn “Nearer my God to thee” was sung, and then Mr. Eastmore — that was the pastor’s name — arose.

On the table before which, instead of in the pulpit, he always sat or stood during evening service, was a vessel filled with water, the surface of which was covered with full-blown water lilies.

“You see these beautiful flowers, friends,” he said, spreading his thin hand above them; “these lovely blossoms with their pure leaves and hearts of gold. Let us see if we may not to-night learn a lesson from these lilies. A few little days ago they were down amid the black mud at the bottom of the lake from whose bed they sprang, covered with impurities, embedded in filth. But Nature did not forget them. In their lowly place they felt her touch into life and action their flower pulses; and they began to rise, and to rid themselves of mud

stain and earthy impurities. Higher and higher they climbed, cleaner and cleaner they became, until even the dark outside leaves were dropped beneath them, and they lay on the surface of the lake sweet, perfect things.

“And so we may rise from the filth of ungodliness. God does not forget us even when we are covered with the mud-stains of sin, but reaches out to us and touches conscience into life, and, like the lilies, we may commence rising. Does any person within hearing of my voice think he is too far down in the mud of degradation to do this? If so, I say to that one, harbor no longer such a thought. What if the lilies had found a tongue and said:

“‘Because we are so low in God’s universe, so far beneath the pure things he has made, we must stay here. Surely nothing can help us; nothing remove from us the stain. Here in the filth we must remain. Nature may whisper of a better place for us, but we cannot be deceived.’

“Would it, therefore, have been true that Nature could not have raised them? Would they not already have been deceived?

“I do not know what these flowers had to

hinder their advancement ; I cannot be aware what roots of other plants stretched across them ; in what meshes of weeds they may have been entangled. But I know, with Nature to help them, they could come to the surface of the lake perfected.

“It has not been revealed to me what roots of evil are binding you down ; I cannot be aware what weeds are choking up the good that is in you ; but I do know, that with God to help you, you may commence coming up to-night.

“Not in this world, with its myriad of contaminating things, may you hope to reach a state pure and beautiful as that of these blossoms ; but you may keep shaking from your souls the polluting mud-stains of sin ; keep surely, steadily getting above all that degrades you, and at last stand forth in your Father’s kingdom as pure as was the first man new from the hand of his Maker, having fulfilled the command ‘Be ye perfect.’ I do not speak to you things I have heard alone, but what I know. I was very low down when my Saviour reached into the filth for me, and helped me to begin throwing off the

mire of transgression. As serenely as the lilies rest on the surface of the lake, do I rest in God's love and care to-day, and so may you rest."

Several members of the church arose one after another, and each spoke a few hearty words, and then the pastor offered a brief, fervent prayer, and the meeting was dismissed. Once more the organ played, and the people slowly left the building.

Until my girls had passed out, did Mr. Arlington, who, during the entire service, had sat with his head bent forward, his whole attitude that of one listening intently, remain in his dusky seat, and then, rising, went out into the night.

"The same story Carmen told me," he whispered exultingly, "only told in a different way. And they both *knew* the things they said. Yes, it must be true. God bless them for telling me these things!"

What he had suffered since that April night spent in Carmen Moore's society, only God knows.

Daily, hourly for a time did the strong appetite he had formed call for the poison

with which he had been wont to satisfy it, and the new-born manliness within him struggled, fought, and was sometimes almost overthrown.

One day upon the street he met a young man he had once been exceedingly friendly with, and was invited to enter a near saloon and take a glass of wine. "Just for old acquaintance's sake you know, Arlington."

In a moment of weakness he stepped into the place, alas! too familiar to him, and stood with the accursed liquid raised almost to his lips, when imagination showed him a pale, earnest face; and, hurling the goblet down, he said:

"Clarry, for God's sake never tempt me or any other man to drink again!" and rushed out into the air.

In these days he seldom saw Carmen. He commenced his night's labor at the same hour her day's work was done, and as they lived in opposite directions from the place where they worked, he rarely saw her on the street except on those occasions when in the morning — he left the office half an hour before she was due at her desk — he went in the direction of her home until he met her, and, turning about, walked with her as far as he might.

But he did not often do this. He had the lowest opinion of himself, and moodily thought that if the other operators who came to the office at the same hour as she, and some of whom came from the same direction and might see them together on the street, should notice her in his company often enough to warrant their saying she was intimate with him, some observations which would soil her good name might be made; and, sooner than have this happen, he would have given up seeing her entirely, much as he valued her company. Several times she invited him to come to her home on Sunday—the only day on which they could be there together—but he as many times answered:

“You are kind to ask me, but I have a reason which I hope I may tell you ere long, for not wishing to go there at present. By and by, if you repeat your invitation, it is my earnest desire that I may be ready to accept it.”

One morning during the early part of their acquaintance, when they were on the street together, he said:

“I don’t know what would become of me, Miss Moore, if I couldn’t think you took some

interest in me. I should feel desolate indeed if I did not feel sure you often think kindly of me, for there is no one here who thinks much about me anyway, and when they do it is with indifference, or some worse feeling."

"I am so glad if my friendship and kind thoughts help you," said Carmen simply.

"They surely do," he said, and then added: "Miss Moore, I see so little of you I am going to ask you to write me a letter sometimes. "I think my room would seem less lonely with something from you in it, and then you would write as you speak, I am certain; and your words are like a cordial to me." "

And thus it came about that she sent him many letters. Hearty, healthy, encouraging letters they were, and again and again was each one read by its recipient. He answered them too, and found much comfort in so doing. It was in one of these letters that she first told him the names of the friends with whom she lived. When he read one of those names the paper in his hand fell to the floor, and he exclaimed: "Wonderful! wonderful! Cecil so near! Little Cecil with my friend Carmen!"

"Write me more of your friends," he said in

answering this letter. "Tell me much of the one you speak of with the beautiful hair. I love music, and shall not tire of hearing of one who loves it too."

And so Carmen spoke a great deal of the home affairs; the little sayings and doings which she thought might amuse him; and of Cecil she wrote especially, and at more length than of the others.

It was in one of her first letters that she spoke of the Church she and her three friends attended, and recommended his going there.

"You may not see me there at present," he replied, "for the same reason I do not accept your invitation to visit your home. But I pray God I may greet you there on some coming day."

But nearly every Sabbath evening after that he sought this Church, entering early—sometimes being the first one there—and listened in its shadiest corner. The first sermon he heard there was the one I have given.

"I wish Mr. Arlington had heard what Mr. Eastmore said to-night," said Carmen on her way home on the evening when this sermon had been preached.

She had told her three friends all about the young man named.

At that moment Mr. Arlington was pondering upon the words that had given him fresh courage and comfort.

Daily, from the night on which his acquaintance with Carmen commenced, did he grow something better.

From that night he hated his old self, and strove earnestly to make a new self of which he need not be ashamed. And by and by the old thirst began to die away, the anxious look to fade out of his face, his laugh to come oftener. The promise, "Ask; and ye shall receive," was proved by him to be no idle one, and he felt how powerful as well as kind was the Hand that upheld him. One day when the weeks had slipped away until the last of August had come, as Carmen was leaving the office at six, in company with Miss Larkin, a fellow operator, she met Mr. Arlington near the entrance door. She held out her hand, and stood talking with him for a moment.

When she overtook Miss Larkin, who had walked on while she had spoken with her friend, that young lady said:

"I hope you're not getting interested in Arlington, Miss Moore. You know he's as dissipated as he is handsome, and that's saying a good deal, I think."

"You are mistaken," said Carmen quietly, not noticing the first part of the remark made. "He is not at all dissipated now."

"Oh, isn't he?" replied Miss Larkin carelessly. "I haven't noticed or thought much about him lately. When people begin to be reckless, I just let them alone entirely."

"Perhaps if fewer people followed the same course there would be less wretchedness in the world," said Carmen.

"Oh, well, in most cases people bring on their own wretchedness," declared Miss Larkin.

"And for that reason are they all the more to be pitied." When trouble which he has done nothing to cause comes upon a man, he may safely trust that for some good and wise purpose has God afflicted him, and that he will make up for all the pain he has caused. And we may well let him alone if we will, sure that the Lord will 'cover him all the day long.' But when a soul has strayed away from God, and is lost by its own act in the wilderness

of sin, it needs the compassion that will move some heart to hold out a hand by which it may be brought to the clear shining way that leads to life. It was those who had brought on their own wretchedness the Redeemer came to save."

"Here is my street," said Miss Larkin, as Carmen finished speaking.

So Miss Larkin said good-night, and moved away, muttering something about people with "ultra fine notions."

CHAPTER IX.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

He lives long that lives well; and time misspent is not lived, but lost.—FULLER.

NOT until a certain chilliness in the morning and evening air caused people to realize that summer was gone and autumn come, did J. Sylvester inform Cecil of his wish that she should be his wife. One day in the early part of September, Mrs. Leander took the children out riding, and their nurse was left alone in the nursery. Thus a special opportunity was given him for making known his desire, and he improved it. With his rich dressing-gown and handsome slippers still on at eleven o'clock, he sauntered into the room where Cecil sat, and with a "Good-morning, Miss, ah, Emerson," took a chair. Cecil returned the salutation, and after a few desul-

tory remarks were made, he said: "I suppose, Miss Emerson, you have never dreamed of — what-you-call-it — securing such a home as this, or a still nicer one."

"I have dreamed of earning one fully as elegant as this," replied Cecil, with rather a puzzled look.

"Ah, well," with a complacent adjustment of the dressing-gown over his knees, "it's all folly, you know, bothering one's brains over something that may never come to pass. I never did such a thing. But I presume" — lolling back in his chair with a see-how-magnificent-a-creature-I-am air — "it never entered your — what-you-call-it — head, you know, that *I* should ask a poor unknown girl to be Mrs. Sylvester?"

"I never gave the subject a thought," replied Cecil, placing little Willie Leander's blocks in the box from which he had taken them.

"Ah, maybe not," with an expression which seemed to proclaim that he knew of the best way of bringing a conversation to a desired point; "but now I've called your attention, you see, to it, perhaps you will tell me if you think I am the sort of chap who would be likely to do such a thing."

“As it is a matter in which I cannot possibly be concerned, you will excuse me if I decline to exercise any thought upon it,” answered Cecil haughtily, closing the box in which the blocks were now all placed, very hard.

“I don’t, ah, wonder you think it cannot concern you,” said Sylvester, rising from his chair, and, with what might be considered for him a brisk gait, going over to where his companion sat; “but, Miss Emerson, ah, Cecil, you know, I—what-is-it—love you. All smashed up, you see, and have decided to make you my—what-is-it—life companion, you know.”

He had drawn a chair to her side as he spoke, and now tried to possess himself of one of her hands; but she drew them both back, and said with a little shudder:

“That can never be.”

“Well,” replied Sylvester, letting his hand rest on the cover of the box just where it had fallen after failing to grasp that of Cecil’s, “it’s only natural that a girl of your, ah, sense, you know, should realize the difference in our—what-you-call-’em—positions, and be a little delicate, you know, about accepting the, ah, hand of a man who must stoop so

infernally in offering it; but, ah, Cecil, my—what you-call-it—love, you're such a deuced trim little affair a man can afford to sacrifice a little pride to marry you. I know it's not every man in my standing that would wed with a nurse girl, but money's not very scarce with me—not *extremely* short, Miss Emerson; and J. Sylvester, leaving the money, you know, out of the action, is not a—what-you-call-it—individual to be ignored; and I do about as I please, and snap my fingers at Society, and she knows better than to turn her back on *me*. Sister Maria was telling me the other day, that you told her in a chat you had with her awhile ago, that your sire, you know, is a blacksmith—no, carpenter. But," with a knowing wink, "one isn't obliged to tell all he knows about his parentage. A few words now and then about old family, changed circumstances, and that sort of thing, will make people think in a short time that Mrs. J. Sylvester has the best of blood in her veins. I—what-you-call-it—suppose you will be quite willing to drop any acquaintances you know that we shall not care to introduce to our friends, as *I* shall desire it."

Not once did Cecil interrupt him; but as he went on a look of displeasure which grew

deeper with every moment that he spoke, came into her face, which was averted from him. The box on her lap slipped down to the carpet, her hands tightly clasped themselves, and when he had finished speaking she arose and stood before him, her beautiful head upraised proudly, her hazel eyes blazing.

"Mr. Sylvester," she said in a low, passionate voice, "if a man I considered worthy of respect had asked me to be his wife, I should be sorry to tell him — as I should tell him — that I could not do the thing he wished. But as for you, with your false estimation of yourself, and your disgusting self-conceit, I am glad to say that I would sooner die than marry you. I despise you heartily, utterly" —

"Really, Miss," began Sylvester; but Cecil silenced him with an authoritative "Wait! I am not through yet!" and continued:

"From what did you stoop in offering me your hand, or rather in deciding that I should have it? What is the position of which you seem so proud? I will answer the question truly. It is that of a hanger-on to your mother and step-father; of a dawdler in the great busy world, in which for a person with

your health to be idle, is to be contemptible; of one, I doubt not, who is courted and flattered on account of his wealth alone. Why, the father you would be ashamed to acknowledge without concealing his occupation, and giving to people a wrong impression concerning him as the parent of your wife, is, in his poverty and lowliness, so immeasurably superior to you with your riches and high standing in society, that, were you his son-in-law, he would have good reason to be mortified that his daughter accepted such a man for her husband." *as the father of the girl*

She paused, and Sylvester said:

"Now I protest; I really protest, you know, Miss Emerson, that you are deuced unjust and unreasonable. What *would* you have a husband be now, if *I* wouldn't suit you?"

"My dreams have not been of a husband or marriage," she replied; "but were I to choose a life companion, I would wish to find one who would consider the life *you* live a disgrace; who would set real worth far above wealth; who would scorn to scatter deception; who would count it a sin to allow what of his riches—if he had riches—that was not spent

for his own needs and gratification, lie idle while it might lighten so many burdens, make glad so many sad hearts; who could esteem others above him, and still retain an honest self-respect."

She ceased speaking, and, turning partly around, leaned her elbow on the mantel-piece, and rested her hot cheek against her hand.

To say that young Sylvester looked surprised at her words, would give but a faint idea of the expression of his face. Blank amazement was written in every feature of his countenance, and when she turned away her head, he ran his fingers through his hair in a dazed sort of way, and as he arose and slouched out of the room, muttered:

"Well, I'll be, ah, whipped, you know!"

And indeed he looked as though he had been whipped already.

That evening when he was sitting with Mrs. Leander in the library, he said:

"Maria, I think the person who has the care of your children during the day, is unfit to be with — what-you-call-'em — young people when their minds are being formed, and that sort of thing, you know."

"Why, Julian, what *can* you mean?" asked Mrs. Leander, dropping her crocheting, and looking much interested; "I thought she was an excellent person in her way, and the children are exceedingly fond of her."

"Well, you see I've kept a kind of lookout over the children," replied Sylvester languidly, "and I think I understand that deuced nurse."

"Yes, I've noticed you visited the nursery quite often, and I have been half afraid — now, please don't laugh, brother — I have been really, half afraid you were getting too much interested in that girl. But the children are uncommonly entertaining, and I can't wonder if you are fond of them. I think Willie is the brightest child I ever knew. But do tell me what you've discovered about Miss Emerson that's not all right?"

"Ha, ha!" said Sylvester. "Excuse me, sis; I must laugh, you see. What really absurd notions do get into the feminine brain, you know. The idea of your brother, J. Sylvester, attorney, getting interested in that sort of girl."

"Well, it can't be denied she's fine looking," said Mrs. Leander reflectively, "and young men

often fall in love with handsome faces, irrespective of any thing else about their owners. But I might have known you wouldn't be so foolish. But"—jabbing away at the worsted in her hands—"do tell me about Miss Emerson." Mrs. Leander was as energetic in her way as her brother was indolent in his.

"Yes," said Sylvester, stretching himself out a little more in his chair; "she's rather pretty, but hardly delicate-looking enough to suit my taste, you know. Well, Maria, I am sure you see that her temper is infernally quick, and when she's angry, you know, she doesn't use proper language. This morning after you took the children out, I happened to be going by the—what-do-you-call-it—nursery, and I just stepped in a minute or two. In the course of conversation I said some little thing in a light way, you know, that she didn't like, and she, ah, commenced scolding away at me—at *me*, Maria, in a really indecent way, you know. A terrible temper, I assure you."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Mrs. Leander, giving the ottoman on which her feet had rested, a savage push.

"True's you're born," replied Sylvester, yawn-

ing. "A dangerous person to have around, I should say. Might get mad with the infants some day, you know, and do 'em some, ah, damage."

"Mercy!" said Mrs. Leander, growing pale at the mention of the possibility of any harm coming to her darlings. "I'm glad I made up my mind to take care of the dear little things nights myself. That girl shan't stay here another week."

"Sensible decision!" said Sylvester, ringing the bell for a servant to come in and throw a stick of wood on the fire. Just here Mrs. Allenworth, who had been in the kitchen consulting with the cook about the concoction of some dish that her son was fond of, entered the room, and was informed that the nurse had been exceedingly impertinent to Julian, and that said young gentleman did not consider her a safe person to have about, and therefore she must, of course, be discharged.

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Allenworth, drawing a chair near the open grate, and putting her feet on the fender, "if things aren't coming to a pretty pass when people are insulted in their own homes! Of course she must go. Julian

dear,"—to Sylvester, who had fallen about half asleep in his chair and was breathing very audibly—"aren't you a little hoarse? I'll tell Jane to fix you up some hot lemonade. No, I'll do it myself; then I'll know it's all right. Mother's boy must not be allowed to get congestion of the lungs."

"Oh, hot lemonade is too deuced flat," said the aroused Sylvester. "Let James bring up a bottle of the wine I heard old—what's-his-name—Allenworth bragging about the other day when those two bankers were to dinner."

The wine was brought, and two hours later "mother's boy" got up to his room with the help of James, and by clinging to the banisters and other objects that came in his way, and was obliged to hold fast to his chair to keep himself from falling while he was being undressed.

He sank into a drunken sleep, muttering, "Folks don't make much, yer know, by giv'n' back talk to J. Sylvester, att'rn'y."

When her day's work was done Cecil made her way home with a heavy and angry heart.

"Oh, how I despise him—despise him!" she exclaimed under her breath, and her boot-heels

went down with a sounding thud upon the pavement. "The insulting" —

She did not finish the ejaculation. I doubt if she could find a word that would express her meaning. When she reached 13 G — street she entered the house, and, going straight to the piano-stool, sat down upon it without saying a word to Grace, who sat by the table sewing, and commenced playing. Rattle, bang, bang, rattle, went the piano. Fast and heavily fell the fingers upon its keys.

"The wind's in the east," said Grace, who had come into the kitchen where Nattie was preparing the evening meal, to get her pressing iron.

"That's a fact, and blowing a regular nor'-wester," answered Nattie, dexterously turning a flapjack on the griddle, quite unconscious that she had made a speech worthy of Mrs. Partington. Grace's iron was too hot, so she put it on the zinc under the stove, and decided she would not do the pressing or sew any more that night. She took a seat by the kitchen window, and was there when Carmen came in.

"Supper ready?" asked the latter cheerily, as she hung her coat and hat on a hook in the corner.

"Yes," answered Natalie, who was leaning against the sink, but " — with a nod towards the sitting-room — "I'm waiting for clearing weather and change in barometer."

Carmen smiled as she glided away, but said nothing. Going to where Cecil sat, she laid her hand with a caressing motion on her hair, stooped and kissed the full forehead, and said:

"I'm ever so sorry that any thing troubles you, little girl. I wish you wouldn't mind it."

Still for a time the stormy playing went on, but by degrees the touch on the instrument grew lighter, the sounds softer and lower, and finally ceased altogether.

"The hurricane is past, girls," said Cecil, coming into the kitchen with Carmen.

That night, during the consultation hour, she told the girls what had vexed her. Grace and Nattie insisted upon hearing what both parties said, and when the recital was finished Grace declared that what Cecil said was "Just splendid," and Nattie applauded by shouting:

"Three cheers for Cecil the eloquent!"

"I hope the truth you told him will do him some good," said Carmen.

CHAPTER X.

A DISMISSAL AND NEW ENGAGEMENT.

The land of song within thee lies,
Watered by living springs;
The lids of Fancy's sleepless eyes
Are gates unto that Paradise;
Holy thoughts like stars, arise,
Its clouds are angels' wings.

—LONGFELLOW.

WHAT are you thinking of? 'Your mind is full of something that doth take your mind from feasting.'"

My girls were at the breakfast-table, on the morning after the occurrence related in the last chapter, and the person addressed was Cecil, the speaker Nattie.

"Wondering what will be the result of my yesterday's plain speaking," replied Cecil, who had been cutting the toast on her plate into small pieces, but not tasting it. "I feel sure Puff-ball Sylvester will do something to be re-

venge upon me. "Such a nature as his cannot bear the truth about its owner amiably." "

"It's dreadful," said Grace; but whether she referred to Sylvester's nature or the very tough steak she was trying to cut, I am unable to say.

"Every thing will be all right," said Carmen. "Don't let's talk of him."

"'Break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue,'" quoted Cecil, commencing to eat the toast she had so carefully cut.

"I should think Shakespeare's ghost would appear to you and Nattie," said Carmen, smiling.

"It would be quite exhilarating to have so toney a visitor," replied Cecil.

"If he does, I hope he'll let us know when he's coming, so Grace can dress up and look stylish for the occasion," declared Nattie, upsetting her coffee as she reached for the pepper. "Grace would enjoy it, and it wouldn't hurt the ghost. She has to keep up the respectability of the establishment. The other day a man called here and asked to see my mistress, and I sent him in to negotiate with

her for a kind of salve that would cure every kind of sore under the sun—if we might credit his words; I could hear his praises of it, as the sitting-room door was open, while I kept on scouring knives, rejoicing for once in my lowliness.”

“Probably if the ghost condescends to call it will be in the ‘witching hour of night,’ and he’ll be only visible to you and me, Nat,” said Cecil.

“Hope he’ll wear ‘his beaver up,’ so we’ll recognize him,” said Nattie, gathering up the dirty dishes within her reach.

“I see we are a little late this morning,” said Grace, who had risen from the table and been to the sitting-room to look at the clock.

They all arose at this, and soon Nattie was alone with her housework.

Mrs. Leander as she crossed the hall that morning *en route* for the nursery, looked as though she intended to say something severe; but when she opened the door and stood face to face with imperious, honest-looking Cecil, her expression changed, and her manner was any thing but harsh, hard or commanding. She said “Good-morning,” remarked on the beauty

of the weather, the clearness of the air, spoke of a geranium in the window, and then said in a low voice: "I suppose, Miss Emerson, you would have no difficulty in procuring another situation; and as the children are not as much trouble as some, I—that is, mother and I—think we can manage them alone awhile."

"I am to understand that my services are to be dispensed with?" questioned Cecil, looking straight into the troubled face of her employer.

"Well, after to-day I think we shall hardly need you," was the reply.

"I will go immediately," said Cecil, without asking a question or hesitating a moment.

"I will consider it a favor if you will stay to-day," said Mrs. Leander. "Mother and I wish to be away this afternoon, and would like to leave the children at home."

"I will remain, but you will remember that I do it as a favor," said Cecil, and with a meek "Thank you," Mrs. Leander left the room, and was soon telling Mrs. Allenworth and Julian that Cecil was to go that night.

"What did you say to her, ah, sis?" inquired J. Sylvester.

"All that was necessary," replied Mrs. Leander rather shortly, as she unfolded a letter just brought in for her, and commenced reading it in a way that said she did not care to be disturbed; and J. Sylvester sank back on the sofa with an expression which would have warranted one in supposing that if some person would invent a machine by means of which one could manage to exist without moving at all, said person would have one grateful patron.

Left alone with her charge, Cecil's face showed that her thoughts were not of the most cheerful or agreeable kind.

"I wonder what will come next," she said half aloud. "If I shall be obliged to endure months of idleness again. Oh, I believe I am getting weary and homesick with all this vain waiting."

She tried to appear as usual, but her manner was less sprightly than it was wont to be, and I think must have had a depressing influence upon the children; for they played with less enthusiasm than usual, and long before the customary time for him to have his nap, Willie left his loved blocks, and, coming to her, said with a little quiver of his red lips:

“Willie is tired ; will nursie rock him, and sing him something ?”

Very tenderly did she lift the child to her lap, and when the small head nestled against her arm, she sang in a voice exceedingly sweet, Barry Cornwall’s “Sleepy Song.”

Sing ! sing me to sleep !
 With gentlest words in some sweet, slumbrous measure,
 Such as lone poet on some shady steep,
 Sings to the silence in his noonday leisure.

Sing ! as the river sings
 When gently it flows between soft banks of flowers,
 And the bee murmurs and the cuckoo brings
 His faint May music ’tween the golden showers.

Sing ! O divinest tone !
 I sink beneath some wizard’s charming wand ;
 I yield, I move, by soothing breezes blown,
 O’er twilight shores into the Dreaming Land.

The musically fastidious ones of New York know all about Gilmore’s concerts. Instantly the words were spoken in the hearing of an initiated person, there arose before him a vision of a beautiful room, well, but softly lighted, snugly filled with delighted crowds ; a commodious stage, upon which appeared handsome men and women with the finest of voices and most elegant of costumes.

It chanced one day soon after his rather hearty dinner, when Mr. Allenworth was taking a nap—which could hardly be called a quiet one, as a gurgling sort of noise often escaped from his throat—in his easy-chair, a servant entered the room, and said a gentleman was in the library who wished to see him, and volunteered the information that said gentleman acted as though he was “beside himself.”

With a spring which was surprising for one of his corpulency, Mr. Allenworth got upon his feet, and with a rather sleepy “Bless my soul! what can have happened!” hastened to greet his visitor, and was soon shaking hands with Tedcastle Gilmore, whose concerts so pleased musical New York.

He was a large, nice-looking, gray-headed, gray-eyed, smooth-faced old gentleman, with a remarkably earnest manner, and a quick, impulsive way of speaking.

The men who were employed by him commonly called him Teddy Torpedo; and I can but think it was an appropriate name for him, since he was very like a torpedo in the respect that if any thing came against him he

was sure to explode, and that with a good deal of noise. He used so many adjectives in conversation, and used them so often, I think it would be only reasonable to suppose that he might sometimes have sighed for a new set to be made, so that he might lay the old ones aside for a season, and enjoy the use of the fresh ones. As for myself, he reminded me of nothing so much as a strong, blustering north wind. But an exceedingly warm heart beat in this man's breast. Had she known his name, many a poor woman could have told how this same Teddy Torpedo had spoken soft words to her when many a milder person had passed her by without notice; and, better yet, slipped into her shrunken hand the money that would bring food and fire. The children were not few who, had he made himself known unto them, could have related how they had been led by his hand, or carried in his strong arms, to places of safety and shelter, and through him provided with the homes they so sadly needed. He was ever on the side of the weak and needy. The world was much better for his living in it. What higher compliment can we pay a man than that?

When Mr. Allenworth reached the library, Gilmore was pacing up and down the room, his face red, his forehead tied up into knots, his hands thrust under his coat-tails. He and Mr. Allenworth had been schoolfellows, and were now, as when boys, firm friends.

"Glad to see you, upon my word," said the latter. "Where have you been that you have stayed away so long a time?"

"Thank you, thank you, Allenworth," was the reply. "Been about here, but so outrageously busy couldn't leave; and I'm bound to confess that only the most infernal luck that ever a man had has brought me here to-day. I'm in a most exasperating scrape, I assure you, and thought perhaps you could assist me."

"Hope I can," said Mr. Allenworth. "What's the matter?"

"Well, you see," said Gilmore, "the first of our fall concerts is three weeks from to-night; and to-day I got word that my best singer is sick with typhoid fever. Can't possibly be out for a month or two of course. Did you ever hear of any thing so infamously ridiculous? Sickness is a confounded nuisance any way, and particularly so in this case. I don't want

to trust one of my other singers with Miss Delisle's part of the affair. They are all good in their places, but not one of them can fill hers. I remember when I was here last some foreigner was teaching your daughter music. I thought possibly he might know of some one who could render what I want sung and not make an unmitigated farce of it. Can you tell me where I can find the fellow? His name is so abominably odd I can't recall it."

"I think I have his address somewhere," said Mr. Allenworth, taking a leather wallet from his pocket and opening it.

Directly opposite the library-door, with only the width of the hall between them, was the nursery-door, and on this afternoon both these doors were ajar. While Mr. Allenworth was looking for the desired address, a sound of singing came into the room where he and his friend sat, and with close attention did the latter listen to it.

"I have found it," said Mr. Allenworth, holding out a card. "I think he"—

But Gilmore motioned him to be silent, and sat like one entranced, the lines all smoothed

from his forehead, the irritated expression gone, his eyes filled with a glow of appreciative light. The song that had closed Willie Leander's eyes had reached the ears of this most excellent judge of music, and with the voice that sang it he was enthralled.

"Whom have you here, Allenworth, that has such a deliciously melodious voice?" he said, excitedly rising when the song was finished. "Don't sit there looking so infernally stupid, but take me at once to the person who was singing."

"Why, I really think it must be Maria's nurse girl," said the bewildered Mr. Allenworth, who knew and cared nothing about music.

"A nurse girl, and with such a voice!" exclaimed Gilmore. "What a diabolical shame!"

Very soon Cecil heard a knock, and when she had said "Come in!" was astonished to see Mr. Allenworth with another gentleman, enter.

"Why in the name of all that's ridiculous, don't you sing?" questioned Gilmore, standing before the puzzled nurse, and waiting for no introduction.

"I've just been singing," said Cecil, smiling

in spite of her amazement. "Will you be seated?"

"But by all that's absurd, why don't you sing in public?" was the next question of Gilmore's, who took no notice of the invitation given.

"That's just what I've been trying to get a chance to do for some time," replied Cecil; "but nobody wants me."

"But somebody *does* want you," cried Gilmore. "It's outrageous, your being here. How much do you know of music?"

"My father and Mr. Ehrenfried have taught me considerable about it," replied Cecil.

"Why, child, you have a marvellous voice," said Gilmore enthusiastically. "Three weeks from to-night I want some one to sing 'Rest in the Lord' and 'Rock of Ages,' at my opening fall concert. Will you try to do this, beginning at once to make preparations for so doing? If you can do it successfully, I think you need not fear for your future. Come and practise at my rooms, will you? I want you, and if you do not fail, I can afford to pay you well."

"I shall be so glad to have a chance to sing!" said Cecil gratefully, wanting no guarantee of this man's respectability but his face.

“Have you ever tried to find one?” asked Gilmore.

“Many times,” answered Cecil.

“Well, you see concert-givers are overrun with applications by people with no more music in them than a locomotive,” answered Gilmore, “and that hurts the chances of the really talented ones. We seldom ask one to sing now, having heard so many who had nothing to recommend them to us, and I dare say others can tell the same story. Well, be on hand to-morrow night at seven promptly. I hate this detestable dilatory work.”

“May I inquire your name?” asked Cecil.

“How intolerably stupid I am!” exclaimed Gilmore impatiently, as he handed her a card and bade her good-afternoon.

Glancing at the pasteboard in her hand when he had gone, Cecil gave a little start of surprise, and the color came and went in her cheeks. How strange it seemed to be engaged to sing for Tedcastle Gilmore!

CHAPTER XI.

THE NIGHT OF THE CONCERT.

What harmony is this? My good friend, hark!
Marvellous sweet music!—SHAKESPEARE.

LIGHTLY tripped Cecil homeward on the night after her conversation with Gilmore. As lightly did she go up the stairs when home was reached, and presently little glad trills of music could be heard, telling as plainly as words could have done, that something pleasant had occurred.

“Clear weather, barometer high,” shouted Nattie, scrubbing away at the dough on her hands, and speaking to Grace who had been kept at 27 Cavendish square that day, and now entered the room.

“Glad to hear the child playing away so happily,” replied Grace.

“Good! Our little Cecil is joyful to-night,”

said Carmen, coming in at that very moment.

"Glad as a spring morning, said Nattie, pushing a pan of biscuit into the oven, and burning her hand at the same time. If I wasn't a little late about supper already I should take time to go in and inquire if she had discovered that she loved J. Sylvester after all, and had reconsidered her decision, as they do in novels.

"Glad you've concluded to attend to the supper," said Grace, "for I'm starving. Oh, I saw such a lovely piece of dress goods to-day! Wish I could have a suit from it. I wonder if we shall ever have just what we want."

"'When our ships come in,'" sang Carmen, sounding like a weak-voiced bumblebee. She was a dear lover of music, but was never known to get more than a very small part of a tune right, and usually hummed without getting any part correct.

"I wonder if you don't want to know what has happened to-day!" said Cecil, entering the kitchen ere long.

"Course we do. Hurry up and tell," said Grace. "We are being consumed with curiosity."

"Keep right on consuming till the consultation hour," replied Cecil. "I'm not going to divulge the secret till then. It will give me a good lesson in self-restraint to keep it awhile, for I'm dying to tell."

I think the supper was hurried out of the way with more despatch than usual that night, and am sure the dishes were washed with surprising alacrity.

"We'll have consultation hour a little earlier than usual to-night," said Carmen, when they were all in the sitting-room. "Begin, Cecil!"

"Well," said Cecil, "be it known unto all whom it may concern, that yours truly is engaged to sing at Gilmore's opening concert, three weeks from to-night."

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed Grace; but she evidently believed her friend's statement, for she added, "isn't that nice!"

"I'm so glad!" said Carmen, in a tone that left her hearers in no doubt of the sincerity of her words.

"Hurrah, for the improved Jenny Lind!" cried Natalie, wildly waving her arm, thereby upsetting Grace's work-basket which was near her on the table, and sending its contents spin-

ning in every direction. "I am delighted!"

"We shall have to sit some distance from Nattie when Cecil sings," said Grace, stooping down to pick up a spool and her scissors which were near her, "or she will knock our hats off in her enthusiasm."

"The next question is, wherewithal shall I be clothed," said Cecil, when they had learned how she came to be engaged and again expressed their pleasure.

"Grace is the proper person to consult on that subject," said Natalie.

"Of course it will be in something simple," said Grace, a little regretfully, "since our pocket-books are not extremely well filled."

Lest any reader should put my Grace down as overfond of fine clothing, I will say just here that she was nothing of the kind. She loved beauty, and richness where it was appropriate met with her strong approval. She cared somewhat more for handsome and costly apparel than did Cecil; a great deal more than did Carmen and Natalie, though all liked fitting and well-looking apparel. But it is when one's love of dress causes him to think more of the garb than of the mind and char-

acter of the wearer, or leads one into harmful extravagance, that it becomes wicked, and Grace's did neither the one nor the other.

"God must approve of beauty, and delight himself in richness," she would say, "else why does he not let the grass come up any color? It would be just as useful if it was a dull brown, as it is with its pretty green hue. And why does he cause any flowers to come forth? we could get on without them. And why doesn't he let the sun go down in a dull black cloud, or any way it happens, instead of piling up the west with red and gold?"

I cannot blame my Grace for loving beautiful clothing.

"I would like you to wear white muslin, since you can afford no richer dress," said Carmen.

There was some talk of other things, but I think the matter was decided from that time. This quiet-voiced girl had much influence in the household to which she belonged.

"O, Cecil!" cried Grace; "I have some lovely old lace that will be beautiful for your throat and sleeves. I had it one summer when I went to Saratoga. I haven't thought of it

for months ; should probably have sold it when we needed money so much if I had remembered that I had it. Glad I didn't."

"That's just the thing!" said Nattie. "Wear some flowers with it."

"You must have some white slippers and gloves," said Grace. "Now we have it all arranged, I believe."

And so the evening passed in pleasant talk and plans ; and so full was Cecil's thoughts of the future that it was not till Carmen said : "I'm afraid you'll have too little time for practise," that she remembered to tell her friends of her dismissal.

"It's like a play, only a good deal nicer," said Nattie ; an opinion in which they all heartily agreed.

They — or rather Cecil and Grace — sang a joyous good-night song, and the landlady sitting in the room below, and who had heard the frequent laughter, and now listened to the merry little tune, exclaimed : "How chipper them young things do feel to-night!" and sighed as she said it, thinking, perhaps, of the time when she too was a chipper young thing, and lived, not fenced around by high city walls,

but free as the birds that built their nests and sang their songs in the trees on the old farm, many, many miles from the crowded town where she now had her home.

Now followed busy days for my girls. Every afternoon and sometimes far into the night, the practising went on at Gilmore's concert rooms; and, keeping himself out of sight for the most part, Tedcastle Gilmore listened particularly to Cecil's singing. He would sit quietly until she finished, and then storm around, bestowing all sorts of strong, approving adjectives upon her voice.

The muslin for the dress was bought, a dress-maker hired to fit the garment, and then the girls made it, Cecil and Grace superintending the work, and each working when she had time.

Mr. Ehrenfried came daily now, and to him was Cecil indebted for many suggestions and hints that helped her materially, and rendered her more than ever grateful to him.

At last the evening of the concert came, and Cecil put on her pure white dress, with the soft, rich lace in its neck and short sleeves, her only ornament being some bright

wild flowers which Mr. Ehrenfried had sent that afternoon.

A carriage was sent early for her, that she might have time after reaching the concert-room for one last rehearsal.

"I shall come home in triumph or disgrace," she said in a tone evidently intended to be light, but which was a trifle anxious in spite of her.

"I trust you will come in triumph," said Carmen brightly, "and I *know*, whether your singing is a success or not, you will not come in disgrace."

"Where in the world is that old shoe I have had saved up for two weeks to throw after her?" said Natalie, rummaging in a box containing odds and ends, and which stood at the end of the sink.

"The puppy from down-stairs was up here yesterday, and I saw him have an old shoe in his mouth as he departed," said Grace. "If I had known it was yours, and of your amiable intentions toward Cecil, I would have rescued it."

"If you are disgraced, Cecil," said Nattie, "lay it all to Grace and that small dog. I

intended to do the fair thing by you, but my plans are foully frustrated."

Then all three kissed Cecil in a hushed sort of way, and as she left the room I doubt not that three hearts sent up a prayer that all things would conspire to render her successful.

Mr. Ehrenfried, ever thoughtful, had taken care that seats not too far back from the stage should be secured for my girls, and something more than an hour from the time of Cecil's departure, they were occupying these seats, and he was with them.

Several people sang, and then Miss Emerson was announced, and in a moment stood behind the glowing footlights, before the expectant audience, charming indeed with her perfect figure, her crown of bright hair, her white raiment, and the wild blossoms at her throat.

Many were there whose robes cost a hundred times the price paid for hers; whose jewels were a fortune in themselves; but in that room there was not so beautiful a person as my Cecil.

Conversation which had been going on during a short interval of waiting ceased; fans dropped into their owners' laps, glasses were taken up, and a large number of New York's most fas-

tidious people fixed their eyes on the new singer; but no sneering or disapproving word was spoken. Even J. Sylvester, who had heard from his mother, who of course had learned it from her husband, that Cecil was to sing at Gilmore's, and had in a lazy fashion ridiculed the idea, only said now to his sister, who sat by his side:

"She *is* a rather—what-you-call-it—fine-looking girl, you know, isn't she, sis?"

For a moment Cecil stood, looking half frightened, her cheeks flushed, her eyes gleaming, and as she commenced singing a little quavering was noticeable in her voice; but presently her eyes searching among the faces looking up from the seats below, beheld the countenances of her four friends, and for a time she looked at no one else, and seemed to be singing to them alone; but ere long her face lost its frightened look, and her tones were smooth and full as she looked upon all the upturned faces before her and continued to sing the beautiful and comforting words of the tender anthem "Rest in the Lord." As the wonderful music rose and fell, and floated on the air of the room, no sound could be heard but the melody which delighted as critical an audience as could have

been chosen; and when it ceased every one sat a few seconds as though spell-bound, and then applause that was deafening burst forth. Encore followed encore, and again Cecil sang the lovely words, and again the applause was long and hearty. When she came for the third time upon the stage a shout of welcome greeted her, and when the second hymn had been sung, encores no less enthusiastic and prolonged than the first had been, told that she had succeeded in highly pleasing her audience. And when she had sung for the fourth time and was retiring, the applause was tremendous.

“A most stupendous success!” exclaimed Mr. Gilmore, tearing about. “Most stupendous!” he repeated, as though he enjoyed the sound of the words; “what an infernal shame you haven’t sung before!”

When a carriage came to take Cecil home, she informed the driver that she had friends there and would walk with them; but that individual declared there was room for half a dozen inside, so my girls went home in state, after thanking Mr. Ehrenfried for his kindness and bidding him good-night.

They said but little on the way, but I think

Cecil understood that it was full hearts, not indifference, that kept her companions as silent as her own grateful feelings were keeping her. But irrepressible Nattie was not to be kept quiet long.

"Well," she declared when they had reached home, sitting down in the coal-hod with her best dress on in her abstraction, "I think we are well paid for all the tooting and tuning up we've listened to. I really must hug you, Cecil." And getting up she bestowed a most ferocious squeeze upon her friend, in spite of that young lady's entreaties that she would wait till she took her dress off, as it might muss it.

"It's so splendid!" said Grace.

"And we are all so glad!" added Carmen.

Cecil went to her piano before she retired, and out in the night air floated strains which told to those who were abroad and heard them, and took in their meaning, that a grateful musician sent them forth.

CHAPTER XII.

GENTLEMEN TO TEA.

“The man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did, but what he became. With self-renunciation begins life.—CARLYLE.”

CARMEN wrote to Mr. Arlington that Cecil was to sing for Gilmore, and mentioned the night, and a desire that he should hear her; and he was among those who listened to her, having secured an operator to take his place in the office till such an hour as the concert should be over. The next morning after the entertainment, as Carmen was going to her work, he met her a short distance from her home.

“Good-morning, friend Carmen,” he said, holding out his hand with a smile. “I came to meet you this morning, that I might tell you how much I enjoyed hearing your friend sing

last night. I thought it would be better than writing it."

"Then you heard her?" said Carmen eagerly, when she had returned his greeting and while he held her hand.

"Yes; and never so sweet a singer, I think," he said.

"I am so glad!" said Carmen, in a pleased tone. "I like to have people appreciate my little girl's talents; and then I am glad too that you were entertained, and passed a pleasant evening."

"Thank you; it was indeed pleasant," he said.

"Just then glancing up at him, Carmen noticed that his face, never round, was becoming positively sharp-featured, and was paler than when she last saw him.

"I am sure you are not well," she said; "I wish I could do something for you. Are you sure you are not really sick?"

"Quite sure," he answered. "Only a little pain in my side now and then. And, my friend" — he seldom addressed her in any way but this now — "do you think loneliness wears upon a person? I believe I am very lonely during a great part of the time."

"I know it does," was the answer. "Mr. Arlington, can't you come to my house yet?"

He paused a moment, then asked:

"Do you think, my friend, I will ever fall again? Ever be the degraded being I was when you took pity upon me and helped me up to where I am?"

"I am sure you never will," said Carmen, in a confident tone. "Has he not promised to keep the feet of his saints?"

"Then I will come," he said gratefully. "Come so gladly, always dear, true friend."

"Let it be soon," said Carmen. "Can you not come to-night? Please do. Surely you can get one of the day operators to stay awhile for you this evening. Take tea and stay as long as you can with us. Join me as I go home."

"I will try to do as you wish," he answered, and then after a moment's silence went on:

"My friend, if you should learn that I had deceived you — deceived you in something that could make no difference to you or me," he added quickly, as though afraid of being misunderstood, or mistrusted of something of which he was not guilty — "deceived you and others

because I thought it best for you and them to be thus deceived; you would not be angry with me?"

"Why, no, I think not," said Carmen, in a rather puzzled way. "I don't think I understand you, but I feel certain you would not keep on doing any thing that would grieve me or give me pain if I ever learned of it."

"Indeed I would not," he said heartily; "and I thank you for your confidence in me."

"Why should you thank me when the confidence is deserved?" she asked.

"We are near the office now," he said, without answering aught to her question; "so I will say good-by, and join you to-night if possible."

When Carmen reached the office, she wrote a note to the girls at home, saying Mr. Arlington would, if possible, take tea with them and her, and suggesting that Mr. Ehrenfried be invited, and sent a boy with it.

"We haven't had a man at the table for so long I don't know as I'll know how to behave towards these two," said Nattie.

"Oh, all you've got to do is to pass the butter every minute or two, and ask them

semi-occasionally if their tea is out," said Cecil.

"What is stylish for people with limited means to have for tea, Grace?" asked Nattie, pausing, dust-brush in hand.

"Oh, we must have some baked chicken," said Grace, "and I'll make some tarts. I know how to make lovely ones. You can help me sew an hour or two, Cecil, and then I'll assist about supper. You better make some of that kind of cake you had the other night, that we all liked so well, Nattie."

"All right," said Nattie. "Soon's I finish dusting I'll go out and get the fowl that's to grace our festive board."

Just then there was a ring, a short, sharp, imperative ring at the hall-door, and when Cecil answered it, she stood face to face with Tedcastle Gilmore.

"Good-morning, Miss Emerson, good-morning," he said briskly. "Can I have a few minutes' conversation with you?"

Cecil bade him enter, and in a few minutes came forth with shining eyes and a glad face, to inform her friends who had all vacated the sitting-room on hearing the invitation to the

stranger, that she was engaged to sing until further notice, at fifty dollars a week.

"Isn't that delightful!" exclaimed Grace, her whole face in a glow of pleasure.

"Wish I had something to make a noise on," said Nattie. "I don't feel like keeping still. Cecil, it's glorious! Hope I can keep from shouting while I'm after that chicken."

"You might put some coal in the stove," said Grace, stitching busily away. "That would make noise enough for any reasonable young lady, and it's really chilly here."

"I am to rehearse at Gilmore's this afternoon," said Cecil. "He wishes me to sing again on Saturday evening. Hope I can get home to tea."

"You *must* get home," said Natalie, taking up the grocery-basket, having put on the coal as Grace desired. "You will be the bright, particular star of our galaxy. Ahem!"

"Don't be foolish Nat," said Cecil, as the chief housekeeper left the room.

Cecil helped Grace with the sewing in the forenoon, and so the latter found time to make the tarts spoken of; and they were a decided success. The cake too looked wonder-

fully nice, and the chicken was a beautiful brown when taken from the oven.

"We do ourselves credit as housekeepers, Grace," said Nattie, polishing a teaspoon vigorously.

"The proof of the pudding, etc.," answered Grace.

The rooms were made to look their brightest and best. Not one of those girls whose sympathy was not aroused when she remembered the lonely lives of the men who were to sit that night at their table; and each longed to make them feel a home atmosphere about while with them. A note had been despatched to Mr. Allenworth's, where Cecil knew Mr. Ehrenfried could be found at the hour it was sent, and the messenger brought back a leaf of his blank book, on which was written that he would come.

Cecil arrived home at half-past five, and to her fell the task of slicing the chicken.

"It looks nice sliced for tea," said Grace, "and I've just thought of a few stitches I have to take in a garment that I thought finished. If I leave it till morning I may forget it. So you better see to the fowl, as Nattie would

be likely to have half of it on the floor if she tried to cut it."

"You needn't cast reflections just because I broke a saucer and spilt all the knives since we began to get supper," said Nattie. "One wants a little variety now and then."

"Did you say this bird was a chicken?" asked Cecil, working away on the fowl in question.

"That's what the meat-man solemnly affirmed," answered Nattie.

"So young and so untender," said Cecil, still sawing away.

"I think there's little doubt we've been fowl-ly dealt with," said Nattie, watching the carving going on.

When Mr. Arlington entered the room with Carmen, and had been introduced to Grace and Natalie—both of whom met him cordially—he took a seat where the light was dimmest, although a chair had been set for him in a brighter place. Cecil was in the kitchen on some necessary errand, but presently she returned, and came forward for an introduction to Carmen's friend.

"Mr. Arlington, this is my friend Cecil. Miss Emerson, my friend"—

Carmen paused, for when she would have spoken the first name of this young man, she remembered she had never learned it. His letters to her had been signed simply R. A.

Cecil spoke no word for a moment, as she looked steadfastly at the person before her, a surprised, glad, thankful expression growing in her face. At last she said in a tremulous tone, holding out her hands: "Ross, Ross, my brother, can this really be you!"

"Dear little sister," he said, "it is really I, your much-ashamed, exceedingly-penitent brother. Am I quite welcome? Are you glad to see the scapegrace of our family, Cecil?"

His voice had a husky sound, and there was a misty look in his dark eyes as he drew his sister's head down to his shoulder.

"You are not a scapegrace now," said Cecil, "and nothing I could say would tell you how glad I am to see you. O, Ross, they must know this at home. You—both of us—must write at once."

"Yes, we will write at once," he said.

"Why have you not been here before?" said Cecil. "Carmen says she has told you of us all, and our names.

“If I had been a better son and brother,” he answered, “you would not have remained near me so long and not have seen me. I did not want to come till I was sure the manhood our friend Carmen helped me regain, would not be lost. I did not want to disappoint you again. Carmen seems sure I will not fall again, and, little sister, I feel certain too, for I have given up my life to God, to whom she led me, and I am sure he will shape it into a more noble thing than it has been. I can never repay our friend Carmen, sister. She has helped me immeasurably in keeping all that is best in me alive; all my worst underfoot.”

With looks full of gratitude, brother and sister each held out a hand to the girl to whom they owed so much; and with a face radiant in spite of her tears, she took them without speaking.

The other girls would have left Cecil alone with her brother for a time, but the latter bade them stay, saying he had nothing to say that they might not hear.

“The reason I took my middle name,” said Ross, turning to Carmen—he and Cecil had

seated themselves upon the sofa, and Carmen sat in a chair near them—"for my name is Ross Arlington—was that with all my waywardness I shrank from disgracing my honest family. I loved them all at home. Can you forgive the deception?"

"There is nothing to forgive," said Carmen softly. "I am glad you did this."

When Mr. Ehrenfried came, and had been introduced to Ross, and heard, together with Ross and Carmen, of Cecil's new good fortune, they all went to tea, and it was a glad party that gathered about the table. Not a person was in her company but loved Cecil and rejoiced in her happiness and success.

Every article of food was praised, and Nattie declared she thought some of opening a restaurant, and hiring Grace as first cook.

Later, Carmen had a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Ehrenfried while the others examined some albums, and told him enough of Ross's history to interest him deeply; and from that night a friendship strong and deep was commenced between the two men, which was an advantage to both. Cecil's brother would have been a person of interest to Ernest

Ehrenfried without these bits of history. Now he knew the young man needed friends and society he was doubly so; for no tale of another's need fell on unheeding ears when told to Mr. Ehrenfried, and in no case when he could in any degree minister to those needs were his ministrations spared. And Ross found ever after, as long as they both lived, in this large-hearted, unassuming man, just the male friend he had dreamed of and longed to possess.

On the evening in question, when Ross arose, saying it was ten o'clock and he must go, as his substitute wished to be relieved before eleven, every one exclaimed how rapidly the time had slipped away, and how much they had enjoyed it.

With promises to come again soon, and to make his visits frequent, Ross took his leave, accompanied by Mr. Ehrenfried, who was to come and sing with Cecil in the morning.

The dishes which had been left till now, that the entire time might be spent with the guests, were hurriedly washed, and then my girls made ready for bed.

“You were right in saying your friend was

handsome, Carmen," said Grace as she removed her ear-jewels.

"Yes, he is fine looking," said Carmen.

"A boy after me own heart," said Natalie, as she unbound her hair; and Cecil smiled proudly as she said:

"I do hope something nice will happen to the rest of you girls soon. I feel as though I was getting more than my share of good things."

"Well, like Sally Smith, you can't help it," said Grace, who was an enthusiastic admirer of the "Drummer Boy."

"I shan't be surprised whatever happens after this," said Natalie. "We are getting like girls in a book at a rapid rate, and Grace and I may make ourselves so famous you'll grind your teeth with jealousy yet. I don't suppose Carmen would be known beyond her 'small corner' in the world if she could."

"When you and Gracie are quite fit and ready, I am sure you will be given your heart's desire," said Carmen, smiling. "I am content in my corner at present."

"Dear Carmen, how full of sweet faith your life is!" said Nattie, as she nestled down beside

Cecil; and Grace's kiss on the lips that ever uttered such cheerful words, was tender indeed.

In a lonely room not far from the home of my girls, a man sat till into the morning hours looking out over the starlit sea.

"So beautiful!" he said, but spoke not of what he gazed upon. "So beautiful and beloved! But her love is not, cannot be for me. O, Father, help me to be brave and patient when I realize that it is not, cannot be for me!"

Sweetest chapter in this book!

CHAPTER XIII.

A FOLDED LEAF.

“ And thy name is a secret I sacredly keep ;
 But wherever this nature of mine is most fair,
 And its thoughts are the purest—below’d, thou art there !
 And whatever is noblest in aught that I do,
 Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.”

— OWEN MEREDITH.

PALER grew Ross Emerson’s face, and by degrees nearly his whole strength deserted him ; and at last, yielding to the entreaties of my girls, he sought the advice of a physician.

“ You are overworked, young man, and must rest,” said the man of medicine emphatically. “ You will be flat on your back in three weeks’ time if you keep on at work.”

“ But ” — began Ross.

“ No buts,” said the physician. “ You must either rest now or be sick abed later. Choose for yourself. Here is a prescription,” handing

him a piece of paper which he had written upon. "Take the medicine, I have ordered three times a day, before your meals, and let work alone, and in six weeks you'll be a new man."

And thus it came about—for he wisely heeded his physician's words, and left his office for awhile—that Ross, having his entire time on his hands, spent a great part of it at 13 G— street.

It happened on the evening of one of his earliest idle days, that he called at the home of my girls and found Carmen alone, Cecil having gone to a rehearsal, and Nattie accompanied Grace on a shopping expedition.

He was unusually silent for a time, answering briefly his companion's inquiries regarding his health, and how he had passed the day, and starting no fresh topics for conversation. At last he said:

"My friend, I have been wanting to ask you something for some time, and I shall not have a better opportunity than the present one. Do you think, dear Carmen, when I have grown much better—as I will surely strive to do—when I am far worthier of you,

when the things of the past are a longer way, a much longer way behind, that you can love me enough to be my wife? I cannot hope to ever be good enough for you, my friend, but I will do my best, my very best, dear Carmen."

A look of pain stole into Carmen's face, and her voice was very earnest as she said:

"I am so sorry you have thought of this, Ross! So sorry you asked me this question!"

"Dear friend, forgive me," he said pleadingly. "I was mad, I suppose, to dream that you could care for me in the way I wished. You so pure, so good, so far above me! It was selfish indeed for me to ask so noble a wife for so poor a husband."

"Don't, Ross," she said, putting out her hand, "you hurt me. Listen, Ross! If my heart's best love was not already given, I know of no reason why I should not learn to care for you in the way you desire. It is not because I feel pure, or good, or far above you, dear friend, that I tell you that I cannot be your wife, but because I would give a husband no second place in my affection, and the first place was taken years ago."

“Years ago!” echoed Ross drearily. “Why, Carmen, not many years ago you were a child.”

“I possessed a woman’s heart while I was yet a child in years, Ross,” she said. “Ross, if I could give you the answer you wish, I am not sure it would be the best thing for you. Think one moment, my friend, and then tell me what is the strongest feeling with which you regard me.”

“Why, Carmen,” he answered, after a slight pause, “it is love. How can I help loving one who has done so much for me?”

“Ross,” said Carmen, “your question makes me more certain of what I thought before; that what you think doubtless is the deepest love you are capable of feeling, is merely intense gratitude. I feel sure, dear friend, that sometime there will come into your life a love that will fill your heart as your affection for me—an affection I highly prize, dear Ross—never can fill it, and, if reciprocated, give you a joy my love never could afford you.”

“May I ask,” said Ross hesitatingly, “if I have ever seen the man you—shall I say are going to marry?”

"I presume you never saw him, Ross," answered Carmen; "and indeed, my friend, I have not seen him for years, and he probably has a wife now."

"You mean to tell me he wronged you?" questioned Ross, an angry look coming into his face.

"Oh, no, no!" answered Carmen quickly. "He never wronged me."

"But, my friend," said Ross, a hopeful look growing in his face, "will not this love die out? Will you not learn sometime to think of him no more? I can be very patient if there is need."

"Listen yet a little, Ross," said Carmen, "and I will tell you in a short way something of a story to which other ears have never listened, and which would not have been told you but for this.

"When I was a little girl, Ross, and went to school in a State west of this city, a young man became one winter my teacher. He was out of health, and had been advised by his physician to seek the real bracing country air. There was no need that he should earn a living, for his father was already a wealthy man,

and doing a prosperous business in Philadelphia; but time passed slowly in the town in which the uncle he was visiting lived, and he preferred to work a part of the time, that the hours might pass more cheerfully. I was thirteen at the time, and I think must have been older than most girls of that age, for I remember that my teacher made more a companion of me than of other scholars whose years numbered as many as did mine. I was a lonely young being; I seemed to have grown away from the companions with whom I was thrown at school, though I did not know then why their company was so unsatisfactory to me.

“At home there was only the uncle and aunt with whom I lived. These two meant to be kind to me, I am sure, but they did not understand me, and were but poor associates for a young person. And so to the hungry-hearted girl to whom he talked as he might have done to one of twice her years—I recall the amused expression that would often come into his face at some question or answer of mine, and know that he regarded me as a child, an old, quaint sort of child, doubtless,

but still a child, to whom he read — he used often to spend an evening at my uncle's — and lent books. He became a hero to be worshipped; one to be almost broken-hearted about when he went away. His absence changed every thing for me. I had no thoughts not connected with him. I do not think he was ever out of my waking thoughts, and my dreams were always of him. I cared for nothing in life but the letters he now and then sent me. It was a woman's heart that loved him, Ross. A woman's heart that learned a lesson he never meant to teach. After a time, when his letters to me had ceased altogether, I heard through his aunt that he was soon to be married. O, Ross, how I suffered then! Although I had never thought to marry him, the idea of another being his wife nearly drove me wild. But my Father in heaven showed pity toward his child; I have learned to think without pain of him I love so well as the husband of another, and my heart does not ache as it used to do at the thought that he has probably forgotten me entirely. God has given me peace. But to-day I love the man of whom I have spoken better than in the old days when he was with me. He is next to God in my

heart, and the dearest thought of my life is, that in 'the world that sets this right' he will be my kind friend again. You surely do not think I shall forget him, Ross? Surely understand now why I cannot give you a husband's rightful place in my regard?"

"No, no; I cannot hope you will forgot him," was the answer. "Oh! Carmen, my friend, I believe I would give my life to bring you the happiness you deserve!"

"You are so good to me, Ross," she said, "and I so wish I need not have given you pain! Now shall we forget your question and this story, and be the same good friends we were before to-night?"

"We will always be the best of friends, Carmen," he said, taking the hand she held out in a close grasp. "The best of friends always."

Stooping, he lightly kissed her forehead, and in another moment she was alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

FIGHTING THE BLUES.

The office of religion is, not to drive us back upon ourselves in anxious self-criticism, but to take us out of ourselves and to unite us to the whole, in loving self-abandonment. A man must take himself for better or worse and forget himself; so shall he the soonest arrive at the beatific vision. — HEDGE.

MY girls naturally thought that Ross would go home while recruiting his health, and Cecil and Carmen urged his doing so, but he answered: "I don't want to go to them in this condition. I want to be well and strong when I visit them. I shall be better soon, and will see them before many months. Perhaps if I put off my visit for a time you can come home too, Cecil. I would like to have you there with me. I am sure you could not well leave the city now. Please say nothing to them at home of my ill health. I have caused them worry and trouble enough, God knows!"

And so the subject was dismissed, and the girls made him always welcome and at home in their rooms when he made his frequent visits. He and Cecil had both written to their parents on the next day after their meeting in the latter's home, he a penitent, pleading letter, she a joyous one; and before they had fairly begun to look for them, answers came to the missives. Answers teeming with gladness and thanksgiving, and telling of an intense desire to see the children who had left the home behind.

And now Cecil's only anxiety was for her friends — she felt sure her brother would soon be well again — she so wanted them to succeed as she was doing.

During many of these days of Ross' idleness, Grace was kept at the home of her employer. That lady's two daughters were having some dresses which were to be worn at a coming dramatic entertainment to be given by them, made, and wished to have the sewing-girl where they could make suggestions concerning said garments when agreeable to them to do so.

Cecil spent many hours rehearsing at Gilmore's

concert rooms, so Ross and Nattie often found themselves alone.

Ross was frequently low-spirited and restless during these days. He tried hard not to repine at the failure of his hopes in regard to Carmen, but he could but feel disappointed, and his health was not such as to help him much in seeming cheerful. He took care, however, to hide his gloomy feelings from Carmen, thinking he might seem by his manner to reproach her; but I think she understood how hard he was struggling to be brave and manly, for she took especial pains to find books that she thought would help him, and to make her words to him strong and helpful; and Nattie constituted herself a benevolent society of one member, and did her best to drive away his blues. She often caused him to laugh heartily at her merry speeches, and got him interested in all sorts of subjects. She declared she should be a rabid politician if a man, and discussed the affairs of the nation in a way that was more vivacious than logical, but still with more understanding of the subject than is usually shown by many who are supposed to be better posted about said affairs. As she took pains never to agree

with Ross' opinions, that young gentleman often found himself arguing with a good deal of spirit upon subjects he had hitherto taken no real interest in, and would sometimes declare if his opponent were a man he should be downright angry with him. All this delighted Nattie, and much of the newspaper matters that would otherwise have surely been skipped, were read attentively now that she might have fresh matter for debate. Ross read all the political matter too. "The masculine nature does not take kindly to being worsted, especially by a woman."

"Mr. Emerson," said Nattie one day when she was alone with the person addressed, and he was lounging rather listlessly on the sofa, "if it is not inpolite to inquire a gentleman's age, please tell me how old you are."

"How old?" he said. "I sometimes forget my age, I seem to myself to have lived so long; but reckoning by the calendar years since my birth, I am twenty-four."

"You look mature for that age," said Nattie, never meaning, I am sure, that her words should sting him; but it was a pained face that looked into hers as he said:

“And why should I not look mature, Nattie? Has my life been such as keeps the youthful appearance of the face? Nattie, sometimes I am ready to cry aloud in my regret for things of the past. I have thought about them so much since I have had no work to take my attention! Yesterday I was reading of Miss Phelps’ poor Nixy, who felt that she must always be ashamed, and I thought I too must always be ashamed, oh, so bitterly ashamed!”

“Mr. Emerson,” began Nattie, but Ross interrupted her with:

“Don’t call me Mr. Emerson. You are just Nattie to me. Let me be simply Ross to you.”

“Well then, Ross,” Nattie went on, “I cannot think it is quite right for you to feel that way. You have repented once—fully, truly repented—of all that was wrong in the past, and have given up yourself to God, and he has blotted out your transgressions, and clothed upon you with his righteousness. Having received so beautiful a garment, is it not ingratitude to the giver to be fretting because the old, cast-off garb was not pure and perfect, instead of enjoying the new one? If it is wrong for us, once having truly repented of, and been pardoned

for our sins, to forget them, why did our Saviour say 'Let not your hearts be troubled?' The dear Lord has promised, Ross, that their transgressions shall be remembered against his children no more forever. If *he* forgets, must we remember? I will tell you something, Ross, that Carmen said to me when I had been worrying about something that was past, and concerning the future. " 'I think,' she said, 'if the thought and anxiety we give the past and future of our lives, did not make us less thoughtful and earnest about our to-days, we should not make so many missteps and lay up for ourselves so much to be sorry about.' The words helped me, Ross. I hope they may do as much for you. I think when we have learned to let the 'dead past bury its dead,' and to put our best strength and thoughts into the doings of to-day, letting our to-morrows rest with God, we shall have discovered the way to be happy and successful. There, I never meant to preach you a sermon, Ross, but I believe I have!"

"And a good sermon too, Nattie," answered Ross. "A sermon I thank you for, and do not believe I shall soon forget. Thank you heartily, Nattie."

Ross' health was slow in coming back to him, and before he was ready to resume his work, Carmen, watching him as a mother might have done, noticed how, when in Nattie's company, his eyes often rested upon her, or followed her when she moved about, with a new, soft light in them, and with a glad little smile Carmen would say to herself:

"Things will work out all right in time, I feel sure. All right in time."

CHAPTER XV.

GRACE'S LIGHT AHEAD.

I see some sparkles of a better hope,
Which elder days may happily bring forth.

— SHAKESPEARE.

ONE morning when the three ladies, mother and two daughters, of 21 Cavendish square, were all in the sewing-room, consulting about the finishing off of the dress, the making of which had for some time kept Grace busy, a note was handed in, and when Miss Alice Everly, the elder of the young ladies, to whom the note was addressed, had read said note, she sank into a chair with consternation enthroned upon her countenance.

“Well, if I ever saw the beat of that!” she exclaimed indignantly, glancing at the tiny sheet in her hand.

“What in the world is it?” asked Elvira,

the younger sister. "Who wrote the note?"

"That—that" — Miss Everly had evidently intended to say something uncomplimentary to the writer of said missive, but thought better of it, and finished with "Laura Dillon wrote it."

"Why does it excite you, my dear?" asked Mrs. Everly in the same tone in which she might have inquired if it rained.

Nothing ever disturbed the serenity of this lady. With her everlasting gray and black dresses, always made of some mixed goods, and hair of the same colors, she might well have reminded one of a well-fed, good-natured Guinea hen.

"Read this," said Alice, waving the note above her head in as tragic a manner as though it had been an order for the immediate execution of the whole family, looking at Elvira, and taking no notice of her mother's question.

"Well, hand it here," said Elvira. "Do you think I can read it there?"

"Well, this is delicious!" she exclaimed sarcastically, when she had perused the short epistle.

"Hadn't you better tell mother what the trouble

is, pets?" asked Mrs. Everly, placidly folding her plump little hands.

If there had been a good smart earthquake in that particular place, I believe she would have inquired in the same even tone, by what all the unusual shaking was occasioned, and folded her hands as placidly as on this occasion.

"Well, mother," said Elvira, "would you believe Laura Dillon *could* accept an invitation to go to Chicago for a month just now?"

I will say for the reader's benefit, that Laura Dillon was a young lady who had intended to read two poems at the musical and literary entertainment to be given by the Everlys the next Tuesday evening. It was then Friday.

"Just *now!*" echoed Alice, as though fearful her sister might have been understood to say a year hence.

"Chicago," said Mrs. Everly musingly. "The name carries me back to the days when I was first married. We went to Chicago for one place, on our wedding tour, your pa and I. He had some business there for the firm—he was junior partner then of the firm of Lovejoy, McKay & Co.—and said as he must go there

he would combine business with pleasure, and really I thought" —

"Never mind now, mother, what you thought, please," said Alice, in a tone more vexed than polite. "The question is, what shall we do for some one to read for us?"

"And it is a question that must be settled very soon," said Elvira, in a way that would have warranted you in supposing that some one had said that the question could wait a week or so before it was answered.

"Sure enough," said Mrs. Everly, as though the fact had not occurred to her before. "Well, let me see. There's Emeline Smith" —

"Emeline Smith!" exclaimed Alice; "don't you know she always reads through her nose, and pronounces half her words wrong, in spite of all her boasting of her ability to read well?"

"Well, then," said Mrs. Everly, not at all daunted by the reception her suggestion received, "why not ask Letty Howard?"

"O, mother, don't!" said Elvira. "It needs some one with a good deal of expression in her voice to read 'Divided,' and Letty Howard's is as dry as Professor Ellstre's lectures on chemistry used to be."

“But what *shall* we do?” cried Alice. “Everybody expects to hear some good reading, and I shall be terribly mortified if we have to give up having any. Laura Dillon was all the really good reader I could hear of who was not engaged for next Tuesday evening.”

Now Grace was of a sympathetic and helpful disposition, and she really liked and was sorry for these girls. They had always, since her entrance into their home, treated her kindly and politely, never by word or act giving her to understand that they considered her beneath them; and, indeed, it is doubtful if they did, for they were sensible, Christian girls, and it was easy to see that Grace was a lady.

She longed to tell these ladies that she would serve them in place of the unfaithful Laura, but the thought that perhaps they would not relish the idea of their sewing-girl's reading at their entertainment — which she judged by appearances was to be a very aristocratic affair — kept her silent for some time.

At last, however, she glanced up from her work, and seeing the really distressed look on the faces of the two Misses Everly, her heart

smote her for not trying to help them, and she quickly said :

“I will read for you if you like. I have taken a good many lessons in elocution, and my teacher pronounced me fit for a public reader more than a year ago.”

“Why, how fortunate!” said Alice, her countenance instantly brightening. “I dare say you can do quite as well as Miss Dillon.”

“Yes, we seem to be really in luck,” said Elvira. “Would you mind reading something for us now?” she asked ; and then added hastily, as though afraid Grace would think she doubted her ability : “Just to let us get an idea of your style, you see. Something else might suit you better than the poems Miss Dillon selected.”

“I shall be glad to read any thing you wish,” replied Grace simply, and Elvira took up a volume of Whittier’s poems, and, opening it at random, glanced at the page before her, and said, as she handed the book to Grace :

“Read ‘The Waiting,’ please. It is a favorite of mine.”

“Miss Farwell, you are the sweetest reader I ever listened to,” declared Alice when the

poem was finished, and Elvira added: "It is really a treat to hear you. Thank you. You do *ever* so much better than Laura Dillon. You will surely come next Tuesday evening, won't you? I will hand you the poems Miss Dillon was going to read when you go home to-night. I know you will read them splendidly."

"I think so too," said Alice. "And, Miss Farwell, if you have sewing you wish to do for yourself, you must take time to do it. We don't need any thing more sewed this week after you finish the dress you're working on. We are extremely obliged to you."

• Grace thanked them, but declared with a half sigh that she had nothing to make for herself.

Her heart was glad and thankful as she sped home that evening.

"Who knows what may come of it," she said to herself many times.

The poems selected to be read, were Jean Ingelow's beautiful one "Divided," and Phœbe Cary's laughable one, "Was He Henpecked?" Every day during the time before the entertainment, she read these poems once before the Misses Everly, who declared they were glad

Laura Dillon deserted them, since her substitute did so much better than she. The night of the entertainment came at last. The other girls lingered about Grace while she made her toilet, making a suggestion now and then, and wishing they could hear her read, although she had read the two poems to them several times. When she was ready to go they kissed her good-by merrily, Nattie declaring she had given up trying to have a shoe ready to throw after people, since she discovered the proclivities of that young animal down-stairs, and Cecil remarking that said tossing of leather was "a custom more honored in the breach than the observance."

"I hope you'll have ever so nice a time, Mousie," said Carmen, who had followed her to the head of the stairs and given her a second kiss. "I feel sure this is the beginning of something better for you." *Little Carmen*

Among the guests assembled at the Everlys', Grace moved in her well-fitting, inexpensive dress, with her high-bred, pleasing manner, quite at home in the society of the intelligent and refined. The young ladies of the house, and their exceedingly calm mother, took care that she should be introduced to a good number of people they

knew to be entertaining and polite, and so she found herself thoroughly enjoying the evening.

There was a good deal of fine music, a great deal of talk about music and composers old and new, much said of books and authors, ancient and modern, and then it was announced that Miss Farwell would read a poem.

Grace was neither afraid nor embarrassed, although she concluded by what she had heard during the time she had been among those present, that she was to read before exceedingly good judges of reading. She took her seat and opened her book with the same look she might have worn had she been about to entertain those at home. "What lover of poetry is not acquainted with "Divided?" It is beautiful if read in an ordinary way. It is more than beautiful when read as it was by Grace. Blithe and joyous were her tones at first, growing a little sadder as she went on, more and more pathetic as she proceeded. A grave look settled on the faces of the gentlemen present as the sweet voice went on, and there was a tremor about the lips of women.

While, O my heart! as white sails shiver,
And crowds are passing, and banks stretch wide,

How hard to follow, with lips that quiver,
That moving speck on the far-off side!

Farther, farther — I see it — know it —
My eyes brim over, it melts away;
“ Only my heart to my heart shall show it,
As I walk desolate day by day *my love to write lines*”

Oh, how full of pain were the tones in which these words were read! Men’s faces grew still graver, and women silently wept. But presently the voice grew braver, and in a calmly triumphant tone the last two stanzas were given.

And yet I know past all doubting truly —
A knowledge greater than grief can dim —
I know as he loved, he will love me duly —
Yea, better — e’en better than I love him.

And as I walk by the vast calm river,
The awful river so dread to see,
I say, “Thy breadth and thy depth forever
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.”

When the poem was finished the applause was longer and heartier than one would have supposed that low-voiced, quiet audience would have given.

The supper came next, and Grace went to the dining-room leaning on the arm of a Mr. Lowry, who had been introduced to her directly

after the reading was concluded. Mr. Lowry was intensely patronizing, if I may be allowed the expression. If he had met Admiral Farragut some day on the street, he would, I doubt not, have gazed upon him with a look that seemed to proclaim that he would like nothing better than to sit down somewhere and take him on his knee, and tell him what he thought about naval matters, assuring him, if he got a chance to speak with him, that he considered him a smart fellow, and passed on with a benign look on his benevolent face. Looking as though he might pat her on the head at any moment, he told Grace that he was much pleased with her reading, and asked her if the idea of reading in public ever occurred to her. When she informed him that she came to New York for the express purpose of getting opportunities to do so, he seemed delighted, and said:

“Glad to hear it, my dear. Glad to hear it. I want some one to read at the National Hall next Monday evening. My business is getting speakers and readers for public meetings, and to read in different parts of the city, and to go out of town if needed. Come to me to-morrow, child, and I will hear you read, and if I am as

well pleased as I have been to-night, I will send you to the National Hall, and can probably find you work for four nights out of the seven."

I need not tell you her answer. Later in the evening the second poem was received with hearty approval, and she went home a delighted girl.

The other girls being weary, did not sit up for her, but she awoke them by a noisy entrance, and the exclamation: "O, girls, wake up! I've something to tell you!"

Great was the rejoicing when said something was told. Cecil jumped to the floor, danced up to the piano in her night-dress, and played a lively air, to which Nattie, also in her night-robe, and who had scrambled out of bed directly after Cecil, drummed an accompaniment with two sticks of wood upon the stove, and Carmen, sitting up among the pillows, expressed her pleasure in her own peculiarly hearty manner.

"We must go to bed, or we'll all have pneumonia," said Grace when they had talked a long time in the chilly room.

"It would be exhilarating to have something new," said Cecil, as she and Nattie filed into the bedroom.

CHAPTER XVI.

TWO YEARS' CHANGES—FERMER ALLISON.

Unharm'd, from change to change we glide,

One man, at least, I know,
Who might wear the crest of Bayard,
Or Sydney's plume of snow.

— WHITTIER.

TWO years with their joys and sorrows,
their sunshine and shadows, their successes
and failures glided swiftly by. Their close did not
find my girls at 13 G—— street. Pleasanter rooms
than the old ones, and in a more desirable locality,
were occupied by them now. They furnished
these rooms themselves, and there was a look
of quiet elegance, and an appearance of comfort
about them, which was exceedingly attractive.
A not very large, but extremely sweet-toned
piano, of which Cecil was the possessor, stood
in the parlor. There were more books than

formerly in the bookcase; the canary still chirped away; the plant, its leaves larger and a darker green now, hung in a yet sunnier window than it used to occupy, and the bits of fancy work were more numerous. In all New York I think there could not have been a more homelike place than the abode of my girls. Not without pain were the old rooms abandoned. The last breakfast there was really a sad one. | "There is something pathetic about almost every last time," | and they had lived a great deal in these little inconvenient rooms. Not merely stayed, but lived; and when, on the morning of their departure from them, Grace, looking for Nattie to say that they — Cecil, Carmen and herself — were ready to go, and waiting for her, found her with one hand holding to the edge of the sink, and the other wiping away the tears that *would* come, she turned away without trusting herself to speak, and joined Cecil and Carmen, who with sober countenances were looking down upon the street, and all three waited silently until their friend, trying to smile, but with very red eyes, joined them. Each of the four had visited her relatives during the second year of their stay in New York. Gone joy-

fully to the dear ones who loved her, and, after a few weeks' stay, returned not unwillingly to her chosen home and work.

The labors of Grace and Cecil had been rewarded with a success that surprised as much as it pleased them.

The announcement that on such an evening Grace Farwell could be heard, invariably drew to the place where the reading was to be, a large number of people who always went away pleased and satisfied. Managers of literary entertainments came to understand this, and Grace's services were in great demand. Nearly every night, except that of the Sabbath, she read in New York, but occasionally yielded to some earnest request to go to some place out of town.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that she succeeded so well, for real talent was hers, and she was very much in earnest.

Cecil was equally successful. Members of the musical circles of New York spoke ever boastfully of "our Miss Emerson."

With all her might she had striven, and she could hardly be dissatisfied with her reward.

She remained steadily in the service of the man who first employed her, although advantageous offers often came to her, believing she would not better her condition by a change, as she was well used and liberally paid.

At the end of two years Natalie was still fighting inch by inch her way in the literary world. No sudden success came to her, but many discouragements and trials. But she had become a contributor to one good and well-paying magazine, and her articles were much oftener than formerly accepted by other periodicals. She was slowly, but as certainly, making herself known as a story-writer. She realized that of the thousands of tales which pour in upon every publisher, only the best would be accepted, and took care that her own should lack nothing of worth or interest that she could supply.

Carmen still worked in the same office as formerly, was still the brave, patient, kindly, well-loved girl as ever.

Mr. Ehrenfried was still Cecil's music-teacher—he often declared she would soon know all he did of music if she kept on learning it as rapidly as she had done—and the earnest, much-

respected, highly-valued friend of my girls.

And what of Ross? A book-publishing firm of the city had lately advertised for a partner, and Ross, with the money he had been able to save since the beginning of his new life, together with a thousand dollars accepted as a loan from Cecil, became that partner. On the evening of her first meeting with him, Nattie had jestingly declared him "a boy after her own heart." Now she could in all seriousness say that he was a *man* after her own heart. He had learned that only as a precious friend did he love Carmen. A newer, far different love had come into his heart, and Nattie wore on her left hand a plain gold ring with her name and his engraved within it. A rather grave, quiet man he was, but with a tender, pleasant manner. A man who had struggled much, and gained much. Who had grown stronger with each step taken in the right direction, and, with a heart full of faith, a life crowned with peace, was as happy as it is given to man to be in this sin-marred world.

But a new anxiety had come to haunt three of my girls. Grace's face was thin and pale, and a cough kept away much of the so sadly-

needed sleep. But she smiled at the fears of her friends, and replied lightly when they urged her to rest and have a physician, and never hinted that she often found it difficult to go through an evening for faintness and giddiness.

"I am only tired," she told herself. "I shall stand it to read through the remainder of the winter, then I'll take a vacation and rest enough to satisfy even the girls. I don't want to be bothering with pills and powders."

"Doctors always advise one to rest whether he needs to or not," she said one Sunday when her friends had been urging the need of medical aid; "and with the advice of one to back you, you dear, over-anxious mortals would give me no peace till I became an inactive member of society. I have twenty nights promised, and it would injure my reputation terribly to disappoint people. I will get some cough medicine, and I dare say that will set me right."

The medicine was bought and taken, the cough became less troublesome, and the other girls took courage, and partially persuaded themselves that all would now be well.

In one of the most elegant mansions, on one of the handsomest avenues of New York, lived the Allisons. Descendants of a grand old family were they. An old English family, nearly related to lords and dukes, and I don't know what else.

Chester Allison, the head of the house, was a commission merchant, and his only son Fermer, was his partner. There were only three in the family—father, mother and son.

Mr. Allison was a large, portly, white-haired, smooth-faced, genial-mannered gentleman; his wife a sprightly, neat-looking, sweet little woman, and Fermer was declared by many to be the handsomest man in New York. Tall, straight, broad of shoulder, ruddy of cheek, his rather dark hair combed away from a good forehead, his large mustache shading a beautiful mouth, his clear blue eyes full of life and expression, he was indeed a magnificent-looking person. No stern, commanding individual was he, but a fun-loving, great-hearted, whole-souled man, idolized by his mother, dearly loved by his father, and thought of with no ordinary affection by his many friends. But there was a depth to his nature of which few were aware. Perhaps no

one quite understood the real grandeur of his soul, since nothing in his happy life had occurred to show it.) "And there is much hidden in each of us, I think, of which only God knows."

When Grace's name came to be mentioned so often and with so much approval, he one evening sought the place where she was to read, and after that she seldom appeared but he was one of her listeners. It was noticeable that Grace always selected something to give her hearers that stimulated the good and shamed the bad in them. She breathed the breath of life into all she read, giving for many a meaning to words and phrases they had never before suspected them to possess. Fermer Allison was charmed with both reader and reading. Grace's perfect manner, the absence of any thing like boldness in her appearance, her admirable pronunciation and expression all highly pleased him.

He was not infatuated with her in the usual way. I once saw a picture called "Dante and Beatrice." On a pedestal a stately figure in a robe of white, with her dark locks flowing behind her, stood looking down at the Italian poet, who was gazing upon her with an expression

of supreme admiration. I have often thought of that picture as I have seen Fermer Allison sitting a short distance from the stage gazing up at his favorite, and that the expression on his countenance was much like that on the pictured face of Dante. But he never sought an introduction to her; never tried to discover where she lived; never tried to address a word verbally, or wrote a line to her. Once he went to the conservatory belonging to his home, and, plucking a few simple white flowers with a rare, sweet smell, and some dark-green leaves, bound them together, and that evening after the reading, as she was stepping into a carriage, he pressed the tiny nosegay into her hand and moved away unrecognized in the dusk that surrounded him. And Grace grew to expect to see a pair of earnest blue eyes fixed upon her when she looked upon the audience, and on the few occasions—after she had begun to notice them—that she did not see them, a feeling of disappointment came upon her, and a sense of missing something oppressed her until the close of the evening. She felt instinctively from whom the plain little bouquet came. She took it home and told the other girls of the man with

the clear blue eyes who looked at her so attentively.

In the darkest night,
In the bright daylight,
In earth, and sea, and sky,
In every home of the human heart
Will Love be lurking nigh,

sang Cecil gayly, and Nattie added:

“‘The plot thickens.’ I may find a subject for a tale without drawing upon my heavily-taxed imagination. See that you do the fair thing by me, Grace, and keep me informed of the doings of Stranger Blue Eyes.

“How quick those two are to scent a romance, aren’t they, Gracie?” said Carmen. “Well, it’s nice for you to feel that one particular person who is especially interested, is always—or nearly always—watching you while you read, isn’t it? I’m glad you’ve found Stranger Blue Eyes, as Nattie has christened him, or rather that he has found you. Wouldn’t you like to know who he is and his real name?”

“Well, I don’t know,” answered Grace musingly; “that would take away the delightful mystery that hangs about my azure-eyed friend.”

“And he may be a butcher,” said Nattie.

“Or a hack-driver,” added Cecil. “Don’t try to find out, Grace.”

As the days went on Grace’s cough returned, and her face grew thinner and whiter, but she worked on with a brave heart, and seldom a complaint. Her energy was unbounded; her will extremely strong. And Fermer Allison kept his interest in her, but never thought of her as men ordinarily think of women they have learned to care for. Never thought how pleasant it would be to see her at his table or fireside, but always as one whose talents had raised her above the common world.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

News fitting to the night,
Black, fearful, comfortless, and horrible.

—SHAKESPEARE.

CLANG! clang! clang! Half a thousand bells rang out one night—a dark, wild night of occasional gusts of driving rain—with a quick, imperative sound, so different from their pealing when calling the worshipers together on the Sabbath, and presently the cry of fire was going forth from hundreds of throats; engines were clattering over the paved streets, and people were rushing in confused crowds to the place designated as being the scene of the conflagration.

In one of the most crowded parts of New York a smoke—a black, thick smoke—was rising, and presently a tongue of flame was seen

and then a burst of fire, and immediately some one said "The National Hall is on fire!" Voice after voice took up the cry, and again and again the words were repeated: "The National Hall is on fire!"

Gallantly, as firemen always do, did the men with the engines perform their work. With almost superhuman energy did they labor to extinguish the flames and keep them from spreading to other buildings near. But the fire had been discovered too late, and, leaping and hissing above them, seemed, with its crackle and roar, to be laughing at their labor and defying their efforts to quench it. Many of the surrounding blocks caught fire, and but for prompt attention must have been destroyed. At last with a crash that could be heard a long distance away, and that sent millions of sparks up into the spring air, the building fell.

While the fire was creeping like an evil thing through the small room at the back of the hall, the reading on the platform went on. Grace Farwell was being listened to, and the audience were absorbed, enthralled. But by and by there began to be noticed an odor of

smoke, and a man looking at the door leading from an ante-room, saw a flame stealing and flickering about its edge, and rising, cried in an excited tone, "The building is on fire!"

No pen can adequately describe what followed. The place that so lately had been quiet but for the voice of the reader, became one wild scene of confusion. Men and women rushed in a crowding, jostling mass towards the two front entrance doors—the back part of the building was now in flames—all struggling to save life—life that is so precious to most of us—and cries of alarm were heard to echo through the room. Near one of the doors a clear, loud voice, the voice of the ticket-agent, was heard above the uproar, saying repeatedly:

"Don't crowd each other. Come out quickly and carefully, and you may all be saved."

But what was one human voice to that terror-stricken people, with the glaring, hissing element behind them!

A score of clear, loud voices could not have stayed the mad rush. On and on they came, and, crowding down the stairs, rushed out at the doors, unmindful of the fact that

they were throwing each other down, and trampling one upon another, behaving as poor, weak human nature ever prompts one to behave in time of peril. Ladders, two of them spliced together to make them long enough, were raised to the windows that were not covered by fire, and before each of these windows was gathered a crowd of people, each person trying in a frantic way to get to the ladder he or she had discovered was on the outside. Some in their haste to put their feet upon the round, took a misstep, and an instant later lay on the stone pavement below, bruised, dead things. Close behind Grace, who stood with hands tightly clasped, and her white, calm face turned partly around and fixed with a fascinated stare upon the flames so near her, was Mr. Lowry. Stooping till his mouth was near her ear, he said in an unsteady voice:

“Miss Farwell, I wish I could do something for you; but the way to both doors and windows is blocked. Only God can help us now.”

“Only God can help us now,” she repeated, like one who has no sense of what he is saying, still looking at the flames.

“I will keep you ahead of me, and push

you along as fast as possible," said Mr. Lowry. "Try not to faint. You are very white. Heaven help us all!"

"Heaven help us all!"

Again she repeated his words in the same dazed way as before, still with her eyes on the fire.

Closer and closer came the flames; their crackling became more terribly audible. It seemed certain that many in the doomed structure must perish by the fire-fiend, or be suffocated by the smoke which was growing thicker each moment.

Out on one of the wet streets a man ran with all possible speed towards the burning building, and as he moved so rapidly along he lifted a pair of earnest blue eyes to the wild sky and said: "O, God, if she needs help, teach me quickly what to do, and give me strength for any thing!"

When he reached the burning building, he comprehended at a glance that it would be folly to try to gain the hall floor by going up the stairs, and quickly going first to one side and then the other of the edifice, he looked at the windows, to see those which the fire

had not reached, with a crowding, importunate mass of human beings before them, and the ladders below them filled with people. Looking at one which had been abandoned to the fire, he saw a stream of water from an engine strike it, and with lightning-like thought calculated that it might not be in flames again for several seconds at least; and in another moment he was going swiftly up the ladder beneath it, and very soon he laid his hand on the hot, charred sill, and vaulted into the smoke-filled room where he felt he should find the person he sought.

At the foot of the ladder he ascended, he had found a shawl. Some woman had evidently dropped it while going down the ladder. He carried it with him as he climbed up the rounds and entered the hall. He seemed to be guided directly to the person he was seeking, for he made his way in the smoke-dimmed place directly to Grace. Her being behind nearly all the others made it easier for him to find her than it could otherwise have been. Winding the woollen shawl about her he said: "Come with me quickly!"

And Grace turned her eyes from the hissing

fire, and without a word allowed him to lead her away.

The frames of the window by which he had entered, were in flames now, and every moment the situation became more perilous. Quicker than I can tell it, he took a knife from his pocket and cut two places in the shawl for Grace to put her arms through; then with some pins he found in the garment, he fastened it tightly around her, and, hastily climbing backward out of the window, placed his feet upon the ladder, descended to the third round, and then said:

“Sit on the sill; swing your feet out; come to the second round, and put your arms about my neck.”

She had thrust her arms through the openings made for them, and without a moment's hesitation obeyed him. They had scarcely accomplished a third of their descent when the fire burst with fresh vigor through the window by which they had made their exit, and streamed out into the night as though reaching after them.

As Allison went down step by step, the flames showed clearly the white face of the girl

he was carrying, and a cheer loud and long went up from the bystanders. When the ground was reached, Allison stood Grace on her feet, unpinned the shawl about her, and, taking it in his hand, folded it and wrapped it about her shoulders, saying as he did so: "There is a drug-store near here. I will leave you there while I find a carriage."

She had not spoken to him, but now she said, looking into the eyes that had watched her so often: "I am so grateful to you!"

"Grateful to me?" he said a little wonderingly. "Yes, I suppose you are, naturally enough; but I had not thought of that. I am so filled with thankfulness myself, I had not remembered you might be grateful to *me*. I was detained in my office to-night, and feared I was too late to serve you. I knew you were to read at the National Hall this evening. I prayed I might be able to help you. I too am very grateful."

They had been walking while he spoke, and soon came to the drug-store he had referred to. He entered it with her, and telling a clerk to give her a glass of wine, and her that he would return soon, withdrew.

A few minutes later she was seated in a comfortable carriage, and he was asking where the driver should take her. She handed him a card, which he gave to the cabman, saying, "Drive to this address," and then seated himself in the carriage with the words: "It seems unsafe for you to go home alone. I will accompany you."

It was not a long drive, and while it lasted both were silent for the most part. When they were near Grace's home, she said once more: "I am so grateful to you!"

"Please do not speak of it," he said. "I only did what I wished to do — what I prayed I might be able to do."

When she had bade him good-night he realized that he knew as little of her as he had the day before. He had not glanced at the card he had given the cab-driver, and the part of the city to which he had ridden was entirely unfamiliar to him. But he cared nothing for this. He probably never would have sought her had he known her name and residence. She did not seem to him like a person he could visit and talk to like other women. He had saved her life. It was what

he had prayed for, and so he was content.

Carmen and Nattie—who were alone, Cecil being at a concert—were awakened by the sound of engines on the street, and the latter arose, and, throwing a shawl over her shoulders, went to a window that was slightly open to admit air; as she stood near it she heard some one down on the street shouting “The National Hall is on fire!”

Her face grew as colorless as the white robe she wore, and she said hurriedly to Carmen: “Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” asked Carmen, sitting up in bed.

“A man down in the street says the National Hall is on fire, and O, Carmen, it is not time for the reading to end!”

Carmen’s usually pale face grew a shade whiter, and after a second’s thought she arose and commenced hastily to dress.

“Nattie,” she said, “I will go where the fire is. If Grace needs help I may be able to do something, though Heaven knows it is unlikely enough I can accomplish any thing. Perhaps I can put it into the mind of somebody else, who otherwise might not remember

to help her. Make a fire and have all things in readiness to receive a person who may be—injured, when I return. Can you be brave and collected, Nattie?”

“I will try so hard,” said poor Nattie, trembling in every limb as she donned her clothing. O, Carmen, Carmen, I shudder to think what may have happened!”

“Perhaps your fears are all in vain,” said Carmen, but her face told that she did not think this likely.

Into the cheerless night she went, and with the piercing wind chilling her to the bone, and the rain falling upon her, walked swiftly towards the burning hall. She was yet some distance from it when it fell, and with uplifted and clasped hands she cried:

“Oh, I wonder where Gracie is now! God be with her and us, and help each to bear whatever may be in store for us!”

She walked on until she was close to the still blazing ruins, and then looked about her. Two or three bodies—the remains of those who had slipped from the ladders—were lying on litters. Going to these she looked upon them, and turned away with a look of relief on her face.

"Do you think many were buried in the ruins?" she faltered to a bystander.

"No," was the answer. "It is thought nearly all escaped; but it is thought many of those who were farthest from the doors must have perished."

"Do you know if Miss Farwell was saved?" she asked of several; but the crowd had begun to disperse, and evidently those who had seen Grace brought down the ladder, or knew of her being rescued from the flames had gone, and each one questioned answered that he did not know.

Around all that was left of the once stately building Carmen looked, and then turned her face homeward, feeling sure that Grace had either left the place, or—oh, horrible thought!—that those fiery embers covered her.

With the same quick step that had brought her there, she travelled on. A shudder now and then shook her frame, and she sometimes put her hands before her face as if to shut out some terrible vision.

"It must be awful to die so!" she said.

When she reached her home and was going up the steps, a carriage stopped near her, and

a gentleman assisted a lady to alight. The rays of a street-lamp falling on the lady's face, showed it to be Grace's, and Carmen held out her arms, crying: "Gracie, O, Gracie!"

Nattie, watching from a window, saw the carriage, the gentleman and lady, and Carmen, and, when she heard the latter's words, threw herself on the sofa and cried for joy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE SEASHORE — GONE HOME.

Her smile is as a listening child's
Who hears its mother call;
The lilies of thy perfect peace
About her pillow fall.

She leans from out our clinging arms
To rest herself in thine;
Alone to thee, dear Lord, can we
Our well-beloved resign.

— WHITTIER.

THE winter snows melted away, the city streets became dry and dusty; the fountains in the rich men's yards again sent up their silvery spray; the plants were once more put in the best condition for growing. Out in the country, sweet wild blossoms began to show themselves, and buds to appear on the trees. The little brooks laughed in their gladness at being released from the bondage stern old Win-

ter had held them in, and all nature rejoiced as she only does in spring.

My girls were more than glad that warm days were come. In their home, day after day, there lay on the sofa a pale-faced girl whose racking cough made their hearts ache, and painful forebodings to fill their minds.

But now the glad, bright summer would soon be here, and they would all go to the seashore. Surely the invigorating sea-breezes would bring back the roses that had fled from Grace's cheeks, certainly do away with the cough, assuredly give strength to the limbs that were now so weak. So reasoned her three fond, anxious friends. Since the night of the fire Grace had done no work, scarcely left the house. Her already enfeebled system received that night a shock from the effects of which it did not recover.

The literary portion of New York missed its favorite, and from many who knew where she resided, she received gifts of fruit and flowers. When the spring had given place to summer, Ross Emerson, at my girls' request, went into the country to look up a quiet place near the sea where four young ladies, one an invalid,

could be accommodated with board. He found a dozen miles away from the city, a place he felt sure would suit them; an old-fashioned farmhouse, with roses and honeysuckles climbing about its doors, and a good number of its windows covered with morning-glories, and standing so near the sea one could gain its shore by three minutes' walk.

The girls were delighted when they heard of the arrangement for their reception at this place, and instantly began making preparations for their departure from the city in which the heat was, during most days, now intense. It was the time for Cecil's vacation, and Carmen had arranged matters so she could be away. Nattie had several stories prepared, so she could supply the magazines for which she regularly wrote, even if she should do no writing for several months.

"I would like you all to come with me," Grace had said when it was decided she should go to the shore; and had it cost a dozen times the effort it did, I doubt not her wish would have been granted. Very unwillingly would her friends have denied her any thing now.

One evening an hour before sundown, the

sweet-faced woman who ruled over the aforementioned farmhouse, stood at the gate as my girls alighted from the very easy carriage that had been secured for them, and welcomed them in a manner that made them decide at once they should like their new abiding-place.

Grace was left to rest while the other girls partook of a delicious country supper, and after they had finished eating, Mrs. Kirk — that was the name of the mistress of the house — brought to her room a delicate little repast, but she could only take a few mouthfuls of the food, and sip a little of the tea.

“I shall be rested soon, and perhaps hungry,” she said as though in apology, when the woman came to take the tray and found so little of what she had brought gone.

“Rested!” said Mrs. Kirk softly, when she had left the room, waiter in hand. “Yes, if I mistake not, you will soon be rested with ‘the rest that remaineth for the people of God.’”

And now every day when the sun shone, these four girls might be found on the rocks or the sand near the shore, sometimes reading, at another time talking, again quite still. I think they were oftener quiet than otherwise.

Robert Collyer says: " "There are times, I think, when we should all be glad because we are quiet. When both the strong motion and the strong emotion of existence should be over and done with for a spell, and all things be as naught to us in the presence of a June stillness." " *How beautiful!*

I believe the stillness meant by this man was the kind my girls found in that country town beside the sea. Body and mind rested, and when a bitter truth came to them, I think they were better able to look it in the face, and braver to bear it, than they would have been among the cares that wearied hands and often harassed hearts. I say when a bitter truth came to them; but to one of them it was not left to come in this quiet summer retreat.

Weeks before those June days, when the other girls began to receive the new, unwelcome fact, without trying, knowing how useless would be the attempt to disguise it, Grace had had her time of learning that earthly life, so short for her, must be given up; and while the tempest of sorrows was raging in their hearts, her own was calm and still. The thought that an existence which she had so enjoyed must soon

end, had at first raised a fierce tumult in her breast ; but again God spoke a "Peace, be still!" and now like a patient, trusting child, she waited to be taken home. The little irritable outbursts that used sometimes to come from her, were never heard now. Only the sweetness of her character showed itself. Perhaps all that was not lovely in her nature had been pruned away since she had given herself entirely up to him to whom all unloveliness is hateful.

"It breaks my heart to see her so different from herself," said Nattie pathetically one day when Grace put by a matter which would have thoroughly vexed her once, with the words :

"Never mind. It cannot be helped now, you know. Don let's talk of it."

"The new self is much more admirable, dear Nattie," answered Carmen. "The kingdom of heaven is fully come in our dear one's heart."

And Nattie moved away to a window, and stood for a long time looking silently out upon the sea.

"What a sweet, contented face Mrs. Kirk has," said Grace one day when the lady mentioned had just left the room. "And yet she tells us she has always led the same quiet kind of

life that is hers now. Well, I am not sure but that is the best kind after all. How hollow and vain all the conquests of the world look to one who is leaving that world behind forever!"

The other girls had not been quite sure before that she realized she was indeed leaving the world behind forever, but her words assured them that such was the case, and they were glad she had accepted the fact and was content. Her cough grew worse, and her strength ebbed fast away, and one day she said :

"I would like to go back to New York. It is beautiful here, and I love the sea, but I should like my last days to be spent in the dear little home we have been so happy in."

And so a message was despatched to Ross to send the same easy carriage in which the four had ridden to the farmhouse, and they returned home, trying to be cheerful on the way, but three of them failing miserably in the attempt.

Until now Grace had kept the knowledge of the real state of her health from her people at home.

"I cannot bear to have them worrying about

me," was her excuse. But one day when she had grown very weak, she said, "Write them at home to come;" and three days after the letter containing the sad summons was sent, her family arrived in New York.

Oh, it was pitiful to see and listen to the gray-haired man, who, when his daughter held out her hands—the beautiful hands grown so thin and white—to welcome him, bent over and put his arms about her while sobs of anguish shook his frame!

"If the new medicine the doctor commenced giving you this morning should strengthen you enough, would you like to go home?" asked Mr. Farwell a day or two after his arrival.

(Grace had consented since the night of the fire to have a physician.)

"No, father," she answered gently. "You know we moved away from the old home where I used to play, and grew to womanhood. The new house never seemed quite homelike. So let me stay here in these dear rooms, father, and you stay with me. You will not find it very hard staying here, will you, dear?"

"Hard staying with you!" he exclaimed, and then added, while a look of pain came

into his face, and as he put out his hand as though to ward off some dreaded thing: "O, Gracie, how can I stay on in the world knowing I must be forever *without* you!"

"It will only be for a little while," she said tenderly, stroking the silvered head that had bowed itself beside her own. Day after day he sat beside her, holding her hand, while the heart-broken expression on his face became fixed. One day she said to him:

"Father, I have been wishing I might have my last resting place, not away in the bare-looking, lonely place to which I used to go to visit mother's grave, but in lovely Greenwood. The grass and plants and flowers are so beautiful there, father! Is it too much for me to ask that I may be laid in this sweet place, and that you will bring mother there? I have money, father, and should like to know that a part of it will be used in securing in Greenwood a place for us all when we are done with the world."

"Nothing is too much, Gracie," he said. "Nothing, nothing! Ask what you will, and if possible your wish shall be granted."

One day when the girls were all about her,

she said : " Nattie, I shall not live to see you as successful as I feel sure you will be some day. Let your book be a good, helpful story, dear. // It is better to help a few than merely charm thousands ; and I think he who has given the world a book that will cause its readers' hearts to turn gratefully rather than admiringly, to its author, has the better right to feel that his work is a success."

" I will remember, Gracie," said Nattie. " I think I can write more understandingly henceforth, as I have both loved and suffered."

It suited the sick girl to have white flowers always in her hands or by her bedside. " Whiter than snow," she would say, passing her hand as colorless as they, over them, and thinking, it seemed by her words, less of them than of a purified soul.

In the years that followed those long, sad, quiet days, a perfume in the air they breathed of tube roses or the lily of the valley, would bring forcibly to the minds of those who watched beside its owner, a pale, patient face, and to those watchers who still live — for Gracie's father is sleeping beside her now — in all the years that are to come the scent of these flowers

will awaken emotions, I think, that the odor of other blossoms will fail to give rise to.

"I have thought much of 'Stranger Blue Eyes' while I have been lying here," said Grace one day, smiling as she pronounced the name Nattie had given the man who saved her life. "I feel sure, somehow, that he is a good, true man, and am so sorry I forgot to find out his name. I hope you will know him sometime, girls. If you do, tell him I was grateful to him as long as I lived."

After this she asked to have her pictures brought to her; and when she had looked at them all, and laid them aside, she said: "Now I feel that I can sleep. Kiss me, all of you, before I wander away into dreamland."

And with a feeling that it was their good-by to her, each one in the room touched his or her lips to hers with a lingering caress. The brown eyes closed, never again to open upon worldly things. She had spoken no farewell, but each one felt that all the last days had been a time of farewell.

The father knelt for a time tearless and quiet as itself beside the loved form when life had gone. The woman who had been a mother to

the dead girl moved up and down the room with step as noiseless as though afraid she might disturb the slumbers of the child she had loved: two young men—the brothers to whom she had been so loving a sister—and to whom she had that day said words they would not soon forget, sat with bowed heads and tear-stained eyes, while away by a window in a group stood the three girls to whom she had been so dear, still and pale. Two days later a casket covered with such pure white flowers as she had loved in life, stood in the church she had frequented, and the old minister to whom she had so many times listened with delight, tried to speak words that would comfort, while his voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears as he looked upon the face resting on the satin pillow.

When the brief, tender sermon was done, and an earnest prayer said, through the sunlight that was as bright as though there were no sad hearts in the world it shone upon, they drove behind the sombre-looking carriage to the spot where the loved form was to rest till the dead shall hear the Master's voice and come forth,

Softly they kissed the lips that had not been wont to leave their caresses unresponded to, and then turning, left their darling with the waving trees and lovely flowers she had wished to have about her last resting place, and went away to take up lives that could never be the same to them again.

CHAPTER XIX.

NATTIE'S SUCCESS AND MARRIAGE.

"The books which help you most are those which make you think the most."—THEODORE PARKER. *(The World)*.

I kiss your cheek — I kiss your lips :
 (Never a change this heart shall know,
 Whatever betide — come life, come death —
 Darling, darling, I love you so !)
 — LUCY DANA.

" I THINK there is a time which comes to every one, no matter how strong his faith in God, after he has laid a dear one away to sleep the sleep of death, when to talk of the happiness of the departed one, or of God's healing, soothing power, seems like a mockery. A mere repetition of hollow, meaningless phrases."

We want the clinging of familiar arms about our necks, the wonted kiss on our lips, the touch of hands to which we have been accustomed. We cannot think of pearly gates and

streets of gold, or, better still, of the warm, sheltering home of rest and joy into which the one we mourn for has entered.

We only feel that our own home is so desolate, though those around us may be many—so drearily, dreadfully desolate—that in all the earthly days to come a grave must separate us from the loved object it has covered. And, for a while, our cross must lie, since we cannot raise it; and words that are meant to comfort only irritate, or fall on unheeding ears. And so it is not to be wondered at that for a time after the casket with its covering of pure white flowers was lowered into the ground at Greenwood, a deep gloom hung over the spirits of my girls. (That to them the days were a lengthy, listless time of longing for something that could never be theirs again on earth; the nights long hours of darkness in which to dream of one that only in dreams could in this world be seen again!) That the sight of any thing which had belonged to the dead girl would bring hot, bitter tears; that their tasks often seemed more than they could perform, since their hearts were too heavy to stimulate their hands.

Carmen was the first to recover from this overwhelming grief, since to her first came the thought that it was surely wrong to indulge in it longer. ^{with relief} The first to seek and find comfort of One who once wept at the tomb of an earthly friend. And the new faith and resignation that found place in her heart showed in her face and actions.

Cecil and Nattie were longer in recovering, because longer in seeking the aid that a pitying Christ was so willing to bestow. Cecil, proud even in her sorrow, faced her grief resolutely after a little, willing to receive, but never seeking sympathy; but Nattie through all these shadowed days turned to Carmen for comfort and encouragement, and never failed to receive either; "for even when her own heart was torn and bleeding, she could find tender words to speak to her friend, and not one of them was lost upon Nattie.

And by and by the peace of God rested down upon all the members of the little home. Gracie's name was spoken softly, as we ever speak the names of our loved dead; but not with tears or aching hearts. The things which had belonged to her were handled reverently,

tenderly, but sometimes smiled over now as they brought to mind some light speech or amusing fancy of her who had owned them. They felt that the love of their absent one was still round about them, and came to be able to go cheerily on with their work with patient hearts.

"Girls," said Carmen one evening when they were all together in the sitting-room, "hear this! I found it marked in one of Gracie's books."

And then she read: "'Oh, I believe that there is no *away*; that no love, no life goes ever from us. It goes as He went, that it may come again deeper and closer and surer, and be with us always, even to the end of the world.'"

"I am so glad," she said when she had lain the book aside, "that Mrs. Whitney wrote that! It expresses my thoughts exactly, and it is a comfort to have what I mean and cannot find words to say, said for me." *W. S. Whitney*

"I think it expresses what we all think," said Nattie softly; and Cecil added:

"Yes; just what we all think, I am sure."

While Cecil sang on with new expression in

her voice, and Carmen did her work steadily in the office, at home, when household matters had received their legitimate attention, Nattie wrote.

"First live, then write," she quoted one day when she had just commenced her book. "Assuredly I have lived somewhat now, and perhaps can write an acceptable work."

Not so merry a story as it might have been if written a year before, did Nattie tell, but it was by no means morbid. Many little flashes of wit could be found in its pages, and if in reading it over, the young author discovered what she considered a dull line, she erased it unsparingly.

A person once said of it in my hearing:

"It is very strong, but exceedingly tender. When one has finished reading it he lays it aside with a feeling that he has been helped, and is braver to go on with his life-work than he has ever been before. There is comfort in its pages. It teaches a lesson of hope."

When it was finished Nattie laid it aside with a little sigh. It had kept her company through many hours, that, but for it, would have been lonely ones, and she had grown to

care for her characters as though they were living people.

"I wonder if any one ever wrote a book he was quite satisfied with," she said. "Somehow I don't believe anybody can get his best thoughts on paper so others can understand them."

"I think you are right, dear," said Carmen; "but there are enough good things in your story to help others to think good thoughts and do noble things. You ought to be, I think, almost satisfied." She had read the manuscript, taking each chapter as it was finished.

"Since that is your opinion I am almost satisfied," replied Nattie with a pleased look. Praise from this friend that she valued so highly and knew would never flatter her, was very sweet. Ross spoke hearty words of approval concerning the book. Mr. Ehrenfried commended it highly, and when Cecil said: "I like the story exceedingly, and I think Gracie must approve of it," the eyes of the writer grew moist, and she said in a glad voice: "I am very nearly satisfied."

The publishing house of which Ross was a member brought the work out. It attracted

but little attention at first, and for several months after its appearance only a few copies were sold. But gradually it came to be widely read and fully appreciated, and publishers declared that Loring and Emerson had made a decided "hit" by its publication.

In homes where patience was needed, in places where grief was to be borne, it proved a blessing; and in hundreds of hearts kindly and grateful thoughts sprang up for the author. Truly Nattie had reason to be *wholly* satisfied with her work.

Twice did the summer flowers, white, stately blossoms, and colorless, gentle things, bloom and fade over Gracie's grave; twice did the bright autumn leaves, as though to atone for the beauty fled, drift down upon the mound; twice the snows of winter descended softly and covered it; twice spring melted away its mantle before Ross Emerson asked that Nattie should fulfil her promise to marry him; but when the two years through which, since the death of one for whom he had cherished a sincere regard, he had patiently waited, were quite gone, he sought her one day and said:

"Can you willingly come to me now, Carmen? May I not hope that very soon I may have a home?"

"Poor old fellow!" said Nattie, half playfully, half seriously. "You have been patient indeed, and shall not wait much longer. But, Ross," seriously enough now, "I think they will miss me a great deal here in the little home that has been so saddened once, so please promise me that as soon as our home is ready, dear, Cecil and Carmen may come to us for as long as they will."

"A promise easy to give," he said with his grave, sweet smile. "Cecil and Carmen are equally dear to me. Make all the plans you wish, and don't fear but I'll sanction them; but assure me that before the summer flowers have faded, I may bring you some of them upon your wedding day."

"How poetical the old chap is getting!" said Nattie, laughing. "Suppose I say no to your pleading?"

"But you will not," he said eagerly; and she did not. When he went away it was decided that two weeks from that day the wedding should take place.

A few quiet preparations were all that Nattie cared to have made for her bridal.

"I never could see the sense in sewing one's self almost to death before marriage, and not having a stitch of sewing to do for months afterwards," she said; "unless one is going upon an extended wedding trip, and Ross and I have no intention of being away more than a few weeks. I will have something real dark," she answered, when Cecil asked what she was going to select for a travelling dress. "I always declared if ever I went on a wedding journey I would wear black alpaca, and a hat to match; but I'll modify that a little. I don't want everybody saying, 'There's a bride;' as though brides were very scarce articles."

"You might instruct Ross to wear a ministerial-looking coat, and not to speak to you oftener than once in half an hour on the way," said Cecil; "then perhaps folks would think he was a priest taking you to a convent somewhere. He looks rather clerical."

One morning, with only her two girl friends and Mr. Ehrenfried to witness the ceremony, Nattie stood beside Ross in the little church

from which two years before had been carried the form of one she well loved, and spoke the words that made her a wife.

The newly-wedded ones had decided to go to the mountains, and then to visit Ross' people—he had visited them twice since that first meeting with Cecil in her home in New York—and Nattie's mother and sisters.

"I cannot go to the seashore," Nattie said. "It would bring another time with its almost heart-break, back too vividly."

It was her desire that the two other girls should go with Ross and herself, but neither could well leave her work, so bride and bridegroom went alone.

"I hope," said Nattie, "no reporter has got hold of the fact that we are to be in the mountains, or will learn we are there. I don't feel like being watched for and pointed out. Just now I want to be thought of and to think of myself only"—

She paused, and Ross, bending over her, finished the sentence in a glad whisper: "Only as Ross Emerson's wife."

CHAPTER XX.

A NEW HOME — CECIL'S GOOD-BY.

(Our homes are cheerier for her sake,
 Our dooryards brighter blooming,
 And all about the social air
 Is sweeter for her coming.

What greetings smile, what farewells wave,
 What loved ones enter and depart !
 The good, the beautiful, the brave,
 The heaven-lent treasures of the heart.

— WHITTIER.

A RESTFUL, enjoyable time was spent by Ross and Nattie among the New England hills, and with the relatives, who on the one side were charmed with the new daughter and sister, and on the other were highly delighted with the newly-made — to them — son and brother.

One day when the two were in the mountains, and Nattie, having declined Ross' invita-

tion to go fishing with him, was sitting in the shadow of a rock examining some moss she had gathered, a woman robed in most fashionable attire—Nattie afterwards declared her dress was fearfully and wonderfully made—came near to her and took a seat. She settled her flounces with great care, took a tiny mirror from her pocket and surveyed herself critically therein, and then looking about her for the first time, discovered Nattie, who had remained motionless since the new-comer's advent. The stranger said good-morning, made a few desultory remarks, and then asked, as she glanced at the book in her lap, "Have you read 'Tangled Threads,' by N. E. Ainslie?"

"Yes; some time ago," was Nattie's quiet answer as she minutely examined a bit of moss she held in her hand.

"I am just finishing it," the stranger said. "I should admire it more if there was not so much in it that will, I fear, tend to make the lower classes think too highly of themselves. They are apt to forget their position as it is. I wondered at so much of that sort of thing when I began the story, but I have since read that Miss Ainslie was once very poor, and earned

a living by telegraphing ; so I think she may still, when she wrote the book, have had sympathy for the poor things who get their living by daily labor."

"What do you mean by the lower classes?" asked Nattie, as she picked up a stone and flung it down the slope before her.

"Well," replied the lady, as though rather at a loss for a reply, "I suppose people who earn a livelihood by constant labor, may in nearly all cases be said to belong to the lower classes. They seldom have facilities for obtaining an education, and get sort of low ideas. / Somehow, I never think of cultivating the acquaintance of a person who really labors, unless his work is musical or literary, and that of the best kind."

"I cannot see, then," said Nattie in the same quiet tone she had used hitherto, "what opportunities you have of judging what the ideas of most working people are like."

"Well," replied the lady with a rather embarrassed laugh, "perhaps you will admit that they usually show in their countenances that they are not intelligent."

"But what of this Miss Ainslie?" asked

Nattie, still not raising her voice. "You will hardly call her illiterate?"

"Oh, no; I suppose she may have had some special advantages. But she was pointed out to me a short time ago, and I could easily see that she did not have a high-born look. I think she had a rather low forehead, but as it was about dusk I could not examine her features as well as I should have liked to do. I shouldn't be at all surprised if she had a great deal of help from some more intelligent person, while writing the story."

She paused, but as Nattie seemed to have no reply ready, she went on like one who is aware he has made no good impression, but means to do so.

"Ah, my dear lady, I can tell if blood moves in a person's veins, and if he is intelligent, the minute I see him. The instant I looked at you, with your fine expression and high brow, I knew it would be a pleasure to talk to you, and so I have found it, I assure you."

She leaned back against the rock behind her with an air that plainly said every thing was made right now, and Nattie, folding her hands composedly on her lap, answered:

"A person who earns all he has by any honest work does not necessarily belong to the lower classes. It is what a person is, not the condition of his finances, that determines to what class he really belongs." It is true many of the poorer class of people do not have the facilities the rich do to obtain an education, but often, oh, *very* often! they *make* facilities, and, causing every possible opportunity for acquiring knowledge to count, secure a better education than do half the sons and daughters of rich men, who, having never learned to be industrious, drone through college or academy, and just barely succeed in getting diplomas. Natalie Ainslie, it is true, was once very poor, and not long since was supporting herself, and helping to support another, with the money she earned telegraphing, and the pay received occasionally for a story. But she did not when on every day but the Lord's, and those of the seldom-taken vacation, she was obliged to sit through long, and oftentimes tiresome hours in her office, and to plan constantly how to make her every dollar bring its most profitable equivalent to her, or to send it to another, belong to the lower classes.

She strove to be honest and true to the best part of herself. She tried to do her duty every day, and gleaned from every possible source the information that helped her, with only such assistance as she obtained from the advice and criticism of some good friends who had been, and one of whom was still and is now, engaged in the same business by which she had for some years mostly gained a livelihood, to write an intelligent book. The laboring classes are not necessarily 'poor things' in the sense you mean by the word poor. The man who works cheerfully and well is rich in self-respect, happy in doing what will give him and his comfort. Far less is he to be pitied than the millionaire who has no object in life but to kill time, and who may far too often be said to belong to the lower class, as he is too vice-stained to belong to any other. A few months ago Natalie Ainslie was a poor, unknown girl, with money only for the necessaries of life. Now the same person is spoken of as the gifted young authoress, and can procure many of life's luxuries. But if to-day she belongs to a higher class than in the poverty-haunted past, it is not because her

portemonnaie is now better filled, but because she is nobler at heart, nearer God than in those struggling days."

She ceased speaking, and the lady faltered:

"You know Miss Ainslie well?"

"I know the author of that book better than another can possibly know her," replied Nattie in the calm, even tone she had used throughout.

"May I ask your name?" was the next question.

Nattie was going away on the morrow. If it became known she was the author of "Tangled Threads" she could not be much annoyed now, and the temptation to reveal herself became evidently too strong to be resisted; so, as she arose and shook the moss from her lap, she said:

"I was married three weeks ago. My name is now Natalie Ellis Ainslie Emerson."

Bidding her companion good-afternoon, she walked away, leaving her a more confused if not a more sensible woman.

"This leaving my little home for good almost breaks my heart."

Thus spoke the lately-made Mrs. Emerson

when she had returned from her wedding trip and was preparing to go to the neat cottage Ross had purchased a little way out of the city. It was indeed with very sober feelings that she made herself ready to leave the rooms so homelike and loved.

"I want to settle things a little, then you dear girls must come to me at once," she said. "I can't exist without you as I see. The horse-cars run right by the door of our house, so you will have no excuse for staying here."

When Ross spoke of servants, Nattie said:

"Please, Ross, don't let's think of them, at present at least. We can hire our washing and ironing done, and I can easily manage the rest. I'm afraid a servant would boss me round dreadfully. I fear I never learned to obey, as I don't know how to command."

Ross smiled as he promised her wishes should be complied with. And a new home was made. A home where love reigned supreme, and comfort and content found a constant abiding place.

"Just the thing! The very thing! Strange, superlatively strange, that I should not have thought of it before! I'm a most infernally

confounded old blunderer. Might have had half Europe wild, literally wild, by this time."

So spoke Tedcastle Gilmore on the day when Nattie moved into the aforementioned house. The gentleman was seated in his library; as he finished speaking he kicked over the waste basket, and, arising, went across the room and out into the hall, banging the door behind him, and, putting on his hat and taking a cane, stepped briskly out upon the street, and was soon moving along as though walking on a wager.

He reached the house in which my girls resided, went hastily up the steps, stopped, rang the bell with a twang that might have put thought of a new wire into the landlord's head, had he heard it, was soon ushered in and saying to Cecil:

"Miss Emerson, I have decided that if you will come with me, we will go over to Europe for three years, and show the people of the Old World what kind of music we can produce. We ought to have gone before. Nothing like a reputation for having been recognized as prodigies on the Eastern Continent! I'm outrageously ambitious, Miss Emerson. I want

to have it truly said that there isn't standing-room at Gilmore's when he gives a concert."

"Do you really mean it?" asked Cecil, the bright color in her cheeks deepening.

"What in the deuce—I beg your pardon—why do you think I should propose it if I didn't mean it? You have stuck to me well, though others have tried hard to take you away, and I mean to do the honest square thing by you as well as myself now, and give you a chance to show off the talent you possess, and both of us to become richer by Europe's gold. You will come, Miss Emerson? I think we can agree on a price for your singing."

"Oh, you know you have raised my salary twice already," said Cecil gratefully; "and the price seems large to me now."

"It shall be larger, much larger, if you will come," was the answer to this.

"You must surely go," said Carmen, when the visitor had left, having obtained Cecil's promise to "think it over" and let him know her decision. "You have always wanted to go to Europe, you know. This will give you a chance to gratify your desire, and help you to make a wide-spread reputation."

Carmen did not speak of the feeling of utter loneliness the thought of this last remaining friend's going away gave her. Dear, brave Carmen! She was quite used to thinking of others before herself, and would speak no word that might deter Cecil from doing what seemed best for her, or that might make it harder than it would otherwise be for her to leave home should she decide to accept Mr. Gilmore's offer. And when she had decided to accept it, Carmen tried to make the days before her friend's departure so full of work that there should be no time for sorrowful thought. It was decided that the rooms they had occupied should be retained until Cecil should sail, and so together there the two girls stayed, with the exception of the brief time spent by Cecil in her father's home, and on her way to and from her native city, and that occupied by them in visiting Ross and Nattie, until the dreaded day that was to witness their parting came, Carmen having asked for and obtained leave to be absent from the office until her friend's time of leaving.

"You will surely go to Ross and Nattie when I'm gone?" Cecil questioned many times, and

invariably Carmen answered: "Oh, yes; I'll be all right, little sis."

All too soon came the hour when the three girls, together with Ross and Mr. Ehrenfried, stood on the wharf near which lay the steamer, gay with flags and pennons, and alive with human beings, that was to bear Cecil away.

"All aboard!" was the shout that reached them ere long, and Ross, Nattie and Carmen each put their arms about Cecil's neck, and kissing her many times, turned away with lips too unsteady to frame the words "good-by." Mr. Ehrenfried took both her hands, and, bending down, touched his lips to her forehead and said:

"May God bless and keep you always, my child!"

As though conscious it bore precious freight, and was proud of its burden, the steamer, with flags floating on the breeze, and pennons waving, rode bravely out of harbor, and Cecil had gone. As long as they could see the handkerchiefs — for Cecil's was among them — held in the breeze by departing ones on board the steamer, did the four stand upon the wharf waving their own in return. When the flutter-

ing bits of linen could no longer be seen. they turned homeward, Ross and Nattie sad indeed; but Carmen and Mr. Ehrenfried with hearts filled with a grief unknown to their companions.

“Our little home broken up! } No one needs
me now,” was the burden of Carmen’s thoughts.
“Gracie beneath the flowers at Greenwood, Ross
and Nattie in a home of their own, Cecil on
the ocean not to return to me for three long
years, if ever.”

But Carmen was not given to repining, and by the time she was at home with Nattie and Ross, being made welcome to their abode—for she went with them directly from the wharf—her grand heart-courage had returned to her, and every word was meant when she said to herself:

“The dear Lord must know best. Every thing is well.”

Long did Ernest Ehrenfried, when he had gained his room that morning, gaze out over the water.

“I feel,” he said to himself, with his face all lined with pain, “that never again shall I stand face to face with her until I meet

her where there is 'neither marrying nor giving in marriage.'"

As he had once knelt in the moonlight, he now bowed in the sunlight, and as earnestly as he had prayed in that night of the past did he now, in the shining day, pour out his heart.

"O, my Father!" he said, "make thy sea exceedingly gentle while she rides upon it. Keep her always pure and true in all things as now. Help her in all her undertakings. Give her peace at all times O, Father! And as for me, help me to stand ready with stout heart and willing hands, for any thing thou shalt send me to do. Help me to be utterly content with what thou metest out to me; immeasurably grateful for thy love, and to keep from me all thoughts of repining because I have not ~~that~~ of her who is so dear to me. In the loving and compassionate Jesus' name, I ask it all. Amen."

Once more his face was calm and patient as he arose and went forth to his labors a conqueror through his faith in and love for God.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW RESOLUTION.

The heavens give safety to your purposes.—SHAKESPEARE.

THE twilight of a Sabbath day was brooding over the cottage which loving hearts had made so much a home, as Carmen sat in her room. A month had gone by since Cecil's departure, and to Carmen the time had seemed long and lonely, in spite of the love given her so freely, the care bestowed upon her so generously, by Ross and Nattie. It would have taken much, very much, to have caused her to acknowledge to any one but herself that she was any thing but content, for she appreciated and was grateful for all that was done for her; so she had striven since coming to her friend's home to be always cheerful, and to all outward appearances had succeeded bravely.

The mother-instinct was strong within the

girl. She liked to feel that in some way she was needed by some one, and when she said, as she sat in her room this quiet Sunday evening: "No one needs me now!" the words were full of heart-loneliness, and sadder than one with a nature different from her own could understand.

She did not murmur. Her faith in God was exceedingly strong, and seldom wavered; never was lost. When she had found an unrest which made her miserable taking possession of her, she had earnestly prayed that unless the new emotions were to lead her to accomplish something better than she was accomplishing now, it might be banished and her old contentment return. It lived, and grew in force, and to-night, laying her hands on the pages of the Bible, which was open on a stand before her, she said earnestly:

"Father, show me what to do! Give me a work to perform for thee that shall leave no time or inclination for repining, and let me go about my task armed with thy strength, and to continue unflinching, no matter what I may be called upon to undergo."

A worthy, noble thing it was for this young

soul to be crying out, not that God would give her happiness, but that she might be shown work for him that would keep away a feeling she thought might be wrong.

A newspaper she had brought to her room the night before, but had not read, lay beyond the Bible on the stand, and, without thinking of what she was doing, she put out her hand and drew it toward her, and her glance fell upon it. The words she read were, "Fearful Suffering at the South." Under this heading was an article telling how in a Southern city yellow fever was laying low nearly the entire population, and death stalking abroad claiming his victims by hundreds. How many died with no hand near to minister to their needs, or to close their eyes when they became sightless. How those who were able to do so, fled from the city, leaving the stricken ones to suffer, and probably face death alone or with only those in a like condition to their own, near. She read the entire article in the dim light, and then laying the paper aside, said:

"How vain for me to say no one needs me! God has pointed out a way for me. I have received my answer to prayer."

Then and there the brave resolution to go to the sufferers of which she had read, was born.

“What have you been doing that makes your face look so calmly happy?” asked Nattie, when, after a time, Carmen went down to the library.

“Having a little talk with my Father,” was Carmen’s answer as she sat down near a window. “Where is Ross?” she questioned a moment later, seeing Nattie was alone.

“He went into town to prayer-meeting,” said Nattie. “I thought if you cared to go you would come down, so didn’t speak to you, and as I didn’t feel meetingy to-night, sent him off alone.”

“Don’t light the gas,” said Carmen, as Nattie arose from her chair and went towards the mantlepiece. “Come and sit close to me in the shadow. I want to tell you something.”

Nattie drew an ottoman to her friend’s feet, and said as she seated herself upon it and felt her hands taken in a close, warm clasp:

“Now we will imagine we are back in the dear little home, and there isn’t such a thing in Christendom as a husband. “However good

a companion one gets, however strong her affection for him may be, I wonder if she ever gets *quite* reconciled to the fact that she isn't a real girl any more." But what have you to tell, Carmen dear?"

Carmen may not have heard the remarks. At any rate she did not answer them, but to the question replied :

"Just this, little girl, that I am going away."

"Going away?" cried Nattie, in a surprised tone, looking up to the face she could but dimly see in the darkness. "O, Carmen, where are you going?"

"Where strong hands are sadly needed, Nattie," was the answer. "I have decided to go South to care for the yellow fever sufferers."

"Do you really mean that?" cried Nattie.

"Really mean it, Nattie," was the reply.

"Carmen —" Nattie's voice was oh, so full of pain! — "do you realize you may never come back if you do as you have planned? That it is probable you never will?"

"Yes," was the slow, calm answer; "I have thought of all that."

"Oh, how dreadful things are!" cried Nattie, her head sinking down upon Carmen's knees.

“Gracie dead, Cecil in Europe, you going away to that awful place!”

“Hush, dear!” said Carmen. “Nothing is dreadful. Gracie is safe. I like to think of this. Nothing can harm or disturb her, whatever comes to us. Cecil is where she has long wanted to go, and helping to make her name a fitting one to be enrolled among those of famous people. You have a loved and loving husband, a pretty, cheerful home, and a book abroad which I doubt not is doing much good, and has made you well-known as a writer. As for me, God has shown me a way to do something for him; and if he chooses to take me to be with Gracie, you will think, dear Nattie, that for me there will be no more trials, and that I have gone willingly, gladly, *home*. When we girls were together with no one but ourselves, I felt I was sort of needed by you three, as I needed you. But now you are all provided for, and so I will go forth with my hand just resting in his who has promised to never leave nor forsake his children. You surely think what I propose to do is the right thing, dear girl?”

“Yes,” answered Nattie, with a sound of

tears in her voice; "you are *always* right."

"Oh no, fond, foolish child," said Carmen, and then added, "I shall go as soon as I can find a substitute to fill my place in the office."

"Will they keep your place for you an indefinite time?" asked Nattie.

"I think so," replied Carmen. "And I feel I need not worry about that. God will surely always have a place for me."

Then they sat a long while in silence, but after a time Nattie said in a husky tone:

"Carmen, I want you to know to-night that I feel myself a better woman for having known you, and that all through my life I believe I shall be nobler because you gave me your affection and helped me in so many ways. And that I thank you, oh, so heartily! for all you have done for and been to me."

"It is something to be grateful for if I have helped you at all," answered Carmen.

Ross deeply regretted that Carmen should go away, but could but acknowledge that she was right in her determination to do so.

The next day when Carmen during her dinner hour was upon the street, she met Mr.

Ehrenfried, and told him of her resolution to go South. Looking into her face he said:

“Miss Carmen, will you take an old fellow like me for an escort?”

“You don’t mean that you are going South too?” asked Carmen quickly.

“Exactly that,” was the answer. “I have had it in my mind some time, and my plans are made. I had thought to go the day after to-morrow, but if you cannot be ready by that time I will wait for you. We are so much needed there that it behooves us to hasten. I was coming to tell you all of my plan, and to say good-by to-night. I shall still come, but you will tell Ross and Nattie of the plan, and I will have to say only the good-by, and that to them alone, not to you. You are a noble girl, Carmen. God bless you!”

“I will try to be ready by the day after to-morrow,” answered Carmen.

“I should have liked to have gone to my sisters for a little before I went, but I will not do it, as while I was travelling and with them many might die needing my care.”

She turned away, liking Mr. Ehrenfried better than ever before.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE HOSPITAL — AT REST.

And, as the tides of the sea arise in the month of September,
 Flooding some silver stream, till it spreads to a lake in the
 meadow,
 So death flooded life, and, o'erflowing its natural margin,
 Spread to a brackish lake, the silver stream of existence.



The dying

Looked up into her face, and thought, indeed, to behold there
 Gleams of celestial light encircle her forehead with splendor,
 Such as the artist paints o'er the brows of saints and apostles,
 Or such as hangs by night o'er a city seen at a distance.

— LONGFELLOW.

DAY after day went by, and, in the city where Carmen had come with Ernest Ehrenfried, each night's record of deaths told that the mortality increased rather than diminished. For weeks scarcely a drop of rain fell, and seldom a breeze found its way to where the fever-tortured ones lay. The red sun looked redder seen through the smoke which rose from the hundreds of bar-

rels of burning tar which were stationed about the city, and used as disinfectants. The heat was intense, and the nights with their cooling chilliness were eagerly looked forward to, each one by many who would never see another earthly dawn.

Constantly were suffering ones being brought, or dragging themselves to the large hospital where Mr. Ehrenfried and Carmen's offered services had been so readily accepted, and as constantly were the dead being carried away, while but few who came were ever able to go away by themselves. Deft-fingered, light-footed, cheery-voiced Carmen moved about the disease-haunted place, doing, it seemed to those who gave the subject any thought, work enough for two nurses. She seldom saw any one but the sick, the nurses who were employed in the same ward as herself, the physician, and the men who took away the dead. There was scarcely ever a time when any nurse could, even for a few minutes, leave the ward in which he or she served.

Hundreds of hands did she hold while the souls of their owners left the bodies; hundreds of eyes, which would never open again in this

world, did she close; straightened hundreds of limbs from which all pain had gone.

As tireless, tender and vigilant, and as warmly welcomed to the bedside of sufferers as herself was Mr. Ehrenfried. The two met for a brief time now and then, and exchanged words of cheer, and spoke of the things which Ross, Nattie, and Cecil wrote in their frequent letters. Cecil and Nattie in their epistles to Carmen never failed to send some message to the man they admired so much, and Ross wrote constantly to both him and Carmen. One day—a day she will surely never cease to remember—when Carmen had been several weeks in the hospital, a nurse came to her and said:

“The gentleman with the queer name is sick and wants to see you. He is in the next ward. Bed number nine.”

Quickly performing one or two things which needed to be done for a near patient, Carmen hurried away to the next ward, and had soon found Mr. Ehrenfried. A glance at his face, over which the dreadful yellow was spreading, convinced her that the fever was upon him.

“I fought hard against it, Carmen,” he said as she came near, as though ashamed of having

yielded to illness. "I felt badly yesterday and during the night, but kept up."

"Of course you fought hard," said Carmen, trying in vain to keep her voice steady. "It would not have been like you to have done otherwise. Has a doctor seen you?"

"Yes, a few minutes ago. I have the fever, Carmen. Sit down and I will say some things to you."

"I will get some water and bathe your head while you talk," answered Carmen, turning away with clasped hands and a face from which she could not keep all traces of the sadness that was weighing down her heart.

When she had returned and was passing her moist, cool hand over his forehead, he said:

"I believe I shall not live to see another day, Carmen. Do not look so grieved, dear girl, I think I am glad to go. Before I came here I made a will, Carmen. The little money that belongs to me will be yours when I am gone. The other girls have more than you. If you go home, take my watch to Ross. My books, all but my Bible, I want Nattie to have. Give the Bible, and the ring on my watch-chain, to Cecil. They both belonged

to my mother; and both she and I have loved them. Here are my keys."—And he handed her a ring with them on it.—"The one with the number eight on it unlocks my room here. The one with the number seventeen opens my room in New York. You know where I lodged there, for you called one night. You will find my books, all but my Bible, which is in my room here, there. Tell Ross and Nattie I remembered them gratefully and lovingly as long as sense remained to me, and Cecil that my last thoughts were of her. God bless you, Carmen, dear, true soul! I pray you may be long spared. The world needs such as you."

Carmen noticed how the sick man's voice lingered over Cecil's name, and took note of the fact that to her were to be given his most precious things. He had shown her the Bible and ring since coming to this place, and told her he valued them above all his other possessions; she read the secret he had guarded so well, and in her heart a new sympathy, deeper than any she had yet known for the lonely man, was born.

"All shall be as you wish," she answered.

“How shall I thank you for your kindness to me?”

“Please don’t thank me in words,” he said softly.

She adjusted his pillow, and did all possible for his comfort. On the shelf near him stood a kind of medicine she had heard Doctor Strong say was the best thing known in yellow fever cases, and beside it lay a spoon that had been used, so she felt sure the best of treatment had been commenced for her friend.

Leaving him for a few minutes, she sought the physician and ascertained exactly how the medicine was to be given. She had received the directions a good many times before, but could afford to run no risks. Lives were too precious to tamper in the slightest with that which might prolong or shorten them. The drug was faithfully administered, and all that might possibly aid it done, but towards evening when Carmen had been away from him for a little time, as she was often obliged to be, she returned, and found him with a pleasant smile on his lips, but the light gone out of his eyes, and knew that the brave, tender, loyal heart had ceased to beat.

With reverent touches did she brush out the soft hair, while on the broad forehead rained her warm tears; with tender motion fold the hands so used to doing tender things themselves; with gentle force arrange a blanket about the tall form. Then kneeling beside him, she breathed a short, earnest prayer. This was his burial service.

Soon an ambulance stood at the door, and when the men came to carry away the dead, Carmen asked of them: "Is it far to the cemetery?"

When they had answered that it was a half-mile, she said: "Will you please drive slowly? This"—with a motion of her hand towards the rigid form on the bed—"was a friend of mine, and I want to know where the body is laid. It will be taken to Greenwood ere long."

The sadness in the tone of this gentlemanly girl touched, I doubt not, the hearts of these men to whom the work of carrying away the dead, had—they had become so accustomed to it—grown to be the same as any other labor, and in no rough or hasty manner they lifted the body she had designated, and when they had gathered their ghastly load, one of them

said to her in a low, pitying tone: "We are ready, Miss, and we'll drive so you'll have no trouble in followin' us."

She thanked him, and, putting on a shawl and hat, went out of the building. Through the smoke-clouded, nearly-deserted streets did she follow the sombre-looking vehicle, and when it stopped in the burying-lot she stood beside it. The light of a full moon shone down upon many tombstones and a vast number of newly-made graves, both covered and open. One of the latter was near a small tree, and Carmen going to it, said to the men with the ambulance, "Please lay his body here. I shall know this spot when I come again."

When they had laid the form of him she loved so much as a friend beside the grave she had selected for it, she uncovered the face and kissed the forehead, and they replaced the covering; and when she had seen the body lowered into the ground, turned and went away with none but God to comfort her in her loneliness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NEW TRIAL AND NEW HAPPINESS.

' We see not, know not ; all our way
Is night — with Thee alone is day ;
From out the torrent's troubled drift,
Above the storm our hearts we lift,
Thy will be done. ')

— WHITTIER.

My cup runneth over with joy. — BIBLE.

OCTOBER had come, and in that stricken city where Carmen so faithfully labored, every night, colder than the last, brought hope to the dwellers in the disease-cursed place, for it told that frost, scourge-scattering, life-saving frost, would soon come. Carmen's form was wasted, and her face, always pale, was exceedingly thin ; but a sort of nervous excitement kept her from realizing how tired she really was. It was well, perhaps, that this was so, for through the long hot days she very sel-

dom found a time to rest, and she would not have deserted her post if by mere force of will she could have dragged herself around, however weary she might have been conscious of being.

She missed Mr. Ehrenfried hourly. Missed his words of cheer, and missed too the thought that in this place of sickness and death was one friend to whom she could always go for encouragement and advice, and be sure of receiving both.

"Miss Moore," said Doctor Strong one morning, "I dislike to ask you to do any more work than you will do here, but if you can arrange to do so, please go into number eleven during the day. The poor fellows there are suffering for want of care. Two of the nurses are off sick this morning."

Carmen promised to do as he wished as soon as possible, but so busy was she kept during the forenoon in the ward in which she was regularly employed, it was not till afternoon that she found time to visit ward number eleven.

From bedside to bedside she went, performing kind and needful things, and speaking kind and needful words to each one. Beside the

last bed of a long row she suddenly stopped with a little stifled cry, and a thrill went through her frame; for before her, tossing from side to side in his pain, was Fermer Allison, the man she had loved since she the woman of twenty was a girl of thirteen. She knew him, although his face was more mature and manly than on that happy winter when he was her teacher, and was overspread by the terrible yellow hue she had become accustomed to seeing on human countenances, and in spite of a heavy mustache which had not belonged to her boyish tutor. He fixed his eyes, his deep-blue, wonderful eyes upon her for a moment, and a puzzled expression stole into them as though he was trying to recollect something; but presently he turned his head away with a sigh, as though too weary to think further of what had for a few seconds occupied his mind. With a great fear that he would die, there mingled in Carmen's mind an exquisite gladness that unto her was given the task of caring for him: of having him where no one could come between them, for a time at least; for she felt sure that he had no relatives or friends near, or he would not be lying there sick and unattended.

“A noble fellow; one who has served us well as nurse, and helped us much with his money,” said Doctor Strong in a low tone, as he paused by Carmen’s side.

“Will he live, sir?” she asked, drawing the physician aside.

“If he lives till twelve I shall have strong hopes of his recovery,” was the answer. “But he is a very sick man, and you had better find out if he wishes to send any message to friends.”

She went to Allison’s bedside, and seeing he was not asleep, bent over him and asked: “Is there any thing you would like me to write them at home, in case you do not go to them again?”

He looked at her, the bewildered look again creeping into his eyes, and answered: “If I die, you will find my father’s address on a card in my pocket-book, which is in my coat pocket. The coat is on the shelf over my head. Please write to him and mother the particulars of my death, and tell them I never stopped thinking about them. And tell them to say good-by to uncle and auntie, and all the cousins and friends.”

“And is there no one else,” faltered Carmen, “that you would have me write to?”

“I never had any relatives only those I have mentioned,” he replied, “and I will not trouble you to write to the friends. You are very good to be willing to do so much, and I thank you.”

“Never any near relatives but those mentioned. No wife between him and me!”

These glad words repeated themselves over and over again in Carmen's mind, as she administered with such tender care to the sick man's needs.

Slowly, slowly, the hours went on, and the fever raged and rioted in Allison's frame, keeping his body tossing, his brain on fire.

“O, Father in heaven, I so wish he may live!” cried Carmen again and again; “but nevertheless”—and surely was there never a more gracious nevertheless since the same word was spoken in lonely Gethsemane—“Thy will be done!”

Ten, eleven o'clock, and still the fever-demon is holding his victim in his loathsome grasp; but at half-past eleven the body of the sufferer grows less hot, and a slight moisture can be

felt upon the hitherto dry skin. When the hands of his watch are telling that midnight is come, Doctor Strong, who has for some moments been standing with Allison's hand in his, turns to Carmen and says, "He will live. Life and Death have played a hard game, but Life holds the winning card." And two thin hands went up and covered a colorless face, and from a brave, strong heart went up a cry of jubilant thanksgiving.

"I surely have seen you before, or met some one who bears a striking resemblance to you," said Allison two days after this night of terrible doubt, when Carmen came to see if she could do any thing to make him more comfortable; "will you please tell me your name?"

"My name is Carmen Moore," she said, without looking into his eyes.

"Carmen Moore," he repeated slowly and thoughtfully; and then the bewildered expression which she had noticed whenever he looked at her, faded out from his eyes, and instead of the hospital walls, he saw in imagination those of a humble schoolhouse; and in place of the sick about him were young pupils; and prominent among them a girl with a wistful, yearn-

ing face, too old to belong to a child of thirteen, and he knew where he had seen his nurse before. Holding out his hand with a glad smile he said: "How wonderful this seems! My friend of long ago, have you forgotten me entirely? Don't you remember your teacher of a winter a number of years ago?"

(Remember him! Every pulse in her body was bounding with pleasure at being with him again. Her heart was full of praise to God for sending him back to her, and that hospital was a glorified place to her because of his presence. But she only said in her own hearty way, as she placed her hand in his outstretched one: "I knew you from the first, and have been waiting to see if you would recognize me. I am very, very glad to see you, and that I have been able to do a little for your comfort."

The blessed, long-wished-for frost came at last, and the disease that had desolated the city was arrested as if by magic; and very soon those who had fled from the town began to return, business to revive, and all things to show that better times had come to the lately fever-ravaged place.

One of the nurses who had been sick returning to the ward where Carmen had been regularly employed, and the two who had been in ward number eleven and were taken sick the day she first entered it dying, it was thought best to keep her in the latter ward.

Fermer Allison, thanks to judicious nursing and his strong constitution, was not long in recovering, and before his old strength came back to him he was helping to care for those weaker than himself. During one of his days of convalescence, Carmen handed him her album which she had brought with her, and while she did some needful things for him, told him of two little homes that had been in New York, and that he would find in the book in his hand photographs of the girls who together with herself had occupied those homes.

"Why, that is surely a likeness of Miss Farwell!" exclaimed Allison, gazing at a pictured face to which he had opened.

"Yes, and Miss Farwell was our Gracie," said Carmen softly. After a moment she added: "Then you have seen her? O, Mr. Allison, were you at the National Hall the night it was burned?"

“Yes, I have seen and heard her many times,” he said, “and I admired her exceedingly. In a way, I think I loved her; but it was not with such a love as we give wife or dear friend. Her genius drew me towards her strangely; I know she was a good and pure woman.”

In a moment he went on: “I was not at the hall when it took fire, but I reached the building when it was nearly ready to fall.”

“And do you know who the man was that brought her down the ladder?” cried Carmen.

“Yes, I know,” answered Allison, speaking slowly, and looking down. He did not go on, and Carmen said:

“Oh, please tell me, Mr. Allison! Gracie wished we girls might know him. She had often seen him in the audience, and said she felt he was a good, true man, and she wanted us to tell him if we ever did meet him, how grateful to him she was as long as she lived. She said he had blue eyes; so Nattie named him Stranger Blue Eyes.”

Still a strange hesitancy to speak seemed to possess Allison. To tell that he performed a deed that she probably considered heroic, seemed to him like boasting, and this he detested.

Looking up in surprise at his apparent unwillingness to give her the information she desired, she saw his face flush as his gaze met hers, and guessed the meaning of his singular behavior.

"Mr. Allison," she said in a low, intense tone, "you are Stranger Blue Eyes. Oh, I am glad, so glad!"

In these days when he saw her hourly and witnessed her hundreds of acts of self-forgetfulness, and noted how all her speech and behavior bespoke the true, noble, tender woman, a strong love for Carmen was born in Fermer Allison's heart, and a few days before they started for New York, he told her of his affection, and asked her to be his wife.

"I was afraid you did not love me," he said, when she had answered him in a way that delighted him.

Looking in his rare, blue eyes, Carmen replied: "Fermer, I have loved you seven long years."

How joyfully and thankfully was Carmen received in Nattie's home! And when on the evening of the day of her arrival, her lover came, it was no ordinary welcome given him.

Before his advent Carmen had told her friends of him. When she said he was the man she was to marry, Ross looked at her with a questioning expression, and she said :

“ No, Ross, the old love has not died out ; but he of whom I have spoken is its object. God is very good to me, my friend.” And then she told Nattie briefly, of the love she had so long hidden in her heart, and spoken of alone to Ross, and that Fermer Allison was the young man who had been her tutor. Also that this same Fermer was Stranger Blue Eyes.

Ross long before his marriage had confessed to Nattie that he had once proposed to Carmen, and received the reply that she should be rather ashamed of him, if he hadn't fallen in love with so beautiful a person. *made like Nattie*

Great was the rejoicing when these things were told ; and Nattie declared she shouldn't be surprised to hear that Fermer was the man in the moon, or any other celebrity, next.

When Carmen had been a few days with Ross and Nattie, and lingered a few more at Fermer's lovely home, where she was made much of by every member of the household, she went, accompanied by her lover, to visit

her sisters, who so gladly received the sister they had thought might never come again to them, and welcomed her lover in a way that quite satisfied her. Carmen was deeply, profoundly happy. She rejoiced in the great love that had come to her, and thanked God daily for the tender, manly heart which had been given her. And as for Allison, it was his firm belief that in the wide world there was no such wonderful person as his loyal-hearted Carmen.

After a two weeks' visit with the sisters, Carmen went back to New York with Fermer. Her wedding was to take place on New Year's day, at the house of Nattie, that young matron declaring she wished it so very much, and she thought it would be just the thing for the sisters to come to the city for the occasion.

But Carmen had not promised it should be so until she ascertained that said sisters were quite willing she should be married in another home than theirs, and could be in New York in time for the bridal.

One mild day, late in December, but before any snows, only some very light ones which had melted as soon as fallen, had come, Allison accompanied Carmen to Greenwood.

She had often spoken to him of the kind friend who had gone with her to the South, and died in the place where his last labor was performed, and to-day a pleasant spot was selected in which to lay the body of this friend, which Carmen had arranged before her departure from that Southern city, to have sent to New York in January.

As they had ridden towards this burial-place, she had told Allison of a letter, the gladsome, congratulatory answer to a missive sent by her something more than a month before, received that morning from Cecil—brave, happy Cecil—whose voice delighted so many European listeners, and whose genius was unquestioned by the dwellers in the Old World.

And now as she stooped and placed a wreath of immortelles she had brought upon the mound before her, and then for a moment laid her head beside the wreath, she said, "I wonder if it is wrong for me to so want some sign from her to-day, that she knows how happy I am. I feel that she knows of my joy, but oh, I wish she could manifest to me that this is so!"

She arose and stood beside Allison, and the

sun that had been for a moment behind a cloud, came brightly out, and first touching the lovers like a sign of benediction, stole softly on and rested lovingly on the chiselled words "Our Gracie."

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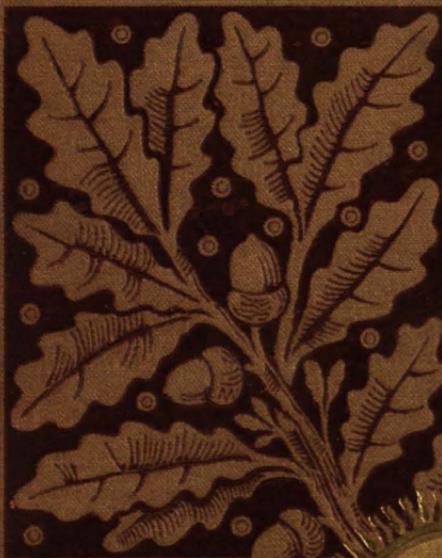
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